After Kiyozawa: 
A Study of Shin Buddhist Modernization, 1890-1956

by

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Department of Religious Studies 
Duke University

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Richard Jaffe, Supervisor

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Hwansoo Kim

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Simon Partner

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Leela Prasad

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Religious Studies in the Graduate School of Duke University

2015
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the modern transformation of orthodoxy within the Ōtani denomination of Japanese Shin Buddhism. This history was set in motion by scholar-priest Kiyozawa Manshi (1863-1903), whose calls for free inquiry, introspection, and attainment of awakening in the present life represented major challenges to the prevailing orthodoxy. Judging him a principal player in forging a distinctively modern Buddhism, many scholars have examined Kiyozawa’s life and writings. However, it is critical to recognize that during his life Kiyozawa remained a marginal figure within his sect, his various reform initiatives ending in failure. It was not until 1956 that Ōtani leaders officially endorsed and disseminated Kiyozawa’s views. Taking my cue from Talal Asad’s critique of Clifford Geertz’s definition of religion, I move beyond interpretation of the “meaning” of Kiyozawa’s life and writings to the historical study of how they came to be invested with authority, impacting the lives of millions of sect members and influencing the perception of him among scholars.

I approach this history on three levels. On an individual level, I examine the lives and writings of Kiyozawa, his followers, and their critics, as revealed in their books, journal articles, newspaper articles, diaries, and letters. On an institutional level, I examine the transformation of the Ōtani organization’s educational, administrative, and judicial systems, as documented in institutional histories, denominational by-laws, official statements, and administrators’
writings. Finally, on a national level, I examine the effect of major political events and social trends on Kiyozawa’s followers and the Ōtani organization.

This study reveals that one critical factor in the transformation of Ōtani orthodoxy was the strategic use of a discourse of “empiricism” by Kiyozawa’s followers, especially Soga Ryōjin and Kaneko Daiei. As the Ōtani organization’s modern university gradually came to supercede its traditional seminary, Soga and Kaneko positioned themselves as authoritative modern scholars. At the same time, this study shows that the transformation of Ōtani orthodoxy was contingent upon broader historical developments far outside the control of Kiyozawa’s followers or Ōtani leaders. Specifically, the state’s persecution of Communists, war mobilization policies, and the postwar context of democracy building all shaped the views and fortunes of Kiyozawa’s followers. I argue that by better acknowledging and examining the contingent nature of religious history, scholars can approach a more realistic view of how religions are formed and reformed. Specifically in regard to modern Buddhist studies, I also argue that more attention should be paid to how sectarian institutions continue to grow and evolve, shaping all aspects of Buddhist thought and practice.
For my mother, Martha Schroeder,  
who inspired my curiosity in religion
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CWS</td>
<td>Shinran. <em>The Collected Works of Shinran</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Kyōgaku Dendō Kenkyū Sentā, ed. <em>Jōdo shinshū seitō</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMZ</td>
<td>Kiyozawa Manshi. <em>Kiyozawa Manshi zenshū</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODH</td>
<td>Ōtani Daigaku Hyakunenshi Henshū Iinkai, ed. <em>Ōtani daigaku hyakunenshi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SJJ</td>
<td>Akamatsu et al., eds. <em>Shinshū jinmei jiten</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SKM</td>
<td>Fukushima Kanryū and Akamatsu Tesshin, eds. <em>Shiryō Kiyozawa Manshi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRS</td>
<td>Soga Ryōjin. <em>Soga Ryōjin senshū</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SSJ</td>
<td>Shinshū Shinjiten Hensankai, ed. <em>Shinshū shinjiten</em></td>
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Introduction: The Symbol of Kiyozawa

On the morning of June 3, 1903, Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 sat alone in his temple, coughing up blood. 150 grams of it, according to his meticulously kept diary. Kiyozawa was the 39 year-old head priest of a small Buddhist temple in Ōhama, a small, industrial town in central Japan.\(^1\) Two days prior, he had relocated from a small windowed room on the second floor to an even smaller, dark corner room on the first floor, making it easier for his attendant to care for him. Kiyozawa’s final days were lonely ones. The previous November, his wife Yasuko had died of tuberculosis—the same illness Kiyozawa had long been suffering from. Two of their four children also died that year. Kiyozawa lived in the temple together with his in-laws, who were not fond of him. In fact, Kiyozawa was not much liked by anyone in the town of Ōhama. He was an outsider, whose marriage to Yasuko and arrival in Ōhama had been arranged by sect administrators. From the perspective of his congregation in Ōhama, Kiyozawa was a terrible

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\(^1\) Saihōji 西方寺 temple is located in Aichi Prefecture approximately 45 kilometers south of Nagoya and 150 kilometers east of Kyoto. The town of Ōhama 大浜 (Great Bay), which was combined with nearby villages to create Hekinan City in 1948, is located on a bay that opens out onto the Ise Bay and the Pacific Ocean. From the second floor of his temple, Kiyozawa could look across the street to a small mirin factory (a sweet rice wine used in cooking) and beyond it to the bay. On account of the town’s windiness, Kiyozawa took the pen name “Bay Breeze” (hinpū 浜風), adding the explanation, “It is a suitable pen name for a ghost-like person such as myself, half-dead and half-alive” (Kiyozawa 1984, 90).
head priest—away in Kyoto or Tokyo on official business much too often; preaching sermons that were too difficult to understand; and having a small, sickly appearance.²

Far away in Tokyo, a group of priests lived together in a communal house, studying Buddhist scriptures and debating Buddhist doctrine. Until October 1902, Kiyozawa had lived with them as their teacher.³ Besides giving regular sermons for his followers, Kiyozawa had been employed as the first president of a newly established Buddhist university. Kiyozawa had hoped the university would maintain a purely religious orientation, but when students made demands for government accreditation and a more secular curriculum, Kiyozawa had resigned and returned to Ōhama. Around the time Kiyozawa was writing the last entry in his diary, one of his followers received a letter from him along with a short essay: “This is How I Have Faith in the Buddha.”⁴ Kiyozawa’s final essay would become a veritable scripture for his followers and for his entire sect. In it, Kiyozawa juxtaposes his previous feelings of emotional anguish,

² Hashimoto notes that in Ōhama Kiyozawa “was often not allowed to perform services and was about to be banished from his own temple.” He also relates how at the annual services for Shinran in Kyoto, Kiyozawa once gave a talk while holding his spittoon (for spitting up blood), causing an overflowing hall of Ōtani members to empty (Hashimoto 2003, 26). Kiyozawa stood at a height of less than five feet, and his head awkwardly outsized his body, leading Ōtani Kōen to refer to him poetically as a pumpkin (in an inscription on a portrait of Kiyozawa on display at the Kiyozawa Manshi Kinenkan).
³ The Japanese terms for “teacher” and “follower” that were most commonly used by Kiyozawa’s followers are sensei 先生 and monka 門下. The former term conveys a stronger feeling of reverence than the English “teacher,” so I translate it as “Reverend” when used by Kiyozawa’s followers to address him. The latter term means “below (or within) the gate” of Kiyozawa’s teachings, without implying direct apprenticeship as the term “disciple” (deshi 弟子) does.
⁴ The essay was renamed “Wa ga shinnen” (My Faith) by Kiyozawa’s followers. Kiyozawa wrote the letter and essay on May 30th, mailing them on June 1st to Akegarasu Haya (discussed below). The original essay, as well as the slightly edited version that was published in Seishinkai, can be found in KMZ (vol. 6). For an English translation, see Blum and Rhodes (2011, 93-98).
intellectual frustrations, and thoughts of suicide with the great peace of mind he has attained in the present life through faith in the Buddha. The impact of these statements was surely heightened by the fact of being written while undergoing the agonies of dying.

On June 4th, Kiyozawa’s attendant asked him if he had any final words. Kiyozawa responded, “Nothing at all.” He died at 1:00 am on June 6th. Thus ends the extraordinary life of Kiyozawa Manshi. And thus begins the improbable story of Kiyozawa’s sanctification within one of Japan’s largest Buddhist communities.

**Goals of Dissertation**

The story of Kiyozawa Manshi’s life and intellectual development is a fascinating one that has rightly called forth much attention from Buddhist practitioners, religious studies scholars, and the public. Born the son of a poor, low-ranking samurai in the waning years of Japan’s feudal period, Kiyozawa’s ascent as a philosopher and religious leader mirrored—and was made possible by—the dramatic transformation of Japan into a powerful modern nation-state. Joining the Buddhist priesthood in order to receive a free education, Kiyozawa excelled as a student, eventually studying Western philosophy at the elite Tokyo Imperial University. Nishida Kitarō, Japan’s most famous philosopher, was influenced and much impressed by
Kiyozawa. Kiyozawa’s first major work, *Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion*, was translated into English and distributed at the famous 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago. However, Kiyozawa abandoned the life of academic philosopher, turning instead to a life of religious devotion. He served as a teacher and principal at various schools in Kyoto before rising to the position of founding president of Shinshū University in Tokyo; he led a nationwide movement calling for democratic reform of the Buddhist establishment; and he embarked on a personal quest to attain religious faith, involving rigorous asceticism, chanting, meditation, study, and writing. In the course of his religious seeking, he purportedly re-discovered three important texts: the Āgamas (early discourses of Śākyamuni Buddha), the *Discourses of Epictetus* (1st-2nd century Greek Stoic philosopher), and the *Tannishō* (records of sayings by Shinran, who is discussed below). In the final years of his life, Kiyozawa and his followers lived together in a communal house, developing a religious viewpoint that they called Seishinshugi (Spiritualism) and disseminating these ideas to the world through the journal *Seishinkai* (Spiritual World).

Kiyozawa’s death marked the beginning of a new story as improbable and dramatic as the first. This is the story of the modern transformation of one of Japan’s largest Buddhist

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* See Fujita (2003). Nishida credits Kiyozawa with being one of Japan’s two first bonafide philosophers (along with Ōnishi Hajime).
* Shinshū University was actually created in 1896 in Kyōto, but its founding is conventionally dated to its reopening in Tokyo in 1901. The same university came to be called Shinshū Ōtani University in 1911 when it was returned to Kyōto. Finally, it came to have its present name, Ōtani University, in 1922 when it received official university status from the government.
organizations—the Ōtani denomination (Ōtani-ha 大谷派) of the Shin sect (Shinshū 真宗).

“Shin sect” is the common abbreviation for “Jōdo Shin sect” (Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗), meaning “true Pure Land sect.” This sect’s founding is ascribed to a priest named Shinran 親鸞 who lived in Japan in the 12th and 13th centuries. Shinran and his master Hōnen 法然 (founder of the Jōdo sect) taught a path to awakening through the salvific powers of a Buddha known as Amida (Skt. Amitābha). According to a number of Buddhist sutras composed in India in the first three centuries of the common era, Śākyamuni Buddha told the story of a monk of the distant past named Dharmākara (Jpn. Hōzō) who vowed not to attain Buddhahood until, after countless lifetimes of practice, he was able to thoroughly “purify” his land such that it would be an ideal place for others to achieve awakening. According to Śākyamuni’s testimony, this monk accomplished his vows, becoming Amida Buddha, so now anyone who wishes may be reborn in his Western Pure Land. Amida and his Pure Land have been a central object of devotion and devotion.

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7 I say “ascribed” because Shinran did not have an intention to found a new sect. In fact, according to Chapter VI of the Tannishō, he famously declared, “I do not have even a single follower” (Ryukoku University Translation Center 1990). It was Shinran’s followers who gradually founded the sect (and the same can be said about Hōnen and the Jōdo sect). In fact, scholars have demonstrated that it was not until the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) that Japan’s Buddhist “sects” as we understand them today took form. For example, see Williams (2006, 188-191).

8 According to Buddhist teachings, Śākyamuni’s attainment of Buddhahood in ancient India was not a unique occurrence. In the distant past, this world had been home to prior Buddhas, and in the distant future, it would be home to future Buddhas. Moreover, Buddhist cosmology posits that this world is just one of many worlds within a vast universe, so the idea developed that in other worlds parallel to our own, multitudes of other Buddhas must be living and teaching right at this moment.

9 For English translations of the Pure Land sutras, see Gomez (1996) or Inagaki (1995). The three most important Pure Land sutras for the Shin sect are the Muryōjukyō 無量寿経 (Sutra of Immeasurable Life),
scriptural exegesis throughout the history of the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Buddhist traditions, but it was with Hōnen and his students that Pure Land Buddhism began to congeal into exclusive sects. Whereas Hōnen emphasized the practice of chanting the name of Amida, Shinran emphasized the mind of faith, which he claimed was brought about through Amida’s power rather than human effort. Shinran’s innovations also include speaking out against all religious practices not oriented toward Amida (including kami worship, ritual purification, and fortune-telling) and promoting the ideal of an egalitarian Buddhist community of “companions” (dōbō 同朋), having taken a wife and declared himself “neither monk nor layman.”

In the modern period, the Shin sect has been dominated by two denominations—the Honganji and the Ōtani denominations—that were hierarchically organized with non-celibate priests instructing laypeople and a head temple (honzan 本山) administering branch temples. These two denominations, headquartered in Kyoto at Nishi Honganji and Higashi Honganji temples respectively, are together comprised of about 19,000 temples and 12 million members (about 25% and 20% of the respective national totals) (Dessi 2007, 11). After joining the Ōtani priesthood in order to further his education, Kiyozawa came to devote his life to serving the Ōtani organization, which he tried to do by advancing new interpretations of Shin teachings

the Kanmuryōjukyō 観無量寿経 (Sutra on Contemplation of [the Buddha of] Immeasurable Life), and the Amidakyō (Amida Sutra). These are sometimes referred to as the Longer Pure Land Sutra, Contemplation Sutra, and Smaller Pure Land Sutra respectively.

10 For an introduction to Shinran’s thought, see Shinran et al. (2007). Regarding the premodern history of the Shin sect, see Dobbins (1989).
and by advocating for reform of the priorities and administrative structure of the organization itself. In response, Ōtani leaders largely held fast to their premodern traditions. Despite all his accomplishments, at the time of his death in 1903, Kiyozawa remained a marginal figure within his sect, dying alone in a small provincial temple, his ambitions unrealized. His philosophical career had been cut short; his democratic reform movement had largely failed in its aims; and his presidency of Shinshū University had ended in an abrupt resignation. Even the Seishinshugi movement would peter out a decade after his death. Kiyozawa seemed destined to end up a mere footnote in the history of Japanese religions.

In 2003, the 100-year anniversary of Kiyozawa’s death was celebrated by Ōtani leaders, scholars, priests, and laypeople in Kyoto and throughout the nation with extensive memorial services, lectures and panel discussions, and an array of new publications, including a third edition of his collected works. By this time, Kiyozawa’s second- and third-generation followers had succeeded to positions of doctrinal and institutional authority within the Ōtani organization, and his lifestory and thought had become pivotal to the organization’s self-understanding. Doctrinally, literalist interpretations of Buddhist scriptures promising rebirth after death in a faraway land had been superseded by symbolic interpretations emphasizing the possibility of awakening in this life.\footnote{The literalist interpretation emphasizes the Sutra of Immeasurable Life’s statement that Amida Buddha lives “to the west of us, in a buddha-field that is one hundred thousand million trillion buddha-fields} Institutionally, the organization’s former administrative
system centered on the authority of the Chief Abbot had been replaced by a democratic one centered on two assemblies of elected officials.

This dissertation tells the story of how Kiyozawa’s life and teachings became embraced as orthodoxy within the Ōtani organization. By “orthodoxy,” I mean doctrinal views sanctioned by institutional authorities. Change of Ōtani orthodoxy was inextricably linked with institutional and social-political change, so this dissertation’s story is told on three levels. First, on an individual level, it examines how a handful of Kiyozawa’s followers strategically adapted and deployed his teachings, integrating them into the fabric of the Ōtani organization. Second, on an institutional level, it examines the history of the Ōtani organization’s educational, administrative, and judicial systems.12 Third, on a national level, it examines the effects of major political events and social trends on Kiyozawa’s followers, the Ōtani organization, and the broader religious world. Factors from all three levels interacted in the process of the establishment of a new orthodoxy.

away from where we are” (Gomez 1996, 80). The notion that the Pure Land is a place one travels to after death is supported by some of Shinran’s writings, but Shinran also describes “rebirth in the Pure Land” as taking place in this world. For example, he writes, “When one realizes true and real shinjin [faith], one is immediately grasped and held within the heart of the Buddha of unhindered light, never to be abandoned... When we are grasped by Amida, immediately—without a moment or a day elapsing—we ascend to and become established in the stage of the truly settled; this is the meaning of attain birth” (CWS, vol. 1: 475). For a succinct defense of the symbolic interpretation, see Terakawa (1994). For further discussion alongside passages from Shinran’s writings, see Shinran et al. (2007, 202-205, 215-216).

12 By “judicial,” I refer specifically to the organization’s system of judging the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of views promoted by sect members.
The next section of this introduction surveys representations of Kiyozawa’s life and teachings produced by his followers, critics, and scholarly interpreters from the time of his death to the present. The following section then explains the critical importance for scholars to look “after Kiyozawa” to the history of how his thought became orthodoxy for the Ōtani community as a whole. The final section introduces the contents of the ensuing chapters.

**Representations of Kiyozawa**

Before turning to the story of how Kiyozawa’s life and teachings became orthodoxy, it is of course necessary to know something about his life and teachings. Kiyozawa’s life and teachings have already been extensively documented and analyzed. Sifting through such scholarship, one immediately confronts a polarization of viewpoints. Ienaga Saburō judges Kiyozawa’s Seishinshugi movement a “fleeting but splendid experiment for the modernization of Buddhism” (1965, 25). By contrast, Winston Davis concludes, “aside from his openness to modernist scholarship, it is difficult to see what is so ‘modern’ about his general position” (1992, 166). Mark Blum describes Seishinshugi as an “idealist[ic] shelter(s) against the storm of politically rationalized ethics pervading Japan at the dawn of its modern imperialistic era” (1988, 80). By contrast, Tamura Enchō characterized Seishinshugi as politically “playing a reactionary role” (SRS, vol. 1: 109). Yasutomi Shin’ya views Kiyozawa as “one of the first modern examples of a creative return to Shinran’s teachings,” including Shinran’s dōbō
egalitarian ideal (2006, 115). By contrast, Akamatsu Tesshin states emphatically that Kiyozawa cannot be recognized as sharing the same faith or social views as Shinran (SRS, vol. 1: 559-560).

One could try to wade through these contradictory opinions, identifying biases, separating out facts from interpretation, and pursuing the most balanced, objective account possible. Relatively balanced accounts are available. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is more to the point to work in the opposite direction—highlighting the imbalances and personal agendas present in the literature on Kiyozawa. That is because this dissertation is fundamentally concerned with how certain representations of Kiyozawa came to be enshrined as orthodoxy within the Ōtani organization, rather than with the objective truth about Kiyozawa’s life and thought.

From the time of his death up to the present, Kiyozawa has been the object of an unceasing production of representations—narratives, recollections, portraits, biographies, commentaries, novels, critiques, translations, hymns, statues, theatrical performances, documentaries, ritual paraphernalia, and tourist memorabilia. In this section, I categorize

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13 For the most thorough and balanced accounts available in English, see Johnston and Fasan’s unpublished dissertations. For a more succinct published account, see Blum’s essay in Blum and Rhode (2011). For the most thorough and balanced accounts in Japanese, see Yoshida (1986) and Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo (2004b).

14 A portrait of Kiyozawa was commissioned immediately following his death, a copy of which still hangs in the main assembly hall at Ōtani University; in addition to foreign language translations, Kiyozawa’s writings were also translated into modern Japanese by Hashimoto and Imamura (Hashimoto 1970; Kiyozawa 2001); a hymn for Kiyozawa was composed by Akegarasu, depicting him as the reincarnation of Śākyamuni, that is still chanted at memorial services for Kiyozawa at Saihōji temple (Tanida 2005); the
written representations of Kiyozawa into seven roughly chronological groupings, summarizing trends and introducing representative examples. This will serve to introduce the reader more fully to Kiyozawa and his world while drawing attention to the long history of polarizing discourses that have circulated around ambiguities in his identity: Was he politically radical or conservative? Was he a modern-day Shinran or a Westernized heretic? Kiyozawa’s short life and sparse collection of writings have lent themselves to a great diversity of interpretations, which inevitably reflect the beliefs, values, and aspirations of their authors.

Memorialization

Within a month of Kiyozawa’s death, the journal Seishinkai became filled with a profusion of writings about and by Kiyozawa. These included biographical accounts, transcriptions of his diaries and letters, accounts of being inspired by Kiyozawa, and reports on memorial services. A list of titles of all the articles about Kiyozawa printed in Seishinkai from July 1903 through July 1909 would fill several pages. Far and away, the most active contributors to this literary production were Akegarasu Haya 明鳥敏 (1877-1954) and Andō Shūichi 安藤州. The other types of representations listed will be discussed in detail in the dissertation.
Akegarasu was one of Kiyozawa’s foremost followers who went on to a prominent career as writer, popular preacher, and Head of Sect Affairs (shūmu sōchō) from 1951-1952. Andō went on to study Chinese philosophy. Akegarasu and Andō were both lifelong devotees of Kiyozawa, but due to a shorter followership under Kiyozawa, Andō’s role in the Seishinshugi movement has been much less acknowledged than Akegarasu’s.

For Kiyozawa’s followers, June became a time of reflecting on and interpreting Kiyozawa’s life and teachings. Each June 6th, they gathered at Kiyozawa’s temple, Shinshū University, and elsewhere to conduct religious services in his memory. These events were often called “Rōsenkai 蠟扇会” (December fan meetings) to commemorate Kiyozawa’s “Rōsenki” diary, in which he details his struggle to attain faith in the midst of illness. On special years, such as the third and seventh anniversary years in 1905 and 1909, especially elaborate events were held. In June 1909, followers gathered at his temple in Ōhama for three days of lectures, all of which were subsequently published in an extended special issue of Seishinkai. As a preface

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15 Akegarasu authored articles using his real name and also using a pen name Himu 非無. Other notably active contributors included Inoue Bunchū, Tada Kanae, Nanjō Bun’yū, Hitomi Chūjirō, and Inaba Masamaru. Sasaki Gesshō, Soga Ryōjin, and Kaneko Daiei—the main characters in this dissertation’s narrative—wrote surprisingly little about Kiyozawa in this very early period.

16 On Andō’s thought and role in the early Seishinshugi movement, see Yamamoto (2011, 149-54).

17 “December Fan” was also the pen name that Kiyozawa used during this period. With this phrase, Kiyozawa expressed the uselessness of his efforts, just as a fan is useless in the month of December. According to Shin teachings, the attainment of true faith in Other Power (tariki) requires acknowledgment of the uselessness of one’s own “self power” (jiriki).

18 Funeral services held immediately after Kiyozawa’s death counted as the first year. Thus, the 7-year anniversary of his death was celebrated in 1909.
to that issue, a brief biography of Kiyozawa’s life is given, which provides a window on how
Kiyozawa’s significance had been distilled by his followers to that point. Akegarasu was the
journal’s chief editor, so we might attribute the biography’s composition to him.\textsuperscript{19} The
following is a full translation of that biography:

Reverend Kiyo

zawa Manshi was born on June 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1863 in Nagoya.\textsuperscript{20} He was the eldest
son of the feudal retainer Tokunaga Eisoku. In 1878, he left home to take the tonsure,
and entered Kyoto Ikuei School. In November 1881, he was selected by the Ōtani
denomination Honganji temple to go study in Tokyo, and he entered the university
preparatory school. In July 1887, he graduated from the philosophy department of the
liberal arts college. While in school, he was always at the top of his class. In September
of the same year, he entered the graduate school while also serving as an instructor at
the First Higher School, the Philosophy Academy, and elsewhere. In September 1888, he
became the principal of Kyoto Middle School by order of the main temple. At this time,
Reverend made a big decision. He resolved to sacrifice himself for the sake of religious
education. This year, Kiyozawa and Yasuko married.

During this period, he lectured on philosophy and religious philosophy at the
Takakura Seminary.\textsuperscript{21} Eventually, by September 1891, he had an emotional
breakthrough. He shed the Western-style clothing he had been wearing up until then
and began to wear white priestly robes; separated from his wife and children; stopped
eating meat; and zealously pursued the way. At the end of 1893, he developed a lung
illness. Following the recommendations of his friends, he declared, “From today
forward, I entrust myself to all of you,” and began convalescence in Tarumi. At this
time, he carefully read the \textit{Four Āgamas}. He also began eating meat and seeing his wife
and children again. In September 1896, recognizing flaws in the head temple’s
administration, he strategized together with Inaba Masamaru, Imagawa Kakushin,
Tsukimi Kakuryō, Kiyokawa Enjō, and Inoue Bunchū, and developed plans for reforming
the denomination. In October, they published \textit{Kyōkai jigen}, professing their opinions and

\textsuperscript{19} For details on the history of the \textit{Seishinkai} journal, see Hōzōkan (1986).
\textsuperscript{20} For the sake of clarity, dates are given according to the Western calendar. In the original text, the date
is given as “the third year of the Bunkyū era.”
\textsuperscript{21} The Takakura Seminary was the traditional center of priestly education within the Ōtani denomination
since the Tokugawa period. See Chapter Three for further discussion of it in relation to the modern
Shinshū University.
rallying people far and wide. Their cause advanced for awhile, but by summer, it came to an end. In spring of 1898, he retired to Ōhama. During this period, he took personal cultivation as his task, and he was deeply inspired by his reading of Epictetus.

In spring of 1899, he went to Tokyo and became the tutor of the Ōtani denomination’s future Chief Abbot while also providing guidance to young seekers of faith. In spring of 1900, he founded the Kōkōdō. In January of the following year, together with Tada Kanae, Sasaki Gesshō, and Akegarasu Haya, he published the journal Seishinkai, proclaiming Seishinshugi and advocating Absolute Other Power faith. In 1901, he was appointed an elder of the denomination. In October, Shinshū University was relocated to Tokyo, and Reverend became its president. In November of 1902, he resigned, returning to his home town of Ōhama and caring for his illness. On June 6th, 1903, at one o’clock in the morning, he finally passed away quietly. He was 41 years old. Reverend had four children. His eldest son, third child, and wife all died of illness one after another before Reverend did.

Among Reverend’s writings are Seishin kōwa, Bukkyō kōwa, Shūyō jikan, Zangeroku, and Shākyō tetsugaku gaikotsu. The latter book was translated into English and transmitted abroad. Also, among the works he authored together with various of his followers are Seishin-shugi, Zoku seishin-shugi, Bukkyō no shinkō, and Reikai no ijin. These are all being eagerly read by the public as books of faith.

Today, six years since the passing of Reverend, those who revere his instructions are increasing in number, and many are holding gatherings by the name of Rōsenkai or Rokunichikai to discuss the way as fellow practitioners. In this way, virtuous influence is increasingly spreading in the world, widely enabling salvation and peace of mind in the present and future. This we cannot stop deeply contemplating with joy.

Compared to later accounts, this short biography is distinct in a number of ways. First, one common trope in later Kiyozawa representations is missing here: of the “three sutras” (sanbukyō 三部経) purportedly discovered by Kiyozawa, only the Āgamas and Epictetus are

22 “Kōkōdō 浩浩恫” was the name given to the communal residence in Tokyo in which Kiyozawa and his followers lived.

23 According to the Western way of counting, he would have been 39 years old. According to the Japanese way of counting, he would have been 40 years old. His birthday was only twenty days away, which may account for why the author rounded his age up to 41.
mentioned. Kiyozawa’s reading of the Tannishō—or of any Shin scripture, for that matter—is unmentioned. This omission arguably points toward the historical fact that the Tannishō was not nearly as formative a text for Kiyozawa as later tradition would have it. This indicates a gap between Kiyozawa and the Shin tradition that later interpreters would either critique or struggle to fill.

Second, this account is notable for the way it tries to depict Kiyozawa in harmonious relationship with the Ōtani organization. Kiyozawa’s 1901 appointment as “elder” (kishuku 善宿) is a fact receiving little or no attention in later accounts. Kiyozawa was one of four individuals appointed to the Office of Elders (kishukyoku), an advisory body called upon by the Chief Abbot for input on important administrative issues (Kashiwahara 1986, 108-109). Also receiving emphasis here are Kiyozawa’s decision to “sacrifice himself for religious education,” his lecturing at the Takakura Seminary, and his tutoring of the future Chief Abbot. Notably downplayed are the extreme tensions provoked by his reform movement, resulting in a punishment of “name removal” (jomei 除名) (i.e. loss of priestly status). Here, too, was an ambiguity in Kiyozawa’s identity that later interpreters would struggle to clarify. In some cases, he seems loyal to the sect’s traditions and integrated into its organization; in other cases, he seemed to be a revolutionary reformer and outsider. Depending on one’s perspective, either of

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24 For the most recent and most thorough study of Kiyozawa’s relation to the Tannishō, see the forthcoming article by Nishimoto Yūsetsu in Yamamoto and Ōmi (2016).
these two identities could be a cause for praise or for critique. In 1909, Kiyozawa’s followers emphasized Kiyozawa’s harmonious relationship with the sect. By the 1960s, they would be presenting him as a model for protest and reform.

Finally, it is interesting to note how this short biography ends with a long list of Kiyozawa’s writings. In point of fact, Kiyozawa did not publish many writings at all. Shūkyō tetsugaku gaikotsu (Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion) is the only completed monograph that Kiyozawa wrote, and it is a short work, running only 42 pages in its present English version (KMZ, vol. 1: 109-150). The other writings attributed to him are transcriptions of his diaries (as in Zangeroku) or transcriptions of lectures that have been made into collections (as in Seishin kōwa and Bukkyō kōwa). The works “authored together with various of his followers,” which include one or more of his articles, were compiled by his followers. The majority of “Kiyozawa’s writings” had to be manufactured by his followers. From the very beginning, Kiyozawa’s followers worked to establish a legacy for their master through publications, biographical accounts, and memorial services.

Although the frequency and intensity of Kiyozawa’s memorialization decreased after 1909, there were still regular services held for him each June, with major events held for his 25-year, 33-year, and 50-year death anniversaries, and for the 100-year anniversaries of his birth and death (in 1927, 1935, 1952, 1963, and 2002). Publications produced on the occasion of these events represent the most long-running and prolific set of writings about Kiyozawa. Produced mostly by Kiyozawa’s loyal followers (both direct followers and second- or third-generation
followers), these writings are motivated by a deep reverence for Kiyozawa and his teachings, which year by year became increasingly sanctified.

**Social Critique**

While still alive, Kiyozawa and the Seishinshugi movement were the target of several critical essays written by prominent Buddhist modernizers of the time. The primary point of critique was in Kiyozawa and Seishinshugi’s apparent lack of concern with society and national improvement. One such critique came in 1902 from Sakaino Kōyō 境野黄洋 (1871-1933), a leading member of the New Buddhism (Shin Bukkyō 新仏教) movement (SKM, vol. 1: 21-28 1902). According to Ōtani Eiichi, the values of the New Buddhism movement can be summarized with reference to:

> ...great importance attached to an inward, subjective sense of “faith,” which must be the basis for “social improvement”; a posture of criticism and study with an attitude of “free investigation”; rejection of religious superstition and the merely outward institutions and rituals of traditional Buddhism; and independence from political power. (Ōtani 2014, 72-73)

Despite considerable overlap between the New Buddhism movement and the Seishinshugi movement, and despite Sakaino’s admiration for Kiyozawa as an individual, he critiqued Seishinshugi for emphasizing feelings over intellect. This, he claimed, would lead people to find satisfaction in their present situation rather than become positive, active members of society. The critique that Seishinshugi promoted subjective peace of mind to the detriment of social
engagement was repeated elsewhere.\textsuperscript{25} Even Soga Ryōjin 曽我量深 (1875-1971), who went on to become one of the leading Shin thinkers of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and one of Kiyozawa’s most loyal followers, initially critiqued Kiyozawa on similar grounds.\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{Doctrinal Critique}

In addition to these social critiques, which often came from outside of the Ōtani organization, there were various doctrinal critiques of Kiyozawa that came from within the Ōtani organization. Most notably, the Kanrensha 貫練社 (later renamed the Kanrenkai 貫練会) organization of traditionalist scholars, founded in 1880, was established specifically to combat the influence of Western values and education. The main critique leveled by Kanrenkai scholars against Kiyozawa and his associates was in regard to their apparent failure to respect tradition, especially the tradition of sectarian studies (\textit{shūgaku 宗学}) developed during the Tokugawa period. In other words, they faulted Kiyozawa for approaching Shin scriptures with an attitude

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\textsuperscript{25} One example is a critique published by Chikazumi Jōkan, the Ōtani priest who went on to lead the Kyūdō Kaikan 求道会館 movement in Tokyo. Chikazumi was critical of Kiyozawa for his failure to account for the Shin doctrine of the “ultimate and conventional two truths.” This doctrine had been interpreted to mean that Shin followers, in addition to their religious duties (“ultimate truth”), have a duty to be loyal citizens of the state (“conventional truth”). Although Chikazumi’s is a more theologically based critique, the concern about social ethics is the same. Kiyozawa responded to Chikazumi by writing “Negotiating Religious Morality and Common Morality” (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 77-91). On early critiques of Seishinshugi, see Blum and Rhodes (2011, 43-48), Johnston (1972, 255-66), Yoshida (1986, 26), and Fukushima (2003, 40-45).

\textsuperscript{26} For Soga’s critiques, see SKM (vol. 1: 1-19). Soga summarizes his first point of critique by saying, “Essentially, in turning its negative attitude (\textit{shōkyokuteki taidō}) exclusively toward the past, Seishinshugi may be extremely effective as a principle of acceptance (\textit{akirame-shugi}) in relation to past failures or evilness. However, as a guide for future behavior, one must say that its value is practically zero” (ibid., 3). For further discussion, see Honda (1998, 13-19).
of “free inquiry” and a lack of concern with interpretive precedents established by past scholars (Yoshida 1986, 130-132). Kiyozawa and his followers’ responses to these accusations and their defense of a new approach to sectarian study are discussed in Chapter Two.27

The spirit of these Kanrenkai critiques was taken up in the 1920s and 1930s by one of Kiyozawa’s very own followers, Tada Kanae 多田鼎 (1875-1937). Tada, along with Akegarasu Haya and Sasaki Gesshō 佐々月樵 (1875-1926), was widely viewed as one of Kiyozawa’s three foremost followers.28 In 1914, Tada experienced a crisis of faith that led him to part ways from the Kōkōdō group and eventually publish critiques of Kiyozawa and his followers (Kaku 2005). Tada’s critique of Kaneko Daiei’s writings, in connection with the latter’s 1928 heresy case, is discussed in Chapter Three. Here I will briefly summarize the contents of his most detailed critique of Kiyozawa, presented in a July 1933 article published in the journal Gendai Bukkyō.29

Tada’s article begins with a rather sympathetic biography of Kiyozawa and discussion of Seishinshugi thought, concluding that Kiyozawa took an important pioneering step forward

27 Besides Kanrenkai scholars, members of the Muga-Ai 無我愛 (Selfless Love) movement, founded by Ōtani priest Itō Shōshin in Tokyo in 1905, also came to critique Seishinshugi as not in line with the teachings of Hōnen and Shinran (Johnston 1972, 255).
28 The notion of Kiyozawa having three foremost followers is based on the fact that Tada, Akegarasu, and Sasaki (along with Kiyozawa) were the initial residents in the Kōkōdō and the the initial editor, manager, and treasurer for the Seishinkai journal respectively.
29 Although Tada’s crisis of faith and parting from the Kōkōdō group occurred in 1914, he did continue to memorialize Kiyozawa, writing the oft-quoted “Kiyozawa sensei shōden” (Short Biography of Reverend Kiyozawa) for Kiyozawa’s 25th anniversary held in 1927 (published in 1928 by Kanshōsha). It seems that doctrinal disagreement with Kaneko during the latter’s heresy incident in 1928 may have caused Tada to further distance himself from the Kōkōdō group and publish a critique of Kiyozawa in 1933.
in reviving Shin faith in the modern world (SKM, vol. 3: 166). However, he then asserts that Kiyozawa’s understanding of Shin teachings nonetheless failed to accord with that of true Shin teachings as taught by Shinran. Tada critiques Kiyozawa on four points: 1) overestimation of his personal experiences along with an underestimation of the need to rely upon Śākyamuni, Shinran, and their writings; 2) misunderstanding of salvation as pertaining to fulfillment and freedom in this life, rather than the granting of a wholly new life in another world; 3) affirmation of the unsatisfactory aspects of this present world due to confusion over the distinction between the defiled world (shaba 婆婆) and the Pure Land; and 4) over-emphasis on the need for personal cultivation (shūyō 修養) due to a failure to understand Shin teachings as a sudden path rather than a gradual one. One additional point of Tada’s critique worth mentioning is his insinuation that Kiyozawa and his followers were unduly influenced by their study of Western philosophy: he characterizes Kiyozawa’s conception of Amida Buddha as “the God of early modern Western philosophers,” and he accuses Kiyozawa and his followers of imagining Amida’s Other Power “each according to his own philosophical viewpoint and religious feelings” (ibid., 167-68). Tada concludes by attacking Kiyozawa’s followers for spreading this mistaken Seishinshugi thought, and by suggesting that Kiyozawa, residing now in the other world, must be thinking the same thing.  

30 Tada specifically lists the names of seven of Kiyozawa’s followers: Sasaki Gesshō, Akegarasu Haya, Soga Ryōjin, Andō Shūichi, Kaneko Daiei, Takamitsu Daisen, and Fujiwara Tetsujō. Takamitsu and Fujiwara
Tada’s critique is representative of the traditionalist stance toward Kiyozawa, according to which Kiyozawa’s interpretations of Shin teachings are too reliant on his own experiences and his study of Western philosophy, and consequently too willing to depart from literalist readings of Shin scriptures in favor of symbolic readings of “rebirth in the Pure Land” as possible in the present world.

Sectarian Scholarship

The first extensive scholarship on Kiyozawa’s life and teachings was conducted by Akegarasu Haya follower Nishimura Kengyō 西村見暁 (1915-2003) during the Fifteen Year War (1931-1945).31 Nishimura began his biography of Kiyozawa in 1940 or so as a student at Tokyo Imperial University, later continuing the work as a graduate student.32 Completion of the project was delayed by the war and by Nishimura’s involvement in the project to publish Kiyozawa’s collected works (1953-1957). His biography, published in 1951, remains the longest and most detailed account of Kiyozawa’s life. Written from the perspective of a second-

were close associates of Akegarasu who were also popular preachers in the Kaga region. On their connections to Seishinshugi and role in propagating Shin modernism widely, see Fukushima Kazuto’s “Seishin-shugi’ no chihō-tekitenkai: Kaga ni okeru ianjin jiken o chūshin ni” in SKM (vol. 1).

31 “Fifteen Year War” is a blanket term now used to describe Japan’s wars that began with the Manchurian Incident in September 1931 and ended with unconditional surrender to the Allied Powers in August 1945. Other terms used to describe these wars include the the Greater East Asian War, the Pacific War, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and of course World War II. The term “Fifteen Year War” is preferred by many historians for highlighting the fact that Japan’s war with China actually began well prior to its 1937 full-scale invasion of China.

32 In the postscript to Kiyozawa Manshi sensei, written in November 1950, Nishimura speaks of working on this project “for ten years.” At Tokyo University, he worked under Miyamoto Shōson 宮本正尊, a scholar of Indian Buddhism who published an article on Kiyozawa in 1967 (Dōbō gakuhō, no. 14-15: 10-22).
generation follower, Nishimura clearly intends to promote Kiyozawa as a paragon of true Shin faith, and it is in this sense that I label his (and others’) work as “sectarian.”

Nishimura’s work is organized chronologically into six chapters according to the six different pen names Kiyozawa had taken. It is heavily lopsided in favor of Kiyozawa’s “Rōsen” (December Fan) years (1898-1902), devoting more than twice as many pages to this chapter as to any other. This is the period during which Kiyozawa read *Discourses of Epictetus*, recorded his spiritual struggles in his *December Fan* diary, and moved to Tokyo to found the Kōkōdō and promote Seishinshugi together with his followers. Nishimura’s biography thus ingrained the perception that the essence of Kiyozawa’s faith and understanding is found in these later years—not in his earlier efforts in philosophical inquiry, ascetic practice, or institutional reform.  

In 1956, Kiyozawa and his thought were officially endorsed by the Ōtani administration for the first time in an official announcement called the “Shūmon hakusho 宗門白書” (hereafter “Sect White Paper”). As a result of this endorsement, together with changes in personnel, the sect’s Kyōka Kenkyūjo (Propagation Research Institute) took up the task of researching Kiyozawa’s life and thought, culminating in their 1957 publication of *Kiyozawa

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33 The introduction to Nishimura’s biography also reinforces this perception by focusing on three of Kiyozawa’s writings—his last letter to Akegarasu and the essays “Negotiating Religious Morality and Common Morality” and “My Faith”—that were all written at the very end of his life.

Yoshida Kyūichi’s biography of Kiyozawa (discussed below) is more balanced in its coverage, but it also promotes the same perception. For example, Yoshida downplays the importance of Kiyozawa’s
Manshi kenkyū, a volume of more than 500 pages comprising images of Kiyozawa and his writings, articles by seven authors, a chronology of his life, and an index. The first chapter of the first article by Sasaki Hasumaro (1896-1978) is titled “Successor of Shinran.” Sasaki argues that just as Shinran inherited Hōnen’s teachings not by parroting his words but by speaking of the true teachings that lay behind those words, so, too, did Kiyozawa faithfully transmit Shinran’s teachings in his own words, having discovered the truth within himself. According to Sasaki, this is what enabled Kiyozawa to part with the widely held but incorrect view that salvation is essentially a future concern.

Following Kiyozawa Manshi kenkyū, many articles and books were written about Kiyozawa by Ōtani priests belonging to the modernist camp, but perhaps the most prominent and influential was Terakawa Shunshō’s Kiyozawa Manshi ron (1973). Terakawa was a student of Kiyozawa followers Soga, Kaneko Daiei 金子大栄 (1881-1976), and Yasuda Rijin 安田理深 (1900-1982). After Soga became the president of Ōtani University (the later name of Shinshū University) in 1961, a lecture course on Kiyozawa was established called “Discourses on Kiyozawa Manshi” (“Kiyozawa Manshi Ron”). After being hired as a professor at the university in 1966, Terakawa took over the course, eventually publishing a work by the same title. Terakawa’s main agenda is to establish Kiyozawa’s belonging in the Shin tradition, both

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34 Yasutomi Shin’ya relates that prior to the publication of Kiyozawa Manshi kenkyū, a conference was held in which the various contributors presented their research. Seated in the front row of the audience were Soga Ryōjin, Kaneko Daiei, Nishitani Keiji, and others, listening and offering advice to the presenters (Kyōka kenkyū no. 151, p. 18).
doctrinally and institutionally. His preface underlines Kiyozawa’s devotion to and interest in
the Ōtani organization, characterizing him as “the first person since Rennyo to fundamentally
question the nature of the religious organization” (Terakawa 1973, 24). His first chapter then
immediately turns to the critique by Tada and others that Kiyozawa’s Shin faith was a product
of Western influences and not in line with traditional Shin teachings. Terakawa’s rebuttal of
these charges largely hinges on the presumption that Kiyozawa rediscovered and was deeply
inspired by the Tannishō (1973, 32-43). Since Terakawa, sectarian scholarship on Kiyozawa has
continued up to the present, most productively by Yasutomi Shin’ya.

Characteristic of this sectarian scholarship on Kiyozawa is the attempt to connect
Kiyozawa with Shinran and the Shin tradition. In the process, various other aspects of his
identity, including his philosophical writings and his ascetic practices, are downplayed or
ignored.

Non-Sectarian Scholarship

In the postwar period, the study of Japanese history tended to be oriented toward the
question of Japanese imperialism, both seeking out the causes for Japan’s disastrous wars and
uncovering examples of those who resisted (see Gluck 1993). Thus, when scholars outside the
Ōtani organization became interested in Kiyozawa from the late 1950s, they tended to focus on

35 For example, Terakawa places passages from Kiyozawa’s “My Faith” and Shinran’s Tannishō side-by-
side and then comments, “We can certainly hear a harmonious resonance between this statement of our
sect’s founder and that confession of Manshi’s.” For further discussion, see Fukushima (2003, 36-38).
his social and political significance, rather than his doctrinal standing vis-à-vis Shinran. While many of these scholars praised Kiyozawa as a bastion of political resistance, others critiqued him as politically reactionary.

Scholarship on Kiyozawa by non-Ōtani authors only emerged after he was brought into the spotlight by the Ōtani administration’s 1956 “Sect White Paper.”36 A year and a half after that announcement, Buddhist studies scholar Tamura Enchō 田村圓澄 published an article entitled “Ningen aku no ishiki to kokka taisei” (Awareness of Human Evil and the National Polity) that included analysis of Kiyozawa and Seishinshugi. He followed this with a more extended analysis in his 1958 article “‘Seishin-shugi’ no genkai” (The Limits of “Seishinshugi”). Tamura first notes the limited social scope of the Seishinshugi movement, arguing that it was popular primarily among young, urban intellectuals (SKM, vol. 1: 103). He then casts doubt on the orthodoxy of Kiyozawa’s interpretation of Shin teachings by suggesting that Kiyozawa’s emphasis on the evilness (zaiaku 罪悪) of human nature may derive from the influence of

36 One exception is Masutani Fumio’s Meiji Kōsōden (Biographies of Eminent Monks from Meiji), published in 1935. Masutani provides short biographies of and commentaries on Fukuda Gyōkai, Shimaji Mokurai, Hara Tanzan, Shaku Unshō, Nanjō Bun’yū, Inoue Enryō, Kiyozawa Manshi, and Watanabe Kaikyoku. Masutani’s 19-page account of Kiyozawa relates basic biographical details; discusses Kiyozawa’s famous “reflection” (kaisō 回想) passage; reproduces a long passage by Tada Kanae explaining Seishinshugi thought; and favorably compares Kiyozawa to Fukuda Gyōkai, Shaku Unshō, and Nanjō Bun’yū as someone whose study of Buddhist teachings was grounded in personal seeking. Although Masutani’s account is rather thin and uncritical, it does show that Kiyozawa was well-known outside of the Ōtani organization at this time.
Christianity and its teaching of original sin. For evidence of this, he points to a letter in which Kiyozawa mentions reading Ernest Renan’s *Vie de Jésus*, and also to an English-language pocket edition of the Bible in Kiyozawa’s library containing underlined passages (ibid., 105). Tamura even suggests that later writers, including Kurita Hyakuzō, Nishida Kitarō, Watsuji Tetsurō, and Tanabe Hajime, may have emphasized awareness of evilness in their discussions of Shinran due to Kiyozawa’s influence. Tamura’s article then addresses the limits of Seishinshugi in regard to politics. He acknowledges that the inward turn of Kiyozawa and his followers in search of independence from the state and its morality can be seen as a form of protest. However, he argues that in approaching economic disparities and social discrimination as problems to be resolved through changes in one’s subjective attitude, Seishinshugi ended up doing little more than affirming the present social order (ibid., 109).

The first major work to appear on Kiyozawa by a non-sectarian scholar was Yoshida Kyūichi’s 1961 *Kiyozawa Manshi*. Two thirds of Yoshida’s work is a biography that remains one of the most balanced and reliable accounts of Kiyozawa’s life. The final third of the work is

37 “Zaiaku 罪悪” is a compound word made of one character meaning “wrongdoing” or “offense” (zai) and another meaning “evil” or “unwholesomeness” (aku). Discussion of “zaiaku” figures prominently both in the Pure Land sutras and in Shinran’s writings (SSJ 3, 173).

38 Tamura gives the title of Renan’s 1863 work in Japanese (キリスト伝 Kirisuto den). This would suggest that Kiyozawa was using a Japanese translation—although I have yet to corroborate this. Although Kiyozawa apparently read Renan’s work, it does not appear in the list of books Kiyozawa had in his personal library (KMZ, vol. 9: 337-379).

39 Yoshida graduated from the Buddhist studies department of Taishō University in 1941. He went on to become a professor at Nihon Shakai Jigyō Daigaku (Japan College of Social Work) and other colleges. As far as I know, he was never a priest and had no strong sectarian affiliation.
devoted to an analysis of Kiyozawa’s thought. Compared to Nishimura, Yoshida’s work makes more of an effort to situate Kiyozawa historically in relation to Meiji society and the larger Buddhist world, and it is more inclusive of critical perspectives on Kiyozawa. Yoshida is not particularly concerned with the question of Kiyozawa’s alignment with Shinran and the Shin tradition. Rather, he is motivated by a concern that dominates most of his Buddhist studies scholarship—the issue of Buddhist social ethics and action. In Yoshida’s analysis, behind Kiyozawa’s emphasis on individual subjectivity and apparent turning away from society lay a positive force for social change. According to Yoshida, Kiyozawa’s thought pointed the way toward a standpoint of total autonomy from the state, and it also challenged the rising ideology of materialism (busshitsu bannō shugi). In Yoshida’s opinion, Kiyozawa’s followers failed to uphold and implement the activist qualities inherent in Kiyozawa’s thought, and instead became preoccupied with abstract philosophizing (1986, 181-185).

Following Tamura and Yoshida’s works, many other prominent scholars and writers directed their attention to Kiyozawa in the 1960s and early 1970s. Among these are Buddhist studies scholar Kashiwahara Yūsen, historian Ienaga Saburō, philosopher Hashimoto Mineo, historical novelist Shiba Ryōtarō, religious studies scholar Wakimoto Tsuneya, and Buddhist
All of these scholars and writers gave extremely positive appraisals of Kiyozawa’s intellectual and social significance.

By contrast, in the late 1970s and 1980s, a surge of scholarship critical of Kiyozawa arose from historians at Ryūkoku University, the school affiliated with the Honganji denomination of the Shin sect. Akamatsu’s 1976 “Kindai Nihon shisōshi ni okeru seishin-shugi no isō: Kiyozawa Manshi no shinkō to sono kansei” (The Seishinshugi Phase in the History of Modern Japanese Thought: Kiyozawa Manshi’s Faith and Its Pitfalls) is representative.

Akamatsu accepts that Kiyozawa’s introspection and elevation of religious faith above all other obligations had the theoretical effect of relativizing the imperial system. However, practically speaking, according to Akamatsu, Kiyozawa’s oppositional stance toward aspects of the social order did not lead him to do anything about it. The nature of Kiyozawa’s faith was to find contentment in the midst of present reality rather than treat present reality as a stage for action (SKM, vol. 1: 536-537, 558-559). Akamatsu goes on to claim that Kiyozawa’s faith cannot therefore be equivalent to Shinran’s, for Shinran’s notion of faith demanded “social action” (shakaiteki jissen) (ibid., 559-560). Thus, although Akamatsu presents his research as following in the “historical positivist” methods of Yoshida (ibid., 533), it can be deemed “sectarian,” and his Honganji affiliation may partly explain his critical stance toward Kiyozawa and his Ōtani-affiliated admirers. Akamatsu and his Ryūkoku University colleague Fukushima Hirotaka

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40 On Hashimoto and Shiba’s interest in Kiyozawa, see Yamamoto (2014, 11-16).
compiled a 3-volume collection of writings on Kiyozawa, including critiques by them and others (SKM). Such critiques eventually provoked responses from Ōtani-affiliated scholars, most notably Hisaki Yukio’s *Kenshō Kiyozawa Manshi hihan* (Examination of Critiques of Kiyozawa Manshi) (1995).

**Contemporary Scholarship**

The celebration of Kiyozawa’s 100-year death anniversary in 2002 along with the 2002-2003 publication of a third edition of his collected works by a mainstream (as opposed to Shin-affiliated) publisher, Iwanami Shoten, led many new scholars to take an interest in Kiyozawa. This recent wave of scholarship on Kiyozawa echoes many of the same themes of past scholarship while also pointing in some new directions.

Imamura Hitoshi, a philosopher known for translating and analyzing the works of modern French philosophers including Althusser, Baudrillard, and Bourdieu, published two books on Kiyozawa in 2003 and 2004. Imamura’s analyses are notable for their concentration on Kiyozawa’s earlier philosophical writings as opposed to his Seishinshugi writings. In *Kiyozawa Manshi no shisō* (The Thought of Kiyozawa Manshi) (2003), Imamura begins by highlighting Kiyozawa’s consistent preference for philosophical language rather than traditional Shin doctrinal language (e.g. “Absolute Infinite” (zettai mugensha) in place of “Amida Buddha”). According to Imamura, in approaching Kiyozawa as a modern-day interpreter of Shinran’s thought, Kiyozawa’s sectarian followers have failed to appreciate Kiyozawa’s basic identity as a
philosopher (2003, 16-18). Imamura evaluates Kiyozawa as having extracted the philosophy submerged within Buddhist teachings and placed that in dynamic conversation with Western thought, resulting in unprecedented solutions to Western philosophical problems. For example, Imamura discusses Kiyozawa's argument that the attempt to fulfill one's “infinite responsibility” toward family, the state, and all living beings inevitably leads to a personal realization of one's own limits and a new existence of living within and entrusting everything to the Absolute Infinite. The resulting standpoint of “no responsibility” paradoxically enables the practice of “infinite responsibility.” Imamura argues that Kierkegaard and Levinas had addressed similar questions, but that Kiyozawa's solution is a unique one opening up new ground for further philosophical inquiry (ibid., 21-29).

Sueki Fumihiko, a prolific scholar of ancient and medieval Japanese Buddhism, turned his attention to the modern period in a series of works published from 2004. These studies, which accord prominent place to Kiyozawa, argue that Buddhist thought and thinkers played a more central role in modern Japanese intellectual history than has previously been acknowledged. The influence of Buddhism has been obscured, Sueki argues, by historians’ overriding interest in political thought together with their supposition that religious thought is an obstacle to history rather than a creative aspect of history (2004-2010, vol. 1: 6-8). Sueki places Kiyozawa in a group with Natsume Sōseki, Nishida Kitarō, and others, who all sought to theorize the nature of the self and the self's relationship to society and the state. In the previous era’s hierarchically-organized society, Sueki explains, individuals had understood
themselves as being “among the people” (hito no aida); in modern society, individuals come to understand themselves as “selves” (jiga) living opposite “others” (tsha) (2004-2010, vol. 2: 23). Sueki argues that Kiyozawa made a huge step forward in pioneering the mid-Meiji period’s “introspective turn” in search of the nature of the self, and he views Kiyozawa’s elevation of religion above all other social and political concerns as a powerful repudiation of the pressures of state morality. Yet he ultimately concludes that the end result of Kiyozawa’s program is the obliteration of the self within a religious other (i.e. within Amida Buddha), which disables any possibility of recognizing and responsibly engaging with others in society. Sueki furthermore suggests that Kiyozawa and his followers’ notion of obliteration of the self within the Buddha is connected to the wider issue of Japan’s failure to recognize and value the autonomy of other Asian nations (ibid., 32-38).

In 2003, Fukushima Eiju, a professor of history at Ōtani University, published Shisōshi to shite no “seishin-shugi” (“Seishinshugi” as Intellectual History), a work that critiques the assumptions underlying past debates over Seishinshugi and models a new approach of treating discourse as historical events rather than as symbols to be interpreted. Fukushima’s critique of past Seishinshugi research, previously elaborated in a 1993 article, is twofold: first, the critique of Kiyozawa for failing to oppose the imperial system is not a useful one because it judges Kiyozawa according to the understanding and values of a later period. At the time, Kiyozawa and the majority of his contemporaries were unconsciously engulfed within that imperial system, unable to recognize and critique it from a distance. Rather than critiquing
Kiyozawa for his unawareness, scholars ought to inquire into the broader causes of that unawareness (Fukushima 1993, 194-95). Second, drawing upon Foucault and others, he notes that scholars simply cannot access the intentions lying behind Kiyozawa’s writings. There is no one way to interpret a text, and key passages in Kiyozawa’s writings can and have been interpreted in polar opposite ways. Rather than continuing to argue over the correct interpretation, scholars ought to inquire into the historical effect of those writings on Kiyozawa’s contemporaries (ibid., 195-197). Fukushima’s 2003 work includes chapters situating Seishinshugi vis-à-vis Fukuzawa Yukichi and new conceptions of “religion”; comparing Seishinshugi to Tokugawa period (1603-1868) sectarian studies; and analyzing the conceptions of gender evident in the Seishinshugi-affiliated women’s journal Katei 家庭 (Home).

Kondō Shuntarō’s Tennōsei kokka to “seishin-shugi”: Kiyozawa Manshi to sono monka (The Imperial State and Seishinshugi: Kiyozawa Manshi and his Followers) (2013) continues in the line of Fukushima and Akamatsu, critiquing Kiyozawa and Seishinshugi for their apparent tendency to affirm present reality just as it is. Kondō’s original contribution is to extend the critique forward to Kiyozawa’s followers in later periods. He documents and analyzes their statements in regard to the Ashio Copper Mine affair (especially in 1902), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), the High Treason Incident (1911), the death of Emperor Meiji (1912), and the Fifteen Year War (1931-1945).

Yamamoto Nobuhiro’s “Seishin-shugi” wa dare no shisō ka (Whose Thought is Seishinshugi?) (2011) is the most highly acclaimed recent work on Kiyozawa and Seishinshugi.
In some ways, Yamamoto continues in the line of postwar sectarian scholarship, praising Kiyozawa and defending him from his critics. Yet his particular defense is built upon a fascinating discovery—that many of the writings published under Kiyozawa’s name may not have been authored by him. First, Yamamoto points out some initial causes for suspicion—that Kiyozawa’s 1899 diary seems similar in tone and content to his early philosophical writings but rather different from a sub-section of his 1901-1903 Seishinkai writings. Differences in tone and content between his early philosophical writings and later Seishinkai writings had long been attributed to a conversion experience that allegedly took place in 1898 in Ōhama when Kiyozawa was reading Epictetus; however, the 1899 diary was written in Tokyo well after that. Next, Yamamoto draws attention to the fact that many of Kiyozawa’s Seishinkai articles are labeled as “composed” (seibun 成文) by his followers. Through a careful analysis of writing style, word choice, and content, Yamamoto persuasively argues that these “composed” articles were substantially edited or wholly created by Kiyozawa’s followers—mostly by Akegarasu and Tada—and that certain other articles not labeled “composed” ought to be viewed with suspicion as well. One of the articles revealed as suspicious is “Shūkyōteki shinnen no hissu jōken” (The Indispensable Conditions for Religious Conviction), which includes the highly controversial passage:

Reaching inner satisfaction is the culmination of religious conviction. In the inner realm, a man discovers that the presence of his wife and children is not a distraction, nor is their loss unbearable if they die. Although he may enjoy eating fish, he does not complain if there is none. He may enjoy wealth, but he is unperturbed by the prospect of poverty... When a person has come this far, he may live a moral life. He may seek
academic knowledge. He may engage in politics or business. He may go fishing or hunting. *When his country is endangered, he may march to war with a rifle on his shoulder.* (Kiyozawa 1984, 23-4; italics added)

As for why Kiyozawa would have allowed his name to be attached to articles written or heavily edited by his followers, Yamamoto points to Kiyozawa’s educational philosophy. According to Yamamoto, Kiyozawa believed that his followers would spiritually mature by expressing and defending their views publicly, but did not care whose name was being attached to any particular view. Following up on this work, Yamamoto and Ōmi are editing a new volume on Kiyozawa to be published by Hōzōkan press in 2016.

In summary, Imamura and Sueki’s works testify to the ongoing interest among non-sectarian scholars in Kiyozawa as a figure with philosophical or historical significance beyond the bounds of the Shin Buddhist world. Meanwhile, scholarship praising Kiyozawa by Ōtani scholars (e.g. Yasutomi Shin’ya and Mizushima Ken’ichi) and critiquing him by Honganji scholars (e.g. Kondō) continues unabated. Finally, Fukushima’s work advances an intellectual history approach that would move beyond the question of Kiyozawa’s beliefs and intentions while Yamamoto’s work pushes back, using careful textual and historical analysis to try to sort out the real Kiyozawa from the false one.

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41 Others non-sectarian scholars who have written on Kiyozawa since 2002 include Takeuchi Seiichi and Fujita Masakatsu.
Foreign Scholarship

Kiyozawa has also become the object of much scholarship outside Japan. As far as I have determined, there exists one non-Japanese author who published on Kiyozawa prior to World War II; a few more beginning in the 1960s; and a considerable number from 2003. This reflects the fact that “modern Buddhism” did not become a popular object of study until recently. It also parallels trends in Japanese writings on Kiyozawa, in which Kiyozawa was largely unknown outside his sect in the wartime and prewar periods; became an object of broad interest following his 1956 revival; and became even more well-known following his 100-year memorial celebrations.

The one foreign author to publish on Kiyozawa in the prewar period was Floyd Shacklock, who collaborated with Tajima Kunji on the 1936 Selected Essays of Kiyozawa Manshi (Kiyozawa 1936). Shacklock was an American Christian missionary living in Japan, who completed his 1937 doctoral thesis on Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. He was directed to Kiyozawa’s writings by the prominent Japanese religious studies scholar Anesaki Masaharu. Sponsored by funds from a memorial gathering held for Kiyozawa by his follower Akegarasu in 1936, Shacklock and Tajima published a large set of translations of Kiyozawa’s key writings, based on the previously published collection Kiyozawa bunshū (Kiyozawa 1928). On the whole, Shacklock attended the Kennedy School of Missions, affiliated with the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. His dissertation, which I have not had a chance to see, is now housed at Columbia University.
the translations are rather inexact and liberal, and there is little in the way of explanatory notes or analysis. However, this remains by far the largest set of translations of Kiyozawa's writings.\footnote{According to WorldCat, Shacklock also published two articles on Japanese Buddhism in the April 1936 and April 1939 issues of the Japan Christian Quarterly, one of which discusses Kiyozawa. I do not have access to these articles at present.}

In the period prior to 2002, the most notable foreign scholarship on Kiyozawa was conducted by Gilbert Johnston. In addition to a number of articles on Kiyozawa, Gilbert Johnston wrote his 1972 Harvard doctoral dissertation on Kiyozawa: “Kiyozawa Manshi’s Buddhist Faith and Its Relation to Modern Japanese Society.” This is a thorough account and balanced treatment that highlights Kiyozawa’s distinctiveness and accomplishments while recognizing his limitations. Unfortunately, it remains unpublished.

Also worthy of mention is Nobuo Haneda, an Ōtani scholar-priest and third-generation follower of Kiyozawa. In 1979, Haneda completed his doctoral dissertation at the University of Wisconsin on the Pure Land thought of 7th century Chinese monk Shandao. In 1984, while teaching at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, he published December Fan, a set of translations of Kiyozawa’s writings together with a short biography (Kiyozawa 1984). Haneda later went on to cofound the Maida Center of Buddhism in Berkeley, California, named after his teacher Maida Shuichi, who was a follower of Akegarasu Haya. Through his writings and
lectures, Haneda has worked to promote modernist understandings of Shin teachings—and knowledge of Maida, Akegarasu, and Kiyozawa—in the United States.

In 2003, English-language scholarship on Kiyozawa expanded a great deal through the *Eastern Buddhist* journal’s special memorial issue on Kiyozawa. This special issue included translations of Japanese articles by Yasutomi Shin’ya on Kiyozawa’s “introspective method,” Fujita Masakatsu on Kiyozawa and Nishida, and Hashimoto Mineo on Kiyozawa and D. T. Suzuki, as well as an article by Mark Blum comparing Kiyozawa to Kierkegaard. Blum went on to co-edit an anthology of modern Shin writings that includes an essay on Kiyozawa and translations of three of his iconic essays (Blum and Rhodes 2011).

In recent years, various foreign scholars have continued to work on Kiyozawa. Most notable are a collection of Spanish and Japanese-language articles on Kiyozawa by Bernat Marti-Orval and a doctoral dissertation on Kiyozawa by Jacques Fasan. Marti-Orval follows in Imamura’s footsteps, studying Kiyozawa as a philosopher. However, in contrast to Imamura’s view that Kiyozawa made use of philosophical language and thought processes to reframe and develop Buddhist ideas, Marti-Orval argues that Kiyozawa’s thought was fundamentally shaped by Western philosophy (Marti-Orval 2011). Fasan’s 2012 dissertation, which also details Kiyozawa’s philosophical influences, is primarily concerned to situate Kiyozawa in relation to broader intellectual trends, such as the idealism of Inoue Enryō and Inoue Tetsujirō and the

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44 Japanese-language versions of all these articles appear in Fujita and Yasutomi (2002).
introspective tendencies of Kitamura Tōkoku, Takayama Chōgyū, and Inoue Tetsujirō. In the process, Fasan advances an intriguing Marxist analysis of Kiyozawa’s “Absolute Infinite” as a metaphysical expression of the “social substance” that came to be perceived with the onset of capitalism. From this perspective, Kiyozawa’s promotion of individual autonomy through submission to the Absolute Infinite represents an alternative to the values of liberal bourgeois civil society promoted by Fukuzawa Yukichi.

Overall, foreign scholarship on Kiyozawa reflects the basic trends in Japanese scholarship on Kiyozawa both chronologically and in terms of content and approach. Certainly the sectarian concern with Kiyozawa’s orthodoxy vis-à-vis Shinran has been less central to this scholarship, but that is not to say that Japanese sectarian scholarship has not subtly shaped the resources used and questions asked by foreign scholars.

Approach of Dissertation

In 1966, American anthropologist Clifford Geertz published an article entitled “Religion as a Cultural System” that contained what would become one of the most widely accepted definitions of “religion”:

A religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (1973, 90)

Geertz anchors his definition of religion to “symbols,” which he defines as “any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception” (ibid., 91). Geertz’s
definition of religion naturally leads toward the framing of religious studies as the task of identifying and analyzing the “conceptions” (i.e. the “meaning”) conveyed by religious “symbols.”

Much of the literature on Kiyozawa, I would argue, takes this sort of approach. Scholars have examined Kiyozawa’s writings, offering conflicting interpretations of the meanings contained within them. They have also approached Kiyozawa’s life as a story to be interpreted, attributing various “meanings” to his adoption of an ascetic lifestyle, for example. To a certain extent, scholars have recently been able to move beyond this approach by situating Kiyozawa in his broader historical context or by examining the logic of his philosophical arguments (rather than the “meaning” of his religious statements). However, many of these more sophisticated analyses still seem ultimately concerned with arriving at a judgment of the nature and significance of Kiyozawa’s thought.

In *Genealogies of Religion* (1993), Talal Asad critiqued Clifford Geertz’s definition of religion, arguing that religious symbols must be understood with reference to the “social disciplines by which their correct reading is secured” (1993, 53). Using the example of Augustine, Asad explains, “it is not mere symbols that implant true Christian dispositions, but power—ranging all the way from laws (imperial and ecclesiastical) and other sanctions (hellfire, death, salvation, good repute, peace) to the disciplinary activities of social institutions (family, school, city, church) and of human bodies (fasting, prayer, obedience, penance)” (ibid., 35). Asad’s point is that Geertz’s definition left out any consideration of the processes involved in
selecting certain symbols, determining the “correct reading” of those symbols, and disciplining people to accept such symbols and interpretations. To restate this in other terms, Geertz’s approach is “synchronic,” analyzing religions as discrete systems as they exist at one point in time, while Asad argues for a “diachronic” approach that analyzes religions as changing over time in conjunction with political, social, and even bodily processes.

Reflecting upon Asad’s essay, I am struck by the enormity of religious change that took place between Kiyozawa’s death and his 100-year anniversary celebrations. Even as recent research on Kiyozawa advances beyond mere interpretation of his life and teachings toward situating Kiyozawa in relation to broader historical processes, it seems to me that more important questions are being left unanswered. Why were the “symbols” of Kiyozawa’s lifestory and writings ultimately selected by Ōtani leaders? What “correct reading” of those symbols has been established by Ōtani leaders? How have the over five million Ōtani denomination members been “disciplined” into accepting Kiyozawa’s views? And to what extent has this institutional history influenced non-Ōtani scholars’ interest in and assessment of Kiyozawa? This dissertation seeks to begin answering these questions by providing a diachronic account of how Kiyozawa’s writings and lifestory were transformed into Ōtani orthodoxy.

A few scholars have previously examined aspects of this history. Kashiwahara Yūsen, a scholar affiliated with the Ōtani denomination, has written a book on the modern history of the Ōtani organization, documenting changes to its administrative structure, temple laws, and
fund-raising system (Kashiwahara 1986). This work is enormously valuable as a source of information. However, it is intentionally thin in terms of analysis, and it avoids the topic of doctrinal change.

Mizushima Ken'ichi has recently published a lengthy (858 pages) study of modern doctrinal change in the Ōtani organization, entitled *Kin-gendai Shinshū kyōgakushi kenkyū josetsu* (Prolegomena to Research on the History of Shin Doctrinal Studies in the Modern and Contemporary Periods) (2010). Mizushima’s work covers much of the same ground that this dissertation will, but our approaches are quite different. Mizushima writes from the perspective of a sect member fully devoted to Kiyozawa and his heirs. His introduction declares the need to “restore the original nature of Buddhism” in order to respond to the crises of Western modernity (2010, 3). In a short article entitled “Watasī no ‘Shinshūgaku’” (My “Shin Studies”), he defines Shin studies as a discipline based on the careful reading of writings by “Shinran, Kiyozawa Manshi, Soga Ryōjin, and others.” Differentiating his approach from historical studies that “objectively narrate” the facts, he explains his approach as seeking to have history (i.e. the history of Shinran, Kiyozawa, and Soga’s thought) “conform to one’s own inner depths” and “become my thought” (Mizushima 2012, 1). Mizushima has been personally inspired by Kiyozawa and Soga’s writings, and is motivated to reveal to his readers a common truth that purportedly animates their writings and Shinran’s. This is similar to the approach of sectarian scholars Nishimura and Terakawa discussed above.
Mizushima’s work brings together a tremendous amount of information about Kiyozawa, his followers, and the Ōtani organization that is invaluable for this dissertation. However, from the perspective of a religious studies scholar, Mizushima’s work is unsatisfactory on account of its largely uncritical stance toward Kiyozawa and his followers, its relatively sparse treatment of their critics, and its view of Shin history as unfolding independently from broader Japanese and global history. Whereas Mizushima attributes the modern transformation of Shin doctrinal views to an authentic experience of faith purportedly achieved by Kiyozawa and his heirs, I draw attention to the ritualization of Kiyozawa’s death, the persuasiveness of his followers’ writings, their achievement of institutional positions of authority, the unexpected impacts of World War II and postwar reconstruction, and the alliance between Kiyozawa’s followers and institutional reformers.

A number of articles and books have also examined the Dōbōkai movement (Dōbōkai undō 同朋会運動), a national faith revival movement inaugurated in 1962 that worked to disseminate a Kiyozawa-based, modernist approach to Shin teachings. There are also several accounts of the long administrative battle within the Ōtani organization that erupted in 1969 when the Chief Abbot broke with tradition by ceding his position as the sect’s administrative

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45 In Japanese, see volumes 111-112 and 129 of Kyōka kenkyū, Maruyama (1972), Mizushima (2010), and Ōtani Daigaku Shinshū Sōgō Kenkyūjo Shinshū Dōbōkai Undō Kenkyūhan (2014). In English, see Cooke (1978), Suzuki (1985), and Conway (2006).
This conflict, involving political intrigue, physical confrontations, financial scandals, and lots of publicity, led to the splintering of the Ōtani organization and a new sect constitution (1982) that demoted the Chief Abbot to a symbolic role. This dissertation extends only as far as the 1956 “Sect White Paper,” so it will not address these later events.

Outline of Dissertation Chapters

Chapter One, “From Faith to Experience,” presents an analysis of Kiyozawa’s writings. Rather than weighing in on the debate over Kiyozawa’s relation to Shinran or offering a new interpretation of the true meaning behind Kiyozawa’s enigmatic or controversial statements, my approach is to trace one strand of argument in Kiyozawa’s writings that becomes particularly important for his followers—that Shin faith is above all a matter of “experience” (じけん jikken, けいん keiken). Already present in his early philosophical writings was a conception of religion as fundamentally related to “subjectivity” (主観 shukan) (i.e. one’s inner, mental state). However, Kiyozawa initially contrasted “subjectivity” with “experience,” insofar as he presumed the latter to refer only to the outer, material world. During his Seishinshugi period,

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* Known as the “Kaishin jiken 開申事件” (announcement incident), this was controversial because it would have broken with the tradition of “three positions in one body,” according to which the Chief Abbot simultaneously held the position of head priest (じゅしょく 住職) of Higashi Honganji temple, administrative head (かんちょう 管長) of the denomination’s nationwide network of temples and their members, and “dharma master” (ほすし 法主) invested with total authority to arbitrate doctrinal disputes.

* Regarding this conflict, see Tahara (2004). In English, see Thelle (1976), Cooke (1978), and Suzuki (1985).
in addressing a broader audience more predisposed to scientific skepticism in religion, Kiyozawa shifted rhetorical strategies, now expanding his definition of “experience” to include “inner experiences.” The claim that religion was rooted in “experience” put religion on the same foundation as science—an essential move at a time when religious beliefs had come to be viewed as “superstition” (meishin 迷信) by many. Kiyozawa’s conceptual emphasis on religion as a matter of subjectivity is undoubtedly a critical aspect of his significance and influence. This chapter clarifies that this conception of religion was central to Kiyozawa’s thought from the beginning (and not a result of any conversion experience) while drawing new attention to the significance of his later rhetorical framing of religion as “experience.”

Chapter Two, “From Experience to Empiricism,” examines how Kiyozawa followers Sasaki Gesshō, Soga Ryōjin, and Kaneko Daiei built upon Kiyozawa’s language of “religious experience” in their development of a new academic discipline of Shin studies (Shinshūgaku 真宗学). In an effort to show that Shin studies is worthy of a place in Japan’s modern university system, they argued that Shin teachings are grounded in concrete “facts” and “experiences” and that the study of Shin teachings through personal experiences or analysis of others’ experiences is “empirical.” At the same time, they sought to distinguish Shin studies from the physical sciences and the historical positivism of modern Buddhist studies scholars by emphasizing person-to-person encounter over textual exegesis and by claiming to access the hidden “inner meaning” of Buddhist texts. This chapter ends with an examination of a 1929 public debate between Kaneko Daiei and Buddhist studies scholar Kimura Taiken,
demonstrating that scholars from these two disciplines were in substantive dialogue with one another. This suggests that Kaneko, Soga, and Sasaki were gaining authority as scholars not only within the Ōtani organization but also in the broader intellectual world.

Chapter Three, “From Empiricism to Authority,” discusses the same time period (1890-1930) already covered by Chapters One and Two, attending to the institutional change and conflict that accompanied Kiyozawa’s career and the subsequent development of modern Shin studies. I show how this period witnessed a gradual shift of authority from Higashi Honganji temple and traditionalist scholars to Ōtani University and modernist scholars, triggering the highly publicized 1928 Kaneko Daiei heresy affair. In addition to discussing the affair’s internal sectarian politics, I highlight the influence of national politics. Kaneko’s heresy affair coincided with the Japanese government’s crackdown on Communism, and commentators consistently viewed the Kaneko affair through the lens of national politics. This parallelism was more than mere coincidence, I argue, for leftist political thought and Shin modernist thought were both forms of radical thought born through the study of Western sources and nurtured through the growth of Japan’s modern university system. Kaneko’s unconventional interpretations of the Pure Land were viewed as the Buddhist equivalent of Communist thought, so debates circled around the issue of the Ōtani organization’s right to suppress Kaneko’s thought (rather than the validity of his doctrinal views). I argue that these debates helped to bring about the Kaneko affair’s ambiguous resolution, in which he resigned but was never officially condemned. This is
important because it shows how Buddhist history was contingent upon broader political and social developments.

Chapter Four, “From Authority to Responsibility,” examines the career of Soga Ryōjin during the Fifteen Year War along with the reasons for his and Kaneko’s sudden reinstatement in 1939-41 into positions of high authority within the sect. Following on the heels of the Kaneko affair, Soga had been ousted from Ōtani University in 1930. The following year witnessed the Manchurian Incident, marking the beginning of Japan’s war with China and of the increasing imposition of national responsibilities upon Japanese citizens. During this period, Soga confronted the question of kami (Shinto deities) and of the “divine Emperor.” Viewing the world around him as pervaded by the workings of Amida Buddha’s compassionate power, Soga arrived at the conclusion that Shinto mythology is an alternate expression of Buddhist teachings and that serving the Japanese Emperor is equivalent to serving Amida Buddha. In an analysis of a 1941 wartime conference of Shin scholars, I show how in contrast to traditionalist scholars, who preferred literalist interpretations of Shin teachings, Soga and his modernist colleagues were willing to defend the controversial view that any Japanese soldier dying in battle would be reborn in Amida’s Pure Land. Soga and Kaneko’s reinstatement and promotion within the Ōtani organization appears to have resulted from the political expediency of their nationalist interpretations of Shin teachings.

Chapter Five, “From Responsibility to Social Movement,” examines the postwar Shinjin Society reform movement in which modernist scholar-priests led by Soga joined ranks with
administrator-priests led by Kurube Shin’yū 訓覇信雄 (1906-1998). The sense of national responsibility Soga and others had felt during the war period was now channeled into a movement to contribute to the rebuilding of Japan and the world. Seeking to shape history, the Shinjin movement was also very much a product of history. It advanced ideals of individual autonomy and egalitarian community that resonated with—but were subtly different from—the ideals of democracy being promoted by secular intellectuals like Umemoto Katsumi and Maruyama Masao. And like the “new religions” (shin shūkyō), the Shinjin movement’s success depended upon fostering a perception of “established religions” as backwards and lifeless.

Originally intended to be a broad-based movement inclusive of laypeople and those unaffiliated with the Ōtani organization, the Shinjin movement quickly narrowed into a priest-centered, sectarian movement. By 1956, it had succeeded in upsetting the balance of power within the Ōtani organization, announcing a new era of Kiyozawa orthodoxy, and beginning the path toward democratization of the sect.

The conclusion explains the process by which Kiyozawa’s writings and lifestory were transformed into Ōtani orthodoxy with reference to three points. First, Kiyozawa’s writings and lifestory have an intrinsic value that accounts for their enduring significance for his followers and sectarian organization. His short but dramatic life made for a good story, and his subjectivist conception of religion—together with his rhetoric of “religious experience”—responded to the needs of a scientific age. Second, Kiyozawa’s followers successfully integrated Kiyozawa into the fabric of the Ōtani institution by ritually memorializing his death, forging a
stronger connection between Kiyozawa and the Shin scriptural tradition, and establishing themselves as authoritative scholars at Ōtani University. Third, broader historical processes, including the expansion of Japan’s university system, the government purge of Communists, war mobilization, and postwar democracy building, shaped the fortunes of Kiyozawa’s legacy in complex and unexpected ways. I then relate these findings to sectarian scholarship and to Buddhist studies scholarship. In the former case, I argue against the tendency to see essential continuity between Kiyozawa and his followers and to present them only as agents of history, rather than as products of history. In the latter case, I argue that Buddhist studies scholars ought to pay more attention to the dynamism and influence of sectarian institutions in the history of modern Buddhism. I end with a brief look at topics not covered in the dissertation, including the subsequent history of how the new Kiyozawa-based orthodoxy was further developed and disseminated throughout Japan, meeting resistance in many quarters.

Before turning to Chapter One, a brief note on the terms “modern,” “modernization,” and “modernist” is needed. I use the term “modern” to denote the period of Japanese history from 1868 to the present, during which time Japan came to be integrated into the global political-economy (and network of cultural influence) as a nation-state with a national military and capitalist economy. In my usage, “modernists” were those who expressly sought to adapt

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48 In Japanese, the “modern period” (kindai 近代) (1868-1945) is distinguished from the “contemporary period” (gendai 現代) (1945-present), but I will use “modern” to refer to this entire period. Of course, it
and reformulate Buddhism to fit this modern context (i.e. “modernity”) while “traditionalists” emphasized the need to preserve Buddhism from the dangerous influence of the modern context. Of course, “modernists” were also committed to preserving what they saw as essential to Buddhism while “traditionalists” in practice did adapt to the modern context.\(^49\)

In recent years, Buddhist studies scholars have called attention to how a “grand narrative” of Buddhism “becoming modern” has dominated the study of modern Buddhist history, just as it has framed the study on modern Japanese history more generally (Ōtani 2012, 13).\(^50\) That is to say, scholars have approached the study of modern Buddhist history with certain preconceptions of what “modernity” ought to consist of (e.g. rationality, democracy, social justice, pacifism), and have focused on how reformist thinkers and reform movements (including Kiyozawa and Seishinshugi) succeeded or failed in bringing Buddhism closer to that ideal. This focus has left a lacuna in our understanding of various aspects of Buddhism in the modern period, including the history of more conservative sectarian Buddhist institutions (Hayashi 2006, 205-6). In this dissertation, I do address the topic of “modernization,” but with particular attention to how this process unfolded for a sectarian Buddhist institution. I attach

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must be noted that “modernity” did not arise all at once. Already during the late Tokugawa period (1603-1868), the Japanese economy had undergone a process of “proto-industrialization,” and increased global economic and cultural exchange took place through the port city of Nagasaki (Gordon 2003, 9-45).

\(^49\) On the latter point, see Ward (2004, 2005).

\(^50\) Regarding this “grand narrative” in the study of modern Japanese history, see Gluck (1993).
no particular content or normative value to “modernism” or “modernization.” Rather I employ these terms to distinguish between two conflicting groups and to denote the result that the “modernists” ended up winning the conflict. At times, the boundaries between these two groups break down—as in the case of “traditionalist” scholar Kōno Hōun claiming “modernist” Kiyozawa for the traditionalist side. Nonetheless, these categories are convenient constructs to help frame the story of the Ōtani organization’s modern transformation.

51 In some cases, “Shin modernism” is associated with ideas and language that are “modern” in the sense of being new in the modern period—the language of “religious experience” is an example of this. In other cases, however, “Shin modernism” encompasses ideas and language from pre-modern periods. For example, in medieval figures like Kūkai, Kakuban, or Shinran, one can find antecedents for Shin modernists’ immanentalist interpretations of the Pure Land, individual-focused conception of the Buddhist path, and “esoteric” appeals to the hidden, inner meaning of scripture.
1. From Faith to Experience: Kiyozawa Manshi and the Defense of Religion (1890-1903)

“As for things like hell, heaven, and Amida Buddha, we cannot truly know them through experience. In this respect, they are nothing more than fancies.” --Kiyozawa Manshi, April 1901 (KMZ, vol. 7: 275)

“It is said that scientific facts are based in experience. Religious facts, too, certainly must be based in experience. Also, it is said that scientific conclusions then become common knowledge. Religious conclusions, too, certainly ought to become common knowledge.” -- Kiyozawa Manshi, April 1901 (KMZ, vol. 6: 8)

1.1 Experience

It is not hard to imagine life without recourse to the word or concept of “experience.” One can speak of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking, and feeling without any need to speak of “experiencing” anything. The English word is most directly derived from the Latin experientia, meaning “trial, proof, or experiment” (Jay 2005, 10). In their earliest usages, “to experience” and “to experiment” were often interchangeable, either meaning “to ascertain by trial, to put to the test” or “to meet with, feel, undergo” (Oxford English Dictionary 2000). This meaning helps explain why people resort to language of “experience” when speaking of what they “meet with” or “feel.” “To experience” is to prove the reality of something through perception of it, so there is no impetus to speak of “experience” unless the reality of something is in question or “on trial.” The Latin experientia (ex-perientia) suggests a notion of coming out of peril—the peril of uncertainty.
“Experience” and “empirical proof” (*empeiria* being the Greek antecedent to the Latin *experientia*) were invoked in Western philosophical and scientific empiricism to demonstrate certain realities while casting a skeptical shadow on others. Montaigne and Descartes both appealed to “experience” out of a common skepticism in traditional knowledge derived from dogmatic theology or common sense. Bacon sought to build knowledge on a foundation of controlled and repeatable “experiments.” Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant all appealed to the authority of “experience” out of a common skepticism in “deductive reason, dogmatic revelation, or textual authority” (Jay 2005, 43).

Within Christian religious discourse, the appeal to “religious experience” only prominently arose during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in response to crises of doctrinal authority. Luther’s personal “experience” of scripture and Catholic appeals to mystical “experience” both sought to restore religion to solid ground. Faced with Enlightenment critiques of religion in the ensuing centuries, defenders of Christianity appealed more stridently to a notion of “religious experience.” Most influential was Friedrich Schleiermacher’s *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799), which defined religion as an essential aspect of our inner experience that had been overlooked both by Kantian rationalism and the “lamentable empiricism” of English philosophy.¹ At the turn of the 20th century,

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¹ Schleiermacher does not actually use the term “experience” often, yet he clearly intends his “intuition of the universe” or “sensibility and taste for the infinite” to be a form of mental “experience” parallel to
William James was prominent among those who argued for the inclusion of a “science of religion” in the modern university, appealing to “religious experience” as a reality and suitable object of scientific study.

In Japan, religion came under the scrutiny of Western science and philosophy only in the mid- and late-19th centuries upon Japan’s forced opening to the West by gunboat diplomacy, and this is also when language of “religious experience” emerged. In fact, Robert Sharf has claimed that the very Japanese terms for “experience”—keiken 経験 and taiken 体験 in Sharf’s account—were essentially neologisms created during this period by translators of Western philosophical works. “One searches in vain for apremodern Chinese or Japanese equivalent to the phenomenological notion of experience,” Sharf writes (1995a, 249). In this dissertation, I will not attempt to confirm or disprove this claim. Indeed, could a survey of premodern texts ever be exhaustive enough to “prove” the non-existence of such a term or concept? Instead, I

physical experiences. For example, he defines the “intuition of the universe” by comparing it to physically sensing light or weight: “All intuition proceeds from an influence of the intuited on the one who intuits, from an original and independent action of the former, which is then grasped, apprehended, and conceived by the latter according to one’s own nature. If the emanations of light—which happen completely without your efforts—did not affect your sense, if the smallest parts of the body, the tips of your fingers, were not mechanically or chemically affected, if the pressure of weight did not reveal to you an opposition and a limit to your power, you would intuit nothing and perceive nothing, and what you thus intuit and perceive is not the nature of things, but their action upon you. What you know or believe about the nature of things lies far beyond the realm of intuition” (Schleiermacher 1988, 104).

Again, he asks, “is it really a miracle if the eternal world affects the senses of our spirit as the sun affects our eyes?” (ibid., 110)

As an example of a passage where he does speak of “experience”: “But the matter of religion is so arranged and so rare that a person who expresses something about it must necessarily have had it, for he has not heard about it anywhere. Of all that I praise and feel as its work there stands precious little in holy books, and to whom would it not seem scandal or folly who did not experience it himself?” (ibid., 84)
seek to trace how modern Shin Buddhists developed a discourse of “religious experience” to affirm religion in the face of scientific skepticism, and to explore how such discourse shifted the terrain of doctrinal authority onto “individual experience” and its proponents.

Before proceeding to that task, it is important to situate the Shin modernists in relation to other early promoters of “religious experience” in Japan. Sharf’s influential series of articles (1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1998) extended the critique of the category of “religious experience,” initiated in the 1960s and 70s by Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, S. V. Quine, and Richard Rorty, to the case of Buddhism and meditative experience. His basic argument is that the appeal by certain modern Buddhists to the significance and authority of unmediated, pure experiences of meditative insight is a new development that mimicked the apologetics of Western scholars like William James and Rudolf Otto. He presents the writings of Zen thinker D. T. Suzuki as one of his primary examples. Emphasizing Suzuki’s indebtedness to Paul Carus and William James, Sharf seeks to expose the novelty, Western-ness, and moral vacuity of Suzuki’s approach in contrast to the mainstream Zen Buddhist tradition.

The appeal to “religious experience” was a broader phenomenon in Meiji period Japan than is evident in Sharf’s account. Perhaps the first attempt to claim for Buddhism an “experiential” or “empirical” basis was by Sōtō Zen monk Hara Tanzan (1819-1892), who was appointed the first lecturer of Buddhist Studies at Tokyo University in 1879. Hara’s pioneering approach to Buddhist studies explicitly blended Western science and Buddhism. By incorporating Western knowledge of physiology, Hara hoped to purge Buddhism of its
accumulated superstitions and return it to the truths of Śākyamuni Buddha’s “original Buddhism” (genshi Bukkyō 原始仏教) (Yoshinaga 2006, 6-7). In 1869, he published a set of essays that advanced the theories that “the brain and spine are of different substances” and “delusion and illness are of the same origin.” These findings were presented on the basis of his method of “Buddhist empirical study” (Bukkyō jikken gaku 仏教実験学). He relates, “If I tried to overturn [Western medical theories] only on the basis of Buddhism’s internal explanations, I fear people would have difficulty believing me. Therefore, I will provide several points of experiential proof (jikken shinshō 実験親証) as grounds for my argument” (quoted in Furuta 1980, 150). In this case, jikken should not be understood in terms of objective and repeatable scientific “experiment.” Rather, Hara was pointing to his own personal “experiences” as evidence.

Indeed, it was a critical aspect of the language of this period that the terms for “experience” (keiken 経験, taiken 体験) and “experiment” (jikken 実験) had not yet become distinct. According to the Kokugo daijiten dictionary entry for jikken, “In the early Meiji period, there was a time when jikken was used to mean keiken, but gradually there emerged a distinction of usage in which keiken pertained to philosophy while jikken pertained to the natural sciences. We see this [distinction] established from the Meiji 30s on” (2001, vol. 6: 830). Without such a distinction in place, Hara and his readers may have registered Hara’s private “experiences” as scientific “experiment” or “empirical evidence.” Sueki Fumihiko asks, “In the academic climate of Hara’s time, to what extent was this kind of ‘experiment’ accepted as such? This is a question I am unable to make clear. However, we are left with the fact that, on the
basis of this very concept of ‘experiment,’ Hara was accepted as a lecturer at Tokyo Imperial University, and then as a member of the Imperial Academy” (2005, 10). Despite the initial support for and recognition of his work, however, Hara was soon superseded in Buddhist studies by the historical research methods of Murakami Senshō and his successors whose “empiricism” was tied to textual evidence, not private religious “experience.”²

Apart from Hara Tanzan’s “Buddhist empirical study” and the appeal to “experience” by D. T. Suzuki and other Zen writers, the rhetoric of “religious experience” also arose among Shin Buddhist modernists. To a certain extent, this appears to have been a case of “convergent evolution,” in which the discourse of “religious experience” emerged in parallel but independently. Kiyozawa Manshi began to speak of “religious experience” possibly as early as 1890 and certainly by 1901. Pre-dating William James’ *Varieties of Religious Experience* and its inspiration of D. T. Suzuki and Nishida Kitarō, Kiyozawa’s writings may have had some influence on Suzuki and Nishida’s discourse of “religious experience.”³ Regarding Hara Tanzan,

² In the 1894 opening declaration to his journal *Bukkyō shirin*, Murakami recognizes the necessity of studying Buddhism “with theoretical and empirical tools,” but claims his research method also incorporates and relies upon “faith and worship.” “We are attempting Buddhist historical research from our own ‘Buddhistic’ perspective. In other words, we are trying to see Buddhist history by means of Buddhist powers of discernment” (quoted in Sueki 2005, 13). Here the appeal to personal insight is set apart from and contrasted with the “empirical” study of history. For more in depth discussion of Murakami, Hara, and their empiricist methods, see Klautau (2012, 55-117).

³ Fujita has demonstrated many points of contact between Nishida and the Shin modernists, and has presented an argument that Nishida’s philosophy is significantly indebted to Kiyozawa’s thought. However, he does not take up the question of whether Nishida’s notion of “pure experience” may also have been partly indebted to Kiyozawa.
Kiyozawa had studied philosophy under him briefly at Tokyo Imperial University, but Kiyozawa’s near complete lack of mention of Hara in his writings suggests that Hara was not an important influence on him. Below I will show that Kiyozawa arrived at the discourse of “religious experience” through his own study of Western philosophy together with his own creative expression of Shin teachings. Although I will discuss the origins of Kiyozawa’s notion of “religious experience,” I am more fundamentally concerned in this and subsequent chapters with why and how that notion was deployed by him and his followers.

In this chapter, I will examine the details of how the discourse of “religious experience” emerged in Kiyozawa’s writings and what role that discourse played in his broader project of reviving Shin Buddhist faith. Specifically, I will track Kiyozawa’s 1) subjectivist understanding of religion, 2) juxtaposition of religious faith with scientific reason, and 3) deployment of the language of “experience” in these arguments. Such an examination is important for a number of reasons. On one level, this examination will further support recent challenges to an earlier, more comfortable paradigm of thinking about Kiyozawa—namely, that his attainment of faith signaled a rejection of his earlier philosophical writings and ascetic practices as misguided attempts to achieve salvation through “self-power.” Specifically, I will argue that Kiyozawa’s

4 Another possible influence on Kiyozawa in this regard is Ōtani scholar Inoue Enryō, who was a mentor to Kiyozawa in Tokyo during the latter’s university days. Future research might examine what position the idea and language of “experience” holds in Inoue’s writings.

5 As discussed in the introduction, Nishimura (1951) set the foundation for the earlier paradigm while Imamura (2003) and Yamamoto (2011) are representatives of the newer paradigm.
rhetorical strategy changed while his conceptual worldview remained largely the same. This suggests that, for Kiyozawa, the attainment of faith did not usher in a different knowledge of the world, but only a deeper, more embodied understanding of what he had already known. It also means that if Kiyozawa is to be accepted as a modern paragon of Shin Buddhist faith, more reflection is needed on how the philosophy and asceticism of the early part of his career can be squared with Shin teachings.⁶

On a broader level, this examination is important for what it tells us about the history that followed. Whereas Sharf was motivated to achieve a more authentic understanding of the premodern Zen tradition unfiltered by the modernists’ Western-influenced appeals to “experience,” I view the Shin modernists’ discourse of “religious experience” as a creative new departure that shook the balance of power and yielded new expressions of Buddhist religiosity that are perhaps more efficacious in our modern world. Needless to say, reason and science were not absent from pre- or early-modern Japan, but the Meiji-period influx of Western science, technology, and philosophy produced unprecedented challenges for Japanese Buddhism. The response of Shin Buddhist modernists, pioneered by Kiyozawa Manshi, was to deny that reason or science could ever stand as independent, totalistic modes of inquiry, displacing religion. They sought to drag reason and science down into the discourse of religion,

⁶ At issue in regards to Kiyozawa’s philosophy are both his philosophical methods (i.e. his use of reason to clarify the contents of Shin teachings) and his conclusions (e.g. his theory of the “soul”—a decidedly non-Buddhist concept).
declaring them to have a basis in “faith” just like religion. On the other hand, they sought to elevate Buddhism to a par with science by declaring Buddhism’s basis in “experience,” “experiment,” and “fact.” Later chapters of this dissertation will show this strategy’s success in enabling the reinvention of sectarian studies as an empirical, scientific study of the facts of individual religious experience. Ultimately, this opened the way for a nationwide faith movement that redefined Shin Buddhism with the motto “from a family religion to a religion of individual awakening.” The Shin modernists’ efforts ought not be dismissed out of hand as “inauthentic” or self-serving. Squaring Buddhism with science has been among the most significant challenges Buddhists have faced in the modern period. This dissertation will trace the details of how this challenge was met in one powerful and dynamic stream of Buddhism.

1.2 Early writings: “Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion”

A Subjectivist Approach to Religion

Kiyozawa’s first major work, Shūkyō tetsugaku gaikotsu (Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion) (hereafter Skeleton) was published in Japanese in 1892 and then translated into English the following year for distribution at the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago. As a mere “skeleton” or outline of his philosophy, it is a short work, running only 42 pages in its present English version (KMZ, vol. 1: 109-50). Short as it is, Skeleton nonetheless expresses certain core aspects of Kiyozawa’s understanding of religion and science that would carry forward into his later writings.
Kiyozawa begins *Skeleton* by asserting that humans share a “religious faculty,” defined as the form the soul or mind takes when directed toward “the Infinite.” It is a key feature of Kiyozawa’s works throughout his career that he tended toward non-sectarian and even non-Buddhist terminology. Later on in *Skeleton*, he states that “the Infinite” could also be rendered by the terms “Substance, Noumenon, Idea, God, Buddha, Reality and the like” (KMZ, vol. 1: 142). Noting that philosophical reason, too, may orient itself toward the Infinite, he enters into a discussion comparing reason and faith (discussed below). He then proceeds to the problem of defining religion. Before coming to his own definition, he first lists a series of twelve definitions of religion that have been proposed previously. The first three are somewhat vague and indefinite,\(^7\) while the latter nine can be identified based on Kiyozawa’s lecture notes as representing Fichte, Hobbes, Kant, Jakob Sigismund Beck, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Albert Réville, E. B. Tylor, and Max Müller (KMZ, vol. 1: 35-36, 55-56). Of these, the definitions that bear the most relation to the one Kiyozawa subsequently advances are those of Fichte, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Réville, and Müller, presented below in Kiyozawa’s words and sequence (ibid., 143).

- “the intellectual intuition of one’s own true nature” (Fichte)

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\(^7\) They are: “Religion is the art or practice of pacifying mind and settling life”; “Religion is the act of ascertaining the destiny of the soul” (derived from Plato?); and “Religion is that which teaches us to become enlightened” (a stock Buddhist definition of religion?).
• “the form which absolute truth assumes for the representative consciousness, or for feeling, representation, and the reflecting understanding, and hence for all men” (Hegel)
• “the feeling of one’s dependence and being one with the Infinite and the Eternal” (Schleiermacher)
• “the determination of human life by the sentiment of a bond uniting the human mind to that mysterious mind whose domination of the world and of itself it recognizes, and to whom it delights in feeling itself united” (Réville)
• “a mental faculty or disposition which, independent of, nay, in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names and under varying disguises” (Müller)

All of these definitions might be said to fall within a “subjectivist” or “phenomenological” framework, emphasizing feelings or states of mind rather than social function, ritual practice, morality, or even belief.\(^8\) The distinction between a “subjective state” and “belief” is that “belief” might derive from trust in a religious teacher, trust in scripture, or flawed reasoning. In contrast, these theorists all define religion as deriving from some meaningful subjective “experience”—though they do not necessarily use or emphasize that term.

In the English version of *Skeleton*, Kiyozawa follows this listing of definitions of religion by concluding, “the idea of religion neither is one nor can even be expressed uniformly according to the difference of the point of view with which each investigator of religion is occupied.” He then proceeds to present his own definition “without considering its agreement or difference with any of the former definition.” That definition is: “Religion is the Unity of a

\[^8\]Technically speaking, the so-called “phenomenological” turn in religious studies is said to have come after these thinkers, yet their formulations of religion can be seen as precursors to it (Strenski 2006).
“Finite with the Infinite” (KMZ, vol. 1: 142-43). However, in his lecture notes, Kiyozawa connects his own definition to those previously listed:

To overview these various opinions, it is recognized in each definition that religion is always the confrontation of two entities, mediated by mental conditions 心情. In other words, the [common] meaning [shared by each definition] is that religion contains two elements, the subjective and the objective, and their unification or harmonization is religion. Moreover, it is clear that the subjective is fundamentally our minds, and the objective is the totality of existence 万有全体 (which is to say the Infinite 無限者) that confronts our subjectivity. Therefore, can I not simply say by way of a definition of religion, “Religion is the harmonization of a finite with the Infinite”?

Kiyozawa here advances his own definition of religion as the common denominator of the definitions of religion he cites—albeit with some hesitation. In the English version of Skeleton, Kiyozawa leaves out this claim, perhaps recognizing its exaggeration, if not outright falsity.

Regardless, it is significant that Kiyozawa saw his definition as based on and in congruence with Western philosophy and its theories of religion.

In evaluating Kiyozawa’s intellectual influences, scholars have generally pointed to Spinoza, Hegel, Spencer, and Hermann Lotze. However, in the matter of defining religion, Friedrich Schleiermacher’s and Max Müller’s influence is most evident. Immediately prior to writing Skeleton, Kiyozawa lectured on Schleiermacher as part of his longer series of lectures on

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9 These lecture notes were based on Kiyozawa’s “Shūkyō tetsugaku gaikotsu kōgi” lectures given in 1892-1893 after the 1892 Japanese publication of Skeleton but prior to the 1893 publication of Skeleton in English translation. The original Japanese Skeleton does not contain the section on religious definitions.

10 For recent scholarship that clarifies Lotze’s central influence on Kiyozawa’s thought, see Fasan (2012) and Marti-Orval (2011).
the history of Western philosophy. Kiyozawa’s lecture draws out two aspects of Schleiermacher’s approach to religion. First, religion is to be understood in terms of “subjective feelings” as opposed to “objective bodies.” Second, religion is more specifically a matter of “giving rise to a feeling of unity with the Infinite” (KMZ, vol. 5: 368). According to Kiyozawa, Schleiermacher went beyond Spinoza’s monism to clarify the principle that the Infinite exists within the finite in a relationship of unity—a metaphysical view that clearly has resonance with Kiyozawa’s own Buddhist notion of “all things as one body” (banbutsu ittai 万物一体).

Nonetheless, Kiyozawa is skeptical that Schleiermacher really understood what this Infinite was (ibid., 358). Kiyozawa concludes by emphasizing the value of Schleiermacher’s seeking out a harmonious “middle ground” between the extremes of “realism” and “mind-only,” of monism and dualism, and of ethics, religion, and theology (ibid., 371-72). In a similar spirit, he notes that in Schleiermacher’s view, each scientific study of the finite phenomena of the world is an opportunity to know the Infinite, so science and religion are not at odds.

11 Kiyozawa’s gave a long series of lectures on early modern philosophy from February 1891 through June 1892. The lecture on Schleiermacher was near the very end of this series, probably sometime in the Spring of 1892. The original Japanese version of Skeleton was published in August 1892.

12 In his lecture notes, Kiyozawa does not explain this point any further, so we can only speculate as to what he means. Is it that Schleiermacher has not had a real religious experience of the Infinite, so he can only speak of it abstractly? Did Kiyozawa have a problem with the way Schleiermacher framed religious experience of the Infinite as a fleeting, unmediated moment, before reflection occurs and intuition and feeling are divided? Was he skeptical of Schleiermacher’s account of the Infinite on account of the latter’s Christian perspective?

13 Perhaps not coincidentally, this is exactly how scholars have characterized Kiyozawa’s Skeleton—as seeking to harmonize competing philosophical and religious perspectives (e.g. Johnston 1972, 128).
Besides these points of common ground, Schleiermacher and Kiyozawa also had their differences, which may account for why Kiyozawa did not forthrightly claim Schleiermacher as an influence or spell out their intellectual connections. Schleiermacher was a romanticist who placed religion firmly in the realm of feelings, rather than reason. As will be shown below, for all his skepticism toward rationality, Kiyozawa was no romantic. With his dry, calculating writing style and his aversion toward the arts and sensual pursuits of any kind, Kiyozawa would have had little patience for the Romantics.

Kiyozawa’s language of a “religious faculty” directed toward the Infinite is strikingly in line with Max Müller’s (1823-1900). In Müller’s *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (1870)—which Kiyozawa had in his personal library—Müller argues that in addition to sensation and rationality, there is a “third faculty of man, co-ordinate with, yet independent of, sense and reason, the faculty of the Infinite, which is at the root of all religions”:

> In English I know no better name for it, than the faculty of faith, though it will have to be guarded by careful definition, in order to confine it to those objects only, which cannot be supplied either by the evidence of the senses, or by the evidence of reason, and the existence of which is nevertheless postulated by something without us which we cannot resist. (Müller 1882, 14)

At the time that Kiyozawa wrote *Skeleton*, Müller was still an active scholar. A decade earlier, another Shin Buddhist scholar, Nanjō Bun’yū (1849-1927), had studied Sanskrit under Müller at

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14 Kiyozawa’s library also contained Müller’s *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religions of India* (1878). See KMZ (vol. 9: 337-79). Of course, the fact that they were in his library does not mean he necessarily read them.
Oxford in England (1880-1884) before returning to Japan and joining Kiyozawa’s Shirakawa Reform Movement. However, Kiyozawa never lectured or wrote at any length on Müller, so the extent to which Kiyozawa read or was influenced by Müller is unclear. After defining religion in terms of “the faculty of the Infinite,” Müller went on to frame the “science of religion” as divided into two methods, “comparative theology” and “theoretic theology.” He claims that theologians have long been preoccupied with theoretic theology, defined as “the analysis of the inward and outward conditions under which faith is possible” (ibid., 17). However, with the benefit of missionary reports and the gathering of sacred scriptures from around the world, comparative theology has become possible. Müller’s career of translating Indian religious texts and lecturing on world religions falls under “comparative theology”; Kiyozawa and the Shin modernists, by contrast, engaged in something more akin to Müller’s “theoretic theology.”

Thus, Kiyozawa did not have much use for Müller’s work beyond his initial definition of religion.

Building upon this phenomenological, subjectivist understanding of religion, Kiyozawa defined religion variously as “the harmonization of the subjective and the objective” and as “the unity of a finite with the Infinite.” This “harmonization” or “unity” with the Infinite is explained as follows:

At first, we know nothing about finite and infinite. As we perceive the distinction, we enter the gate of religion. In the beginning, however, the two terms are merely distinguished from each other. The two elements are separate. Then comes the combination or the union, not yet unity, of the two. The two elements are only bound together as inseparable. The combination or the union becomes more and more intimate. Amalgamation, so to speak, comes in. Infinite is found in the finite and the finite in the Infinite. At last, the two elements become undistinguished... Who is a
Christian? It is he who believes in Christ (separate). No, it is he who has Christ in himself (middling). Not yet; he is a true Christian, who is himself Christ (undistinguished).

Again, who is a Buddhist? It is he who believes in Buddha (separate). No, it is he who has Buddhahood in himself (middling). Not yet; he is a true Buddhist who is himself Buddha (undistinguished). (KMZ, vol. 1: 140-41)

In explaining the unity of the finite and the Infinite, Kiyozawa crosses over from philosophical abstraction into theological language. Kiyozawa depicts religious development as a three-stage progression from objectivism (Buddha as an external object) to subjectivism (Buddha within one’s subject) to what he would later term “subject-object transcendence” (no distinction between subject and object of faith). This understanding of religion can be characterized as “subjectivist” on two counts. First, the subjective discovery of Buddha within one’s mind is an essential step toward true religious understanding. Second, the final step of achieving object-subject transcendence marks a transformation of consciousness: “The aim of religion is to realize this relationship [of unity with the Infinite] in the brightest consciousness” (ibid., 137).

Again: “by the development of our mental activity, we arrive at the point when we perceive this relation and become conscious of the fact that we are finite and also infinite” (ibid., 123).

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15 Jpn. Shukyaku-chōsetsu-shugi 主客超絶主義 (e.g. KMZ, vol. 6: 63). Kiyozawa’s views on this subject will continue to be elaborated in the rest of this chapter. At the outset, I would emphasize that some might see Kiyozawa's position of “subject-object transcendence” as a form of “subjectivism.” What is certain is that Kiyozawa strove to distinguish his position from a coarse form of subjectivism that would posit the Buddha and Pure Land as merely contents within the mind. In Kiyozawa’s view, the external world exists, and Amida Buddha and the Pure Land can be found there; however, the nature of the external world and of the internal world are not ultimately different. All is “subjective.” See especially his 1901 essay “Shinki no hatten” (Development of the Mind) (KMZ, vol. 6) and his 1901 lecture “Byōdōkan” (A View of Equality) (KMZ, vol. 7) (both discussed below).
All of this may seem like a rather ordinary conclusion to reach. It would seem to require no great feat of imagination to arrive at a notion of Buddhism as a matter of developing one’s mind to see things in a new way. However, it is noteworthy that Kiyozawa has so dramatically stripped religion down to a single category of experience—marginalizing religious practice, morality, institutions, etc. In a different sense, Kiyozawa’s emphasis on a subjective state of mind is noteworthy coming within a Shin Buddhist context, where it is the gravest of heresies to deny Amida Buddha’s establishment of a Pure Land to the west (i.e. its objectivity) or view Amida and his Pure Land as mere mental phenomena (i.e. subjective). Naturally, Kiyozawa and his followers staunchly denied that their focus on subjective experience was opposed to these core Shin doctrines. Finally, it is noteworthy how Kiyozawa engaged with and explicitly built his religious philosophy upon Western philosophy and its language of a “faculty of the Infinite” and “the Infinite existing within the finite.” This begs the question, was Kiyozawa’s Buddhist worldview significantly formed or altered by such language, or did he merely put such language to use to give different expression to an “authentic” Buddhist worldview? As discussed in the introduction, this has been one of the primary points of disagreement between Kiyozawa admirers and critics.
Reason’s Reliance on Faith

Kiyozawa juxtaposed his discussion of religion with a discussion of science and reason. Skeleton’s introductory section, entitled “Religion and Science,”\(^{16}\) argues that philosophical reason reaches its endpoint in grasping the Infinite whereas religious faith finds its starting point in believing in the Infinite:

Reason or philosophy begins with the search about the infinite and never stops its pursuit until it finally grasps at it; when, however, it grasps at or realizes its object, the work of reason is over, and philosophy is finished; and this is just the starting point of faith or religion. In other words, faith or religion begins by believing the existence of the finite and tries to enjoy its blessings. So we may state that, at the point where philosophy completes its work, there begins the business of religion. It is by no means thereby implied that, unless we finished philosophical task [sic], we should not be allowed to enter the gate of religion. (KMZ, vol. 1: 145)

Kiyozawa seems to say that one can “grasp” or “realize” (understand? prove the existence of?) the Infinite through the use of reason and philosophy. In his later writings, Kiyozawa clearly denies that reason could ever grasp the Infinite, so this passage has often been interpreted as evidence of Kiyozawa’s reversal of views.\(^\text{17}\) Yet Kiyozawa’s early optimism toward reason should not be exaggerated. First, considering Kiyozawa’s imagery of “finish line” and “starting point,”

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\(^{16}\) “Science” is here the translator’s choice for the Japanese term “gakumon 学問,” which is normally translated “learning” or “academics.” “Science” is thus meant here in a broad sense.

\(^{17}\) For example, Hashimoto describes Kiyozawa’s “conversion” as follows: “For Kiyozawa, the path from philosophy to religion, as well as that from thought to experience, was the same as the one from the Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion to “Zaishō sangeroku,” and further still to Seishin-shugi, which was the shift from “choosing reason over faith when these two contradict” as found in the Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion to “abandoning reason and choosing faith.” Kiyozawa’s “Three Great Sutras” were indeed significant in such a conversion” (2003, 29).
one could say that 99% or more of the philosophical pursuit involves getting closer and closer to the Infinite, but the instant one arrives, philosophy is already over. There is nowhere any indication that Kiyozawa believes philosophy or specific philosophers to have reached this “finish line.” Rather, reason’s “grasping” of the Infinite is presented here by Kiyozawa as a mere ideal. He clearly thinks that reason is a useful tool for approaching the Infinite and for purifying faith, but it is not clear what he meant by suggesting that reason could grasp the Infinite. In fact, the subsequent passage in Skeleton distinctly says that reason alone can never bring one “to the solid resting place of religious belief”:

We have asserted that religion depends on belief; but we do not mean that it requires unreasoned or unreasonable belief. On the contrary, if there are two propositions, the one of reason and the other of faith, we should rather take the former instead of the latter. For we are sure that true propositions will be true both to reason and to faith, and that propositions of reason can be corrected by other propositions of reason while those of faith are devoid of such means of corrections. But remember that the nature of reason is incompleteness, i.e. reason can never be complete in its range or series of propositions, one proposition linking to or depending on the other ad infinitum, so that if any one relies on reason alone, he might never be able to attain the solid resting place of religious belief. This characteristic incompleteness of reason may be a warning to the seekers of scientific truth. Why is A? Because of B. Why is B? Because of C. Why is C? Because of D. And so on without end. Such is the chain of proofs or grounds. Reason can never stop and rest. If it stops and rests at any point, it must be just a point of belief. Hence reason must ultimately rely on faith for its foundation. In cases, however, of many or conflicting propositions, those must be selected which harmonize with fundamental beliefs and those rejected which are in conflict with them. Thus selection and regulation are the proper functions of reason, not only with regard to religious propositions, but also in all propositions of science and knowledge. Such being the case, we conclude that Faith and Reason should always help, and can never conflict with, each other. (KMZ, vol. 1: 144-45)
In this presentation, faith relies on reason to correct and fortify itself, but reason cannot operate independently of faith. In the Japanese version, Kiyozawa further clarifies: “Conflicts only exist between this faith and that faith. Therefore, one can say that all confrontations and arguments are not conflicts with reason but are between faith and faith. In such cases, faith is made right by reason” (ibid.: 7). In this system, where reason only functions to “select” and “regulate” propositions of faith, it would seem that the Infinite is to be grasped by *reasonable faith* (i.e. faith made pure by reason)—not by reason itself.

Kiyozawa’s depiction of reason vis-à-vis faith bears a great resemblance to sections of Herbert Spencer’s (1820–1903) *First Principles* (1862). Like Müller, Spencer was Kiyozawa’s contemporary. As Gilbert Johnston has noted, Kiyozawa took a special interest in Spencer’s notion of “the Unknowable,” the topic of Part I of Spencer’s *First Principles: A System of Synthetic Philosophy* (Johnston 1972, 95-98). The topics of religion and “the Unknowable” were not central to Spencer’s writings nor even to *First Principles,*

18 The great majority of that work presents Spencer’s signature theory that evolutionary process is at work in all aspects of the universe, including astronomy, geology, biology, social organization, and human thought. The first

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18 Émile Boutroux explains, “Herbert spencer did not, originally, intend to preface *First Principles* by speculations in regard to The Unknowable. It was because of the fear that his general doctrine should be interpreted in a sense unfavourable to religion, it was in order to avert the reproach of atheism, that Herbert Spencer, on reconsideration, added that first part” (1911, 95).
section of Kiyozawa’s *Skeleton* introduces the idea of religious evolution, and Kiyozawa elsewhere seems to subscribe to Spencer’s notion of an evolutionary process guiding social change. Yet it is Spencer’s argument about the Unknowable in relation to religion and science that most caught Kiyozawa’s attention and arguably influenced his framing of religion vis-à-vis science.

Part I of Spencer’s *First Principles* attempts a reconciliation of religion and science via the concept of the Unknowable. Spencer insists that religion must be based on some “fact” of human “experience,” considering its universality and vitality in the range of human societies. Because “it is impossible that there should be two orders of truth in absolute and everlasting opposition,” there must be some way to harmonize them (Spencer 1897, sec. 1.6). The fact of

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19 In the first section of *Skeleton*, Kiyozawa writes, “We maintain that this [religious] faculty develops itself and say that, beginning with a weak and imperceptible energy, it evolves or improves itself progressively till it reaches the point of prominence and vividness that it can no longer be said to be absent. It is due to the difference in the degree of this development that there are such diversities of religious doctrines, ancient and modern, oriental and occidental” (KMZ, vol. 1: 146). The notion of religious evolution was explicitly developed not by Spencer but by E. B. Tylor in his 1871 *Primitive Culture*.

Elsewhere in *Skeleton*, Kiyozawa seems to reject the theories of social and biological evolution: “Thus we have demonstrated that all becoming must be grounded upon the principle of persistent identity. Now, of the so-called modern theories of evolutions—evolution of society from savagery to civilization, evolution of mankind from no society to society, evolution of animals from lower to higher life, etc.—are these in harmony with the principle of persistent identity? Is there anything persisting through the changes of states in each kind of evolution... Nothing at all” (KMZ, vol. 1: 130). Yet this is just a matter of how Kiyozawa wanted to use the word “evolution” in contrast to “heredity.”

20 In an 1884 English essay, written while Kiyozawa was a student at Tokyo Imperial University, Kiyozawa discusses the “almost universal opinion of the learned” that “the course of the world is progress, is evolution. What is implied in the theme is that of evolution. Human mind began its course from zero to its present stage” (KMZ, vol. 4: 258). Kiyozawa’s later *December Fan Diary* also speaks about morality’s “stages of development” and its corresponding range of social systems (Kiyozawa 1936, 180).
human experience upon which religion is founded, according to Spencer, is the “positive” but
“indefinite” consciousness of the Absolute. Crucially, Spencer’s argument for the existence of
the Absolute is premised on the necessary incompleteness of science and reason. He first
argues that all explanations of the origins of the universe—from atheism to pantheism to
theism—end in the logical paradox of uncaused causes. Then turning to supposedly well-
grounded scientific concepts of space, time, matter, motion, force, consciousness, and the self,
he attempts to show that they, too, are all logically incomprehensible. He concludes, “Ultimate
Scientific Ideas, then, are all representative of realities that cannot be comprehended. After no
matter how great a progress in the colligation of facts and establishment of generalizations
ever wider and wider, the fundamental truth remains as much beyond reach as ever” (sec. 3.21).
Spencer applauds science for its “purification” of religion (sec. 5.29), bringing religion ever
closer to the truth “that the mystery it contemplates is ultimate and absolute” and
fundamentally unknowable. At the same time, Spencer upbraids science for failing to
acknowledge “that its explanations are proximate and relative” (sec. 5.30). Even as it advances
further and further, science continually has “rested content” and “stopped short with
superficial solutions,” imagining itself to have understood reality in an absolute sense (sec.
5.29).

The parallels between Kiyozawa and Spencer are striking. Both argue for religion as
consciousness of the Absolute; reason’s incompleteness; reason’s role in purifying religion; and
a necessary harmony between religious faith and scientific reason. In time, Kiyozawa would
also come to speak, like Spencer, of religion’s basis in the “facts” of human “experience.” In the
English version of Skeleton, Kiyozawa does not reference Spencer or include Spencer’s definition
of religion. In his lecture notes, however, he includes discussion of one further definition of
religion:

Spencer states, “Religions are a priori theories of the universe.” He takes early modern
physics as his basis and looks at religion. Thus, [in Spencer’s account,] physics sets forth
explanations of the world on the basis of what is confirmed by experiment and
observation. That is to say, it is an a postereori explanation. He asserts that religion, by
contrast, is not based on established facts nor on observation or experiment, but is
constructed out of a priori notions. Thus, religion lacks the basic ideas of the
elementary sciences. If experiment and observation are taken to be the principal ways
for opening up human wisdom, it can be thought that religion ought to die out.
However, in his thinking, the Unknowable is forever something that cannot be
investigated. Therefore, one can say that religion also will always exist. (KMZ, vol. 1: 56)

As Kiyozawa correctly notes, Spencer views religion as pertaining to an Unknowable reality
that is unapproachable by scientific methods. Consequently, religion and science ought to exist
harmoniously. This point is fundamental to Kiyozawa’s Skeleton and to his later writings.

However, while Spencer proceeded to philosophize upon the knowable world, Kiyozawa
committed himself to the quest of knowing the Unknowable.

**Scientific Experiment, Religious Experiment**

The term “experience” barely appears in Skeleton. None of the definitions of religion
Kiyozawa cites nor his own definition refers to religious “experience.” The term “experience”
appears only once in passing in the English version of Skeleton without any correlate in the
The related term “experiment” appears twice in a passage meant to repudiate the theory that the soul is a mere immaterial epiphenomenon of matter.

Passing out of the many gradations of the materialistic theory, the soul comes to be regarded as immaterial... This comes hand in hand with the empirical theory of knowledge. At a certain stage of intellectual progress, men begin to lay exclusive importance on observation and experiment. Then anything, if it be discordant with the two processes, is thrown away as useless and untrue. And, by a natural mistake of misused logic, the observation and experiment are identified with sensations and then it is proclaimed that anything, if not founded upon the testimony of the senses, is unreal. The result of this theory is materialism. There is nothing real but matter. The soul, as immaterial existence, is nothing. It has no substantiality of its own. The mental phenomena are nothing but functions arising from the combinations of material particles. This is an extreme theory. (KMZ, vol. 1: 134)

Kiyozawa here relativizes reliance on methods of “observation and experiment” as belonging to a certain stage of intellectual progress that must eventually be transcended. He calls it a “mistake of misused logic” to identify observation and experiment with sensations and then proclaim the unreality of anything not subject to sensation. Is the “mistake” to be found in 1) identifying experimentation with sensation or in 2) proclaiming unreal that which is not

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21 In the Japanese version of Skeleton in the subsection “Theory of the soul as apperceiving substance,” Kiyozawa states, “We should directly inquire into the special characteristics of the functioning of the spirit. Our spirit’s functioning is various, but in summary, it can be said to be the functioning of consciousness or conditioned thinking” (KMZ, Vol. 1: 15). In the English translation, this is glossed as “We may proceed to find out what kind of reality this [soul] is in our own experience. What is the most immediate to us is consciousness” (ibid., 132). The Japanese for “We should directly inquire” is rendered into English as “We may proceed to find out... in our own experience.” “Experience” is here used to express a sense of “directness” or “immediacy.”

22 This mention of the “empirical theory of knowledge” is an addition in the English translation with no equivalent in the Japanese original.
subject to sensation/experiment? Kiyozawa certainly disagrees with the claim that only sensible (i.e. material) objects have reality, but does he also disagree with the presumption that experimentation can only target material objects? Might one also “observe” and “experiment” upon one’s mind and its encounter with the Infinite?

In fact, there is evidence that at this time Kiyozawa was beginning to consider the possibility of inward-looking, religious “experiments.” By the time of his writing Skeleton, Kiyozawa had already embarked upon a new lifestyle that he reportedly called “the way of Minimum Possible” (minimamu poshiburu shugi). From 1890, Kiyozawa drastically changed his living habits—shaving his head, donning monastic robes, restricting his diet, and walking instead of using rickshaws or trains. In 1892, following the death of his mother, he intensified his practices, especially his dietary restrictions. This continued until 1894, when he contracted tuberculosis and began a period of convalescence. Kiyozawa’s lifestyle changes are well attested in Kiyozawa’s diaries, the reports of his followers, and newspaper articles about Kiyozawa. Yet it is important to note that Kiyozawa never wrote an essay, diary entry, or lecture notes that referred to this lifestyle with the language “Minimum Possible” or “experiment.” Such representations are based, as far as I have determined, on the hearsay testimony and interpretation of one of Kiyozawa’s followers, Hitomi Chūjirō. At the June 1909 memorial services for Kiyozawa, Hitomi related the following:

Teacher was always saying, “Experiment (jikken) is an interesting thing. There is nothing easier for making people understand than confirming and proving things through experiment.” It seemed he was experimenting with various things. There was
a time when he sent me a letter, stating, “I am in the midst of experimenting with various things.” Teacher had previously taken up wooden clogs and traditional robes, walked at dawn to the head temple, and didn’t eat meat, so it is needless to say that he was inquiring into the ways of high monks of the saintly path through his own experiments. (Seishinkai 9, no. 6: 28)

Indeed, Hitomi had published in Seishinkai an excerpt of a letter he had received from Kiyozawa, dated December 9th 1893:

I am also presently in the midst of experimenting (jikken) with marvelous things. One can obtain firm results and then quickly make those known to others. I wonder whether there is anything in the world more wonderful than experiment. In all things, isn’t it possible to lessen disagreement and critique by turning to experiment? (Seishinkai 3, no. 7)23

It is unfortunate that the full letter was not published or otherwise preserved to provide further context. In Hitomi’s view, at least, Kiyozawa was here referring to his own “experiments” in living, Nishimura Kengyō finds corroboration for Hitomi’s interpretation in the details of Kiyozawa’s engagements with various ascetics. For example, in October of 1892, Kiyozawa dispatched a certain individual by the name of Ikagawa24 on a fact-finding mission to inquire into the lifestyle of a certain mountain hermit (sennin 仙人) living in the forests of Mt. Hiei. After receiving Ikagawa’s reports, Kiyozawa and Inaba Masamaru entered Mt. Hiei to seek out the hermit, but to no avail (Nishimura 1951, 125). Also, in August of 1893, Kiyozawa wrote a letter to his wife that marveled at the dietary practices of another ascetic he had met (ibid.,

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23 Jpn. 小生も當時妙な事を実験中に有之候。確たる成績を得候上は、早速御報可仕候。世界に実験程面白きことは無之哉と存候。故に何事も実験と思ふてすれば不平も非難も少なかる可き歟。

24 Identity and reading of name unknown. Nishimura only identifies him as 五十川氏.
Such evidence shows that Kiyozawa likely viewed his lifestyle changes as an “experiment” that could verify religious truths and persuade others of those truths, yet in his writings and lectures, he did not promote “experimentation” or “experience” as components of the religious life.\(^\text{25}\)

In his early philosophy of religion, Kiyozawa rarely uses the term “experience” (keiken). He did speak of “experiment” (jikken), but largely as a scientific method and philosophical position that only acknowledges the reality of that which can be observed by the five senses.\(^\text{26}\)

For the early Kiyozawa, religion, understood in subjectivist terms, stood in opposition to “experiment” and “experience.” Yet there are hints in these early writings that Kiyozawa may have felt compelled to broaden the definitions of “experiment” and “experience” to allow for “subjective experience” or even “experience of the Absolute.” Moreover, Kiyozawa seems to have been incorporating “experimentation” into his own religious life.

### 1.3 Middle Writings: Two Diaries

Between the 1892 publication of Skeleton and the 1901 commencement of the Seishinshugi movement, Kiyozawa fell ill with tuberculosis, spearheaded a nationwide

\(^{25}\) The significance accorded to the language of an “experiment” in the “Minimum Possible” by biographers and interpreters of Kiyozawa is thus overblown, reflecting a fascination with Kiyozawa’s asceticism (within the decidedly non-ascetic context of Shin Buddhism) as well as the appeal and power of Kiyozawa’s and his followers’ later discourse of religious “experience” and “experiment.”

\(^{26}\) To be sure, this was a caricature of Western traditions of “empiricism,” which had always allowed some space for the reality and “constitutive activity” of the subject (Jay 2005, 79).
movement to reform the Ōtani organization, found inspiration in the words of Śākyamuni Buddha and Epictetus, and moved to Tokyo to found and preside over Shinshū University.

Rather than attempt a survey of all of Kiyozawa’s writings from this period, I will focus on two works that best elucidate the transition from early Kiyozawa to late Kiyozawa. December Fan Diary (Rōsenki 蒔扇記) (1898-1899) is Kiyozawa’s personal diary that supposedly records his attainment of faith. Notes on the Finite and the Infinite (Yūgen mugen roku 有限無限録) (1899-1900) represents Kiyozawa’s last writings before the advent of the Seishinshugi movement but well after any transformative experience of faith he may have had.27

“December Fan Diary”

December Fan Diary features Kiyozawa’s ruminations on death and its relation to freedom in light of his reading of The Discourses of Epictetus. Kiyozawa’s diary is filled with English quotations and his own Japanese translations of The Discourses.28 From Epictetus, Kiyozawa adopts a view of the world as strictly divided into an inner world that is “in our power” and an external world that is not. Freedom is obtained by recognizing this distinction

27 As discussed in the introduction, Yamamoto Nobuo (2011) has recently argued that Notes on the Finite and the Infinite shares much in common with Kiyozawa’s early philosophical writings but is curiously at odds with certain Seishinkai essays. He explains this discrepancy by arguing that Kiyozawa’s followers had a hand in compiling his Seishinkai essays, sometimes proffering their own ideas (or interpretations of Kiyozawa’s ideas) under Kiyozawa’s name. From Yamamoto’s perspective, Notes on the Finite and the Infinite thus represents an important reliable resource for gauging the authentic views of the mature Kiyozawa.

28 Kiyozawa was reading an 1888 English translation by George Long titled The Discourses of Epictetus: with the Encheiridion and Fragments (London: George Bell and Sons).
and giving up any concern with “externals” (gaibutsu, gebutsu 外物)—including one’s own body and its life and death. Thus, Kiyozawa writes, “The greatest obstacle in the way to independence and freedom is our concern for material things, especially the question of keeping alive” (Kiyozawa 1936, 182). For both Epictetus and Kiyozawa, there was a God or “Other Power” that had established things in this way, granting humans freedom only with respect to their inner life.  

29 At times, Kiyozawa follows Epictetus in emphasizing the freedom of thought that humans do enjoy; at other times, he seems to contradict himself, emphasizing that such freedom is ultimately granted by and contained within Other Power: “Not only are our birth and death beyond our control, but the stream of our changing thoughts is also outside our conscious management and control. We are wholly in the power of something beyond us” (Kiyozawa 1936, 165).

Although December Fan Diary thus promotes an inward, subjectivist approach to exercising freedom and realizing one’s connection to the Infinite, it contains at least one section that relativizes this subjectivist approach.  

30 He writes:

Where is the Buddha nature? Not within. Not without. Not between the two. Employing discriminations, we explain it as within (direct 正), or we explain it as without (conditional 縁), or we explain it as the fruit (completion 了)... The Buddha, in his kindness, in one case opened the inner gate of contemplative practice, expounding that all beings have Buddha nature. In the other case, he opened the outer gate of hearing

29 “Other Power” (tariki 他力) is a core doctrine of Shin Buddhism, emphasizing that salvation through faith is wholly due to the power of Amida Buddha’s “Primal Vow” (hongan 本願) and stores of merit.  

30 This diary entry apparently represents Kiyozawa’s notes for a public dharma talk rather than private writings to himself.
and having faith, expounding the power of the Primal Vow and the seeking of rebirth upon faithfully hearing the name [of Amida Buddha]. Ultimately, these are [contained within] the great compassionate gate of skillful transformation. (Kiyozawa 1936, 162-3 amended; KMZ, vol. 8: 389-90)

Here Kiyozawa is clear that Buddha nature—the seed by which humans may grow to Buddhahood—is only said to be “within” or “without” out of expedience. For Kiyozawa, it is the third gate—Buddha-nature as “the fruit” (of karmic action)—that is the true but “ineffable” (fukasetsu 不可説) path to Buddhahood, encompassing the expediencies of the “self-power gate” and “other-power gate.”31 The emphasis in December Fan Diary on introspection would seem to suggest a preference for “contemplative practice” of the “inner gate,” according to which the Buddha nature is thought to exist within the mind (as in Zen Buddhism). However, Kiyozawa’s introspection does not aim for a direct insight into true reality; rather, he is concerned to discern the limits of his own powers in order to cultivate true faith in “Other Power”—the condition for rebirth and awakening.

December Fan Diary also contains an extended discussion of the limits of reason in the face of “mystery:”

However hard we may work at scholastic investigation, or however much our scientific and philosophic research may advance, what is beyond death (the final destination of all lives) is ultimately closed to us by a gate of mystery (fukashigi 不可思議)... Not only what is beyond death or life, but also concerning the objects before our eyes, their

31 Kiyozawa is here referencing the established doctrine in East Asian Buddhism, especially of the Huayan (Jpn. Kegon) school, that the path to Buddhahood (the “causal part” inbun 因分) can be explained, but its final realization (the “fruition part” kabun 果分) is inexplicable. This passage of Kiyozawa’s diary is also discussed in Johnston (1972, 190-1).
existence and purpose can only be called mysterious. Surrounded as we are by these strange things, we still have one realm of freedom. This is the realm of our own thought. (Kiyozawa 1936, 148-149 amended; KMZ, vol. 8: 362)

Echoing Spencer’s discussion of the “unknowable” (fukachi 不可知), Kiyozawa extends the quality of “the mysterious” (fukashigi 不可思議) from religious questions (existence after death) to the ordinary objects of our perception. He concludes that it is only our own thoughts that we can truly know and control.

“The mysterious” appears also in a later entry where Kiyozawa discusses Leibnitz’s theory of atoms and its implications for religion. Accepting that the universe is divided into atoms, Kiyozawa asks “whether these atoms have come into being by their own power or have been helped to grow by some other power.” He answers, “we can see neither the very beginning of self-development nor the very end. This makes us inclined to believe that the development of atoms is aided by some power not within themselves” (Kiyozawa 1936, 152). Thus, for Kiyozawa, the illogicality of uncaused causes and the mystery of existence imply some “other power.” Kiyozawa proceeds to characterize all religions—polytheistic, monotheistic, and pantheistic—as different forms of “paying reverence to the mysterious” (fukashigi no sonsū 不可思議の尊崇). In asserting the limits of the powers of observation and rationality and the implied existence of a “mysterious” reality, Kiyozawa rehearses his previous Spencer-like position.

Mention of “experience” or “experiment” is almost wholly absent from December Fan Diary. In one exception, Kiyozawa speaks of “mental experience” in a passage that seeks to
explicate Epictetus’s notion of freedom: “Can one say that an independent person’s acts of body, speech, and thought are free? Those [acts] that can be free and that remain within the scope of freedom are free. The standard for this must be found in one’s own mental experience (shinteki keiken 心的経験)” (KMZ, vol. 8: 425). The passage goes on to paraphrase Epictetus’s argument that a person’s thoughts and volitions are always free, even when confronting external obstacles (e.g. when confronting a thief, a person is always free to hand over the object without compromising his principles or becoming angry). This diary entry’s reference to “mental experience” is perhaps the first time he has ever advanced a notion of inner religious experience. According to Kiyozawa here, one can discern the boundaries of freedom and learn to live freely and happily only by investigating one’s private subjective experience. This is “religious,” for Kiyozawa, because such introspective discovery is accompanied by the complete entrusting of all externals to the Other Power of the Buddha. Why did Kiyozawa turn to a language of “mental experience” here? By all accounts, Kiyozawa’s reading of Epictetus was transformative for him; he would call The Discourses of Epictetus the “number one book in the West,” recommending it to his followers and students and invoking it frequently in his writings and lectures. In my interpretation, it was through studying The Discourses and applying its lessons to the dire circumstances of his own life that Kiyozawa finally felt himself to have found reliable knowledge to ground his religious faith. By way of Epictetus, he had found a liberating truth that could not be doubted—that had an “empirical” basis.
“Notes on the Finite and the Infinite”

Notes on the Finite and the Infinite is consistent with December Fan Diary in its Epictetus-inspired notions of freedom, subjectivist approach to religion, and skepticism toward science and reason’s ability to know the world. It also contains several illuminating passages that discuss “experience” in relation to “religion.”

The theme of skepticism toward science and reason is especially prominent. In one entry, Kiyozawa discusses this topic with explicit reference to Spencer’s First Principles:

Those who wish to see ultimate truth in this relative and limited physical world should look into Herbert Spencer’s First Principles. They should seek out a firm basis for the fundamental ideas of matter, motion, time, space, and so on. Spencer concludes that they are all unknowable. To expound the principles of physics or to discourse upon chemistry without determining whether [such fundamental ideas] are unknowable or not—is this not like building a castle in the sky? (KMZ, vol. 2: 116)

Kiyozawa here suggests his own agreement with Spencer that ideas such as “matter, motion, time, space, and so on” do not rest on a “firm basis” of their own but rather presume some reality beyond the “relative and limited physical world.” He is not urging his imaginary audience to adopt Spencer’s conclusion that they are ultimately “unknowable” but rather to follow Spencer’s line of thinking, seeking out a firm basis for the relative world and its features.

In a later entry entitled “Theories are Based on Faith,” Kiyozawa goes a step further in stating outright that the basic laws of logic (identity, non-contradiction, and the excluded middle), cause and effect, mathematics, and the sciences (including the categories of space, time, energy, motion, matter, and quantity) all have their basis in faith. This is consistent with
what he had already said in *Skeleton*: reason is fundamentally incomplete—“one proposition linking to or depending on the other *ad infinitum*.” Arguments for “self-evidence” are really just appeals outside of reason, and in this sense they can be said to “have a basis in faith” or represent a kind of faith commitment.

Kiyozawa then proceeds to reject Spencer's position that the Absolute is intrinsically unknowable:

Philosophy is said to ultimately fix the foundation for all the fields of study. Yet its ultimate principles always fall into the limited world. What, then, is the ladder into the clouds by which to step out of the relative world and climb to the Absolute world? One can say “direct perception” (*chokkaku* 直覚) or “touch” (*sesshoku* 接触), but isn’t “faith” the clearest [term]? (KMZ, vol. 2: 141)

Kiyozawa asserts that one can “climb to the Absolute world” by “faith.” Significantly, Kiyozawa presents “faith” as synonymous with “direct perception” and “touch.” Such terms might seem to point toward a concept of “experience.” Yet in fact, Kiyozawa follows this passage with a clear statement that such “faith” is not to be confused with “experience”:

Experiment, observation, experience—are these not things that come after we establish a certain amount of faith? Thus, is it not the greatest contradiction to say that faith is not well-established if not based on experiment and observation? (KMZ, vol. 2: 141-142)

In this passage, “experiment” and “experience” come only after faith, so they cannot be expected to form the basis for faith. The implication seems to be that neither our scientific experiments nor our experiences occur on a tabula rasa, but rather presume some pre-existing commitments and orientations that ultimately derive from faith. It is unclear whether
“experience’ here only refers to experience of the objective world or includes subjective experience.³²

The final entry of Notes on the Finite and Infinite displays Kiyozawa’s ongoing resistance to define religion as “empirical” or “experiential.” Kiyozawa states that philosophical worldviews can be broadly classified as either “empiricist” (keiken-ron 経験論) or “realist” (jitsuzai-ron 実在論). In his explanation, empiricists hold that we can only obtain knowledge through experience and so cannot know the world absolutely. “Empirical absolutists” only recognize the objects of experience as real while “empirical relativists” allow for the existence of unknowable things outside our experience. Kiyozawa rejects both positions, arguing that the very notion of “experience” implies a subject and an object. Absolutist empiricists ignore the subject and only impute reality to objects of experience. Relativist empiricists advance the nonsensical notion of “unknowable” but “existent” things.³³

Therefore, Kiyozawa sides with the “realists.” Realists, Kiyozawa explains, hold that the human mind possesses an “absolutist faculty” by which we may know the world absolutely.³⁴

³² It is somewhat curious that Kiyozawa takes “experience” out of the equation when he writes, “Thus, is it not the greatest contradiction to say that faith is not well-established if not based on experiment and observation?” In December Fan Diary, he had explicitly presented “mental experience” as the pathway to knowledge of one’s freedom as well as one’s relationship with the Infinite. Perhaps he was unsure here whether to say that faith is based on “experience” or not.
³³ Needless to say, these are shorthand, undeveloped representations and critiques of Western philosophical positions. I introduce them here only to show how Kiyozawa categorized his own views in relation to “empiricism.”
³⁴ He explicitly claims this as one of his own personal views elsewhere in the diary (KMZ, vol. 2: 142).
Such knowledge is said to be arrived at by one of three forms of mental activity—logic (*ronri* 論理), sudden enlightenment (*tongo* 頓悟), or faith (*shinnen* 信念). Kiyozawa rejects logic as a possible means to knowing the Absolute, and thus concludes that the Absolute can only be known through sudden enlightenment or faith.

Kiyozawa here unquestionably sets “religious faith” and “experience” opposed to one another. “Experience” is understood within the context of philosophical “empiricism” that is skeptical of any reality not observable by the five senses. “To experience” means to see, hear, smell, taste, or touch the “outside world.” For Kiyozawa, the object of religious faith was no mere object within the “objective world”; it belonged to a realm transcending the subject-object distinction, prior to “experience,” and thus unknowable to reason or scientific observation. Rather, it was through “faith”—understood in terms of “direct perception,” “touch,” or even “mental experience”—that one could encounter and know the Infinite.

Kiyozawa does note that “experience” requires a subject as well as an object, but he resists any straightforward assertion that “faith” is a matter of “experience.”

**1.4 Later Writings: Seishinshugi Publications**

Kiyozawa’s Seishinshugi period (1901-1903) writings do not significantly depart from his previous writings in terms of understanding religion and religious faith. His former affirmation of religion on “subjectivist” grounds together with his denial of the self-sufficiency of science and reason are restated and expanded in these writings. A change that we do see,
however, is in his rhetorical use of the term “experience.” Here, for the first time, Kiyozawa clearly argues that religion is grounded in experience—but this does not constitute a changed view.

**A Subjectivist Approach to Religion**

The January 1901 opening article of the Seishinkai journal, entitled “Seishinshugi,” begins as follows:

Our existence in the world requires a firm ground on which to stand. If one were to try to get along in the world and do things without such a ground, it would be like trying to give a performance standing on the clouds. Obviously, one could not avoid toppling down. Yet, how is such a ground to be attained? It cannot be attained except on the basis of an Absolute, Infinite being. (Johnston 1972, 189 amended; KMZ, vol. 6: 3)

Here we immediately see an expression of Kiyozawa’s longstanding belief that nothing besides religion—not science, reason, nor anything else—can provide one certain, non-relativist knowledge. The passage continues:

We see no need to make a one-sided assertion on the question of whether this Infinite is within our spirit or outside our spirit because this Absolute Infinite is wherever seekers meet it. This is not limited to within [the spirit], nor is this limited to outside [the spirit]. We just say that unless we are in touch with an Infinite Being like this we cannot have a firm ground in the world. And the road along which the spirit develops when it has gained this kind of ground is called Seishinshugi. (ibid. amended)

Note the recurrence of this metaphor, previously used to argue against the ultimacy of scientific knowledge. See discussion of Kiyozawa’s *Notes on the Finite and the Infinite* above.
Thus, from the start, Kiyozawa’s Seishinshugi does not deny that the Absolute Infinite also can be encountered in the outside world. The Absolute exists both within the spirit and outside the spirit—wherever the seeker seeks. Yet, practically speaking, Kiyozawa argues that the Infinite Being should be sought introspectively. The same essays ends by declaring, “The main point of this is that Spiritualism is our way of practice in the world, and its first principle lies in the faith that complete fulfillment should be sought within the spirit” (KMZ, vol. 6: 5). In Kiyozawa and his followers’ Seishinshugi writings, the term “spirit” (seishin 精神) undoubtedly carries nuances not conveyed by the terms “mind” (shin 心) or “subjectivity” (shūkan 主観), but the core meaning of the term here and elsewhere is “mind.”

Why should the Absolute be sought within one’s mind if it exists both within one’s mind and outside of it? In a 1901 essay entitled “Development of the Mind,” Kiyozawa expands on ideas presented in Skeleton, describing the process of attaining faith as a development from objectivism to subjectivism to “subject-object transcendence” (shukyaku-chōzetsu-shugi 主客超絶主義). He describes this three-stage process in relation to profitmaking, fame, social relations, ethics, and finally religion. In the example of profitmaking, one first pursues profit indiscriminately, seeking objective gain; then one learns to pursue only profit that is suitable for oneself, producing subjective gain; finally, one learns to abandon the search for objective profit

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36 I am presuming that Kiyozawa is the author of these ideas. Unless expressly noted, the articles I treat in this section are not among those directly called into question by Yamamoto (see Yamamoto 2011, 38).
37 On the nuances of the term “seishin” in Kiyozawa’s writings, see Johnston (1972, 188-89) and Nishitani Keiji’s 1963 article in SRS (vol. 2: 243-55).
or subjective gain, resulting in serenity—the highest form of gain or profit. As for religion, one first imagines God or Buddha to exist objectively outside oneself, embodied in images or residing in faraway heavens; one then discovers God or Buddha as subjective realities, residing within oneself. The attainment of the third stage is described as follows:

When one truly reaches the pinnacle of religion, without [exclusively] looking to wooden statues or mind-only, one comes to revere the wooden images and also to taste Amida as mind-only. It means that the man who has arrived at truth allows for wooden images and also tastes Amida as mind-only. [Such a man] has faith in the Tathāgata [epithet for the Buddha] of the infinite dharma world and simultaneously has faith in Amida of the Western Land. Such a man has faith that this world of samsara is none other than nirvana while at the same time having faith in the Western Pure Land. Only upon reaching this point has one arrived at religion. (KMZ, vol. 6: 65)

Echoing Skeleton, Kiyozawa describes the ultimate stage as the transcendence of the subject-object distinction, resulting in a perspective that finds the objective view (that the Buddha

38 “Mind-only” (yuishin 唯心) is a Buddhist concept associated with the Yogacara tradition of Mahayana Buddhism, according to which “the external world of the senses does not exist independently of the mind and that all phenomena are mere projections of consciousness” (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 195). In a Shin context, the notion that Amida Buddha or the Pure Land are “mind-only” is anathema, given Shinran’s famous opening words to the “Faith” (shin 信) chapter of his Kyōgyōshinshō: “As I reflect, I find that our attainment of shinjin (faith) arises from the heart and mind with which Amida Tathagata selected the Vow, and that the clarification of true mind has been taught for us through the skillful works of compassion of the Great Sage, Śākyamuni. But the monks and laity of this latter age and the religious teachers of these times are floundering in concepts of ‘self-nature’ and ‘mind-only,’ and they disparage the true realization of enlightenment in the Pure Land way. Or lost in the self-power attitude of meditative and nonmeditative practices, they are ignorant of true shinjin, which is diamondlike.” (CWS, vol. 1: 77).

39 “Tathāgata” (nyorai 如来), literally “thus come one” or “thus gone one,” is a traditional epithet for a Buddha. Kiyozawa’s use of the term is intentionally non-sectarian, pointing to a generalized Buddha (along the lines of “Dharmakaya”—the eternal “body of dharma” that comprises one of the Buddha’s three bodies, according to Mahayana thought) rather than to Amida Buddha in particular. This distinction is clearly seen in this passage’s contrasting of “the Tathāgata of the infinite dharma world” with “Amida of the Western land.”
resides only in certain images or certain lands) and the subjective view (that the Buddha resides within one’s mind) incomplete and unsatisfactory. Instead, one sees the Buddha and paradise everywhere—within and without. Clearly disavowing the position that the Buddha is merely a subjective reality, Kiyozawa’s developmental model nonetheless requires believers to pass through a subjective stage en route to subject-object transcendence and union with the Buddha.

The notion of faith as a state of subject-object transcendence is prominent in Kiyozawa’s final essay and iconic testament of faith, “This is how I have faith in the Buddha,” published as “My Faith” in June of 1903 in Seishinkai, days after his death. Kiyozawa introduces his faith as follows:

I should hardly have to mention that my faith refers to the state of my mind that has faith in Tathāgata, which is made up of two factors: faith and Tathāgata. Outwardly these two appear to be two different things, but for me these two are one. What is my faith? It is faith in Tathāgata. What is Tathāgata to which I refer? It is the reality (hontai 本体) upon which my faith is based. (1972, 148 amended; KMZ, vol. 6: 330)

To say that faith (his subjectivity) and the Tathāgata (the object of his belief) are not two separate things is to say that the subject-object distinction does not apply—subject and object are unified in some sense.
Reason’s Reliance on Faith

As in his earlier writings, Kiyozawa’s Seishinshugi writings affirm religion while denying the self-sufficiency of reason and science. For example, in the essay “First Look within Yourselves,” Kiyozawa states:

We commonly think that things have constant aspects just as we see them. This is a great mistake. We are accustomed to see the color of a thing and regard it as its everlasting element; what we hear we regard as a constant sound; we touch a thing and think that its present form will never change. We even declare that such and such a thing has certain qualities which have been proved true through our experiment and observation. But how can we grasp the true meaning of a thing through experiment or observation, when we stand on a false basis in surveying its real structure? This does not mean, however, that we need no kind of experiment or observation whatever. I am only saying here that no amount of experiment and observation will ever give a real understanding of things unless founded on true hypotheses. (1936, 54 amended; KMZ, vol. 6: 60)

Here again, Kiyozawa states that the “true meaning” of things is ultimately “unknowable” to science. Scientific “experiment and observation” are useful only in a limited way and require some “firm basis” from outside of reason.

In “A View of Equality, a Spring 1901 lecture given at Shinshū University in Tokyo, Kiyozawa reacts to the hypothetical charge that his religious claims are based in “fancy” (kūsō 空想) with the counter-charge that science is itself based in “fancy.”

There may be objections to this view that “all things in the universe are one body” (banbutsu ittai 万物一体); some may say that this fancy will never hold its own in the presence of today’s experimental sciences. But are not the experimental sciences themselves also based on fancies? What are called atoms in chemistry are no other than fancies; so too is every power in physics. Nay, all objective existence is founded on fancies. The sciences and experiments of today are in no position to boycott imagination. (KMZ, vol. 7: 272)
Kiyozawa’s use of the term “fancy” to characterize science and religion is new, but the idea is consistent with his earlier writings: scientific claims are not more well-grounded than religious faith statements. The proofs of science and reason are “incomplete,” ultimately resting on “fancies.”

Kiyozawa also goes a step beyond his previous argument, claiming here that not just the sciences and philosophy, but “all objective existence,” is based in “fancy.” The “objective world”—the world investigated by the “empirical sciences”—is actually subjective, Kiyozawa says. He develops this argument as follows:

It is my own fancy that our universe exists both within and outside our mind. It is generally agreed that objective entities lie outside our mind. They mirror their reflections within our mind, it is true, but those are nothing but reflections. The theory that things exist both within and outside our mind means that both the things outside our mind and those within it are equally substantial; and moreover these two kinds of things are not really two kinds but entirely the same. This may seem highly fanciful, but our own view has already been stated that nothing is to be rejected simply because it is fanciful. We also say in Buddhism, “mind only” or “consciousness only.” Recently I have been advocating Seishinshugi, which does not say that there are two kinds of things, objective and subjective, and that we take hold only of the subjective things and abandon the objective things among them. It says that even so-called objective things are subjective; or, objective things and subjective things are not two kinds of substance, but one. Or to put it differently again, both objective and subjective are fancies. It says that both objectivity and subjectivity exist in one and the same fancy. But, what is this fancy? It is a completely subjective thing. Therefore, to say that there are both

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40 I follow Johnston and Tajima and Shacklock in translating the term kūsō 空想 (literally “empty thought”) as “fancy.” The term carries implications of “fantasy,” “delusion,” or mere “imagination.” The character 空 denotes the “sky” and “emptiness,” suggestive of Kiyozawa’s previous characterizations of secular worldviews and pursuits as “building a castle in the sky” or “giving a performance standing in the clouds.”
subjectivity and objectivity within the fancy is to say that both of these exist within the subjectivity. Ordinarily, we speak of these two subjectivities as the “great universe” and the “small universe.” With respect to the subjectivity of the small universe, all objective things exist. This subjectivity and objectivity are both together in the subjectivity of the great universe. Then, by saying that the small universe and the great universe are entirely the same, we say in effect: the large universe is at one and the same time the small universe. Or we may say instead the “great self” and the “small self.” Well, each one of us is both “great universe” and “small universe.” When viewed from this angle, there is no distinction between self and other or between this and that. Everything is equal: from this angle, from that angle, and from every angle. (Johnston 1972, 193-94 amended and expanded; KMZ, vol. 7: 273-74)

This passage presents some of Kiyozawa’s richest metaphysical speculations and could be discussed from numerous angles.41 Here I would like to emphasize that this was a motivational lecture to Shin Buddhist students rather than a philosophical or theological tract meant for a broad audience. Perhaps more important than the argument’s metaphysical content is its rhetorical strategy and purpose. Kiyozawa inverts the meaning of “fancy,” claiming that everything real in the world has a basis in subjective “fancy.” This turns the tables on science and its critique of religion. The “objective” world of science is swallowed up by the “subjective” world of religion.

41 I interpret this passage as again denying both “objectivism” and “subjectivism” (in a coarse sense) in favor of a view of “subject-object transcendence”: “objective things and subjective things are not two kinds of substance, but one.” Kiyozawa’s view of “subject-object transcendence” can also be understood as a form of subjectivism (in a refined sense): “This subjectivity and objectivity are both together in the subjectivity of the great universe.”
Scientific Experience, Religious Experience

In addition to sharpening his critical rhetoric toward science—declaring science and the objective world to be matters of “fancy”—Kiyozawa also sharpened his affirmative rhetoric in support of religion. Previously, Kiyozawa had used language of “touch,” “direct perception,” and even “mental experience” to describe the religious encounter with the Infinite. In his Seishinshugi writings, Kiyozawa more openly and assertively sets religious faith beside scientific knowledge as equally grounded in “experience.”

In mid-April of 1901, Kiyozawa published two essays in separate journals that spoke of religion in antithetical ways—“A View of Equality” in the Shinshū University journal Mujintō and “Science and Religion” in Seishinkai, intended for the broader public. In “A View of Equality,” Kiyozawa states outright that religion is not based in experience; in “Science and Religion,” he states that it is.

As for things like hell, heaven, and Amida Buddha, we cannot truly know them through experience (keiken). In this respect, they are nothing more than fancies.  ---“A View of Equality” (KMZ, vol. 7: 275)42

It is said that scientific facts are based on experience. Religious facts, too, certainly must be based in experience (keiken). Also, it is said that scientific conclusions then become

42 Jpn. 地獄極楽や阿弥陀如来の如き、我々は之を現実に経験よりて知ることは出来ぬ、其点から云へば空想に過ぎません。
common knowledge (jōshiki 常識). Religious conclusions, too, certainly ought to become common knowledge. --“Science and Religion” (KMZ, vol. 6: 8)43

What should we make of this discrepancy? Presuming that Kiyozawa was the author of both statements,44 it would seem that “experience” was for him a flexible term that could carry contradictory meanings, depending on the context. In “A View of Equality,” Kiyozawa was addressing the Shinshū University population of students, faculty, and staff—“insiders” who already possessed some commitment to Shin teachings. As recounted above, Kiyozawa responded to the implicit charge that his religious views were based in “fancy” with the counter-claim that science and its objects of study were based in “fancy” themselves. Yet “A View of Equality” does not seek to defend religion to scientific believers; it seeks to affirm a certain form of religiosity to religious believers. With this in mind, let us look at the passage in question:

As for things like hell, heaven, and Amida Buddha, we cannot truly know them through experience. In this respect, they are nothing more than fancies. Assuredly, however, they have a practical use which exists whether the object in question is a reality or not. In other words, there is utility where there is faith—faith being a fancy built up in our mind with unshakable firmness. It is a matter of course that any great accomplishment requires a great faith or fancy: an infinite utility requires an infinite faith. That the larger universe is the same as the smaller universe is indeed as much a fancy as anything that can be imagined. If, however, this fancy should be implanted deeply in our minds, an immense use would come of it. Miracles such as the dead coming to life

43 Jpn. 蓋し科学の事実を以て経験に基くものといふ。宗教の事実も決して経験に基づかざるものにあらす。又科学の判断を以て常識に範らるものと云ふ、宗教の判断も決して常識に範らざるものにあらす。
44 Yamamoto (2011) casts no skepticism on the authorship of these two essays.
or the changing of a wicked spirit into a Buddha will be accomplished through such fancy. The so-called “mystery of divine transformation” will come forth. This world as it is will become the Pure Land; it will become the heavenly realm. However, to know this mysterious meaning, to understand this mysterious realm, one must take care not to be trapped into [notions of] their objective reality. (1936, 50 amended; KMZ, vol. 7: 275)

Here Kiyozawa cautions his Shin audience against the pull of scientific pressures to search for an objective reality corresponding to religious teachings. Instead of arguing for the “empirical” nature of religion—its basis in “experience”—Kiyozawa points to the wonderful miracles and transformations that will occur for one who has established deep faith. The emphasis on “practical use” is accompanied by lack of concern with “whether the object in question is a reality or not”—a statement that echoes Shinran’s statement in the Tannishō: “I am entirely ignorant as to whether the Nenbutsu is really the cause of Birth in the Pure Land, or whether it is the karma which will cause me to fall into hell” (Ryukoku University Translation Center 1990, 19). In such a discursive context, Kiyozawa did not choose to argue that religious realities could be “proved” through “experience.”

In “Science and Religion,” Kiyozawa addressed a broader readership beyond the bounds of the Shin community. The Seishinkai journal had a relatively wide readership for its time (approximately 3000 copies printed per issue) composed of Buddhists from various sects as well as non-Buddhist intellectuals (Yoshida 1986, 155). Confronting such readers who generally would have been more committed to science and more skeptical of Shin teachings, Kiyozawa
argued that religious teachings are proven by experience just as scientific theories are. Here is the full passage in question:

When it comes to knowledge such as the revolving of the earth, for us today who have come to think of it many times, we are able to imagine the situation somewhat. But if it were explained to those without such an education, they would certainly not be able to affirm it easily. Although such scientific explanations are difficult to affirm straight away, its facts are based on experience, so its conclusions become common knowledge. Is it not the same with the so-called “delusive faith” and “superstitions” of religion? I have something I must say regarding so-called experience and common knowledge. It is said that scientific facts are based on experiences. Religious facts, too, certainly must be based in experience. Also, it is said that scientific conclusions then become common knowledge. Religious conclusions, too, certainly ought to become common knowledge. One may ask science whether [religion] runs counter to experience or contradicts common knowledge, but science does not have the qualifications to make such a judgment. One may ask philosophy, but within the field of philosophy there are many different theories. Therefore the final judgment as to experience and common knowledge must be entrusted to the spirit of individuals, which is the fundamental birthplace of both [experience and common knowledge]. (KMZ, vol. 6: 35)

Kiyozawa speaks of religious “facts,” “experience,” and “knowledge” in parallel with scientific “facts,” “experience,” and “knowledge.” His argument hinges on the premise that the “experiences” of religion are analogous to the “experiences” (i.e. “empirical findings”) of science. Both are “empirical,” albeit on different registers. Kiyozawa is thereby able to define science and religion as parallel domains, the only difference being that religion relates to subjective rather than objective facts. In Kiyozawa’s accounting, the “fundamental birthplace” of experience is located in one’s subjectivity, not in the objective world, so there can be no question that religion’s subjective facts deserve to be affirmed and established as common knowledge just as scientific facts and theories are. Philosophy, for its part, is powerless to contradict religious claims on account of its variability—“incomplete” and limited as it is.
Through such arguments, Kiyozawa attempts a redefinition of “empiricism” itself, declaring the possibility of an “empiricism” of “religious experience.”

Thus, for a Shin Buddhist audience, Kiyozawa characterized science as a matter of “fancy” while affirming the miraculous efficacy of embracing the “fancies” of Shin teachings; for a broader readership, he asserted religion’s “empirical” basis. In both cases, Kiyozawa sought to level the playing field and bring religion and science together by denying science’s self-sufficiency and privileged access to knowledge; only the rhetorical strategies were different.45

Around the same time, Kiyozawa gave an important lecture entitled “Religion is a Subjective Fact.”46 The lecture begins: “Any religion is a subjective fact. A subjective fact of any kind is examined as to its validity only in our own heart. It should not be judged true or false by its relation to the outer world or because of other men’s comments about it, as in the case of all objective facts” (KMZ, vol. 6: 283). Kiyozawa’s characterization of religion as “subjective fact” is akin to his assertion that religion is “based in experience.” In both cases, Kiyozawa is claiming for religion a status as proven reality equal to that of science’s objective facts. There would be no compulsion to characterize religion as “fact” or to speak of its basis in “experience” if it were not being scrutinized from a secular, scientific perspective.

45 The discrepancy between these two essays could also be interpreted as indicating an ongoing tension in Kiyozawa’s thought regarding the empirical status of religious truths.

46 The lecture is said to have been given in the Spring of 1901, presumably as one of Kiyozawa’s Sunday lectures at his 金剛堂 group’s dwelling (KMZ, vol. 6: 399).
In an oft-cited passage from the same lecture, Kiyozawa likens the “subjective fact” of encountering the Buddha with the subjective sensation of temperature:

Then, if one takes [religion] to be a subjective fact, how can one explain the existence of gods and buddhas (shinbutsu 神仏), the being or non-being of hells and pure lands? This is a point that is difficult to get to the bottom of. That being the case, if I now were forced to try to speak of the situation, [I would say] we do not have faith in gods and buddhas because they exist; gods and buddhas exist for us because we have faith in them. Also, we do not have faith in hells and pure lands because hells and pure lands exist; hells and pure lands exist for us when we have faith in them. It is just like cold and warmth. Fundamentally, it is not that cold and warmth exist as objective facts first and then we feel them as facts. While we do not feel them, the facts of cold and warmth are completely non-existent [for us]. However, when we feel them, then they exist [for us]. I would like for you to think about my outline of the subjective facts that make up the content of religious faith in this way.

If after all religion is a subjective fact, then it is off the mark to ask about the objective proof for those things that concern the facts of our religious faith. That is to say, concerning the contents of religious faith, one should ask whether we are each able to have faith in each point, but there is no need to argue about whether such things have actuality removed from our minds. (KMZ, vol. 6: 284)

Taken out of context and ignoring the key words “for us,” Kiyozawa’s statements have been taken to mean that the Buddha exists only within our minds or that the Buddha’s existence depends upon human belief—that when we cease to believe, the Buddha ceases to exist. I would argue, by contrast, that this passage should be interpreted as Kiyozawa’s pragmatic instructions to students about the order of attaining faith: one cannot first obtain (objective) proof of the Buddha’s existence and then enter into faith; rather, one can only obtain (nondualistic) proof of the Buddha’s existence after coming to have faith. Kiyozawa is not denying the Buddha’s ever-

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47 Jpn. 私共が神仏を信するか故に、私共に対して神仏か存在する.
present reality; he is only emphasizing that the Buddha’s reality cannot manifest itself “for us” until we have faith.48

One is reminded here of Śākyamuni Buddha’s famous response to a monk’s metaphysical questions about the universe and Buddhas (Is the world eternal or non-eternal? Does a Buddha exist after death or not?). Śākyamuni compared this monk to a person wounded with a poisoned arrow demanding to know who had shot the arrow before having it removed. The lesson is that engaging such questions is unrelated and even counterproductive to the goal of achieving an end to suffering. Similarly, Kiyozawa speaks of being “forced to answer” questions that are “off the mark.” Nonetheless, he does begrudgingly give an answer that emphasizes the “subjective” nature of religion. This can be understood in two ways: as an intermediary step on a path from objectivism to subjectivism to object-subject transcendence, or as an expression of his view that the “subjective” world and the “objective” world are equally “subjective” in the final analysis. In either case, Kiyozawa is not saying that the Buddha has no existence apart from our minds.

The language of “religious experience” appears again in “On Saint Shinran’s Birthday,” an essay based on a letter sent by Kiyozawa in April 1902 to Shinshū University on the occasion

48 This argument echoes a passage from Notes on the Finite and the Infinite discussed above: “Experiment, observation, experience—are these not things that come after we establish a certain amount of faith? Thus, is it not the greatest contradiction to say that faith is not well-established if not based on experiment and observation?” (KMZ, vol. 2: 141-142) See Johnston (2007) for further discussion of Kiyozawa’s “Religion is a Subjective Fact” essay.
of Shinran’s birthday celebrations in lieu of his actual attendance.\(^49\) The essay was printed in

*Seishinkai* the same month. He writes:

From the very start, the great path of Other Power revealed by Saint Shinran, viewed for the first time by an outsider, will not stand up to suspicion. Talk of “Other Power,” “the Primal Vow,” “Buddha’s Name,” “gathering,” “Pure Land,” and “hell” will be taken to be either foolish children’s games or absurd theories. However, once one has intimately encountered the great question of life and death, passed through spiritual anguish, and touched the light of the one path, one will be surrounded in light and look anew upon that which had appeared absurd. One will see in “Other Power” a deep significance; in “the Primal Vow” a deep significance; the arising of a taste of mystery in “Buddha’s Name”; the arising of irrepressible gratitude in “gathering”; and the present reality of hells and pure lands in the clarity within one’s mind. That which had been doubted will all become facts of spiritual experience (*shinreki-teki keiken no jijitsu* 心霊的経験の事実), and just as if looking upon the bright moon on a clear night, one will reach knowledge that cannot be doubted in the slightest…

In sum, religion is subjective fact; it is spiritual experience. In this sense, if one tastes the Other Power teachings revealed for us by Saint Shinran, each word will have life and each phrase will be a fact, giving us peace of mind, giving us happiness, and giving us eternal life. (KMZ, vol. 6: 103-4)

Through a process of encounter and experience, what had appeared fanciful and absurd are discovered to be deeply significant realities in this world of the present. Experience of these realities brings “knowledge that cannot be doubted” as well as “peace of mind,” “happiness,” and “eternal life.” This dual emphasis on experiential “knowledge” and the “practical use” of

\(^49\) *Kiyozawa Manshi zenshū* states that the essay “is thought to be” a letter sent by Kiyozawa for Shinran’s birthday celebration (vol. 6: 389). No original manuscript of Kiyozawa’s letter exists, and Yamamoto categorizes this essay as showing strong indication of being edited or otherwise “compiled” by Kiyozawa’s followers (2011, 38).

\(^50\) *Sesshū* 摂取. This can also be rendered as “grasping.” This refers to Amida Buddha’s gathering or grasping of sentient beings into his Pure Land or, more abstractly, into the purview of his compassion (SSJ 314).
faith brings together the disparate language and concepts employed in “A View of Equality” and “Science and Religion” a year earlier.

Finally, language of religious “experiment” (jikken)—largely absent from Kiyozawa’s writings in the decade since his so-called “Minimum Possible experiment”—resurfaces in Kiyozawa’s final essay, “My Faith.” However, in this essay, jikken can be translated best into English as “experience.” The difference between jikken here and keiken in “Science and Religion,” “A View of Equality,” and “On Saint Shinran’s Birthday” is that jikken is used as a verb to describe personal experiences whereas keiken is used as a noun to discuss “experience” abstractly. Jikken means “to experience and thereby verify” while keiken means “experience.”

The term appears in two passages in the essay. First:

As for why I have faith in the Tathāgata, I can say it is because it involves the benefit mentioned above [of having all agony and suffering swept away]. But there are other reasons. The benefit comes only after the act of believing. Before, no one can know if benefit will follow. Of course, there is no reason one could not believe in the testimony of others, but a belief based on hearsay remains uncertain. To truly say that there is a benefit or not, one must be speaking on the basis of having experienced (jikken). My faith in the Tathāgata is not only based on such benefits. It has a great basis outside these. You may ask what that is. My faith in the Tathāgata [derives from reaching] the ultimate limits of my knowledge. I will disregard the period when I was not serious about the matter of life. Once I had become somewhat serious, it came about that I just had to inquire into the meaning of life. Eventually, that inquiry brought me to the point of acknowledging life’s meaning to be inscrutable. This brought on my faith in the Tathāgata. There may be room for suspecting that my following this course was accidental, for the need for such an inquiry is not necessary in order to have faith. My faith, however, required passing through such a course of events. It is an integral part of my faith to believe that my self-power is useless. (Kiyozawa 1972, 149 amended; KMZ, vol. 6: 161)
In this passage, Kiyozawa expresses an “empiricist” position: certain knowledge of the Tathāgata’s power to effect blessings can only be obtained through personal experience. He claims to have had such an experience. Yet this experience—this empirical proof—came only after attaining faith. Faith was attained, for Kiyozawa, not through an experience of the Tathāgata but through the exhausting of his powers of reason. He needed to personally discover reason’s inability to discern ultimate truth. This had been a theme in Kiyozawa’s writings all along. Yet in this passage, reason’s supportive role in “regulating” and “purifying” faith takes on a different cast—ultimately, reason’s use lies in its very abandonment. Kiyozawa’s depiction of the role of reason bears some similarity to the traditional Buddhist metaphor likening the Buddha’s teachings to a raft. For Kiyozawa, it is reason that aids one in arriving at the far shore of salvation, yet the final step is to let go of reason.51

The second passage containing the term *jikken* affirms the present reality of religious truths and efficacy and asserts an agnosticism regarding the afterlife:

The happiness deriving from faith is the greatest happiness of my present life. It is the happiness I am experiencing day and night. I shall not speak of happiness in the next life here, since I have not yet experienced it myself. (ibid., 150 amended; KMZ, vol. 6: 163)

51 The reader may consider this comparison a stretch, as the “raft” of the Buddha’s teachings are usually understood as a great treasure whereas Kiyozawa’s “reason” is declared “useless” in the final analysis. Admittedly, the emphasis is different, but practically speaking, the point is the same: make use of the Buddha’s teachings or reason as far as you can, and then realize that you have to let go.
Here, too, the language of “experience” is used in relation to an implied skepticism about the reality of religious entities. The appeal to “experience” is made to sort out what has been confirmed as real (i.e. the present efficacy of religious faith—and the implied present reality of the Buddha) from what has not been confirmed as real (i.e. future rebirth in the Pure Land).

1.5 Conclusion

What has been clarified by this survey of Kiyozawa’s writings as they relate to the conceptualization of religion, science, and experience? First, it has been shown that throughout his career, Kiyozawa consistently took a subjectivist, or phenomenological, approach in defining religion. This reduction of religion to subjectivity is expressed most clearly in the following quote from “On Saint Shinran’s Birthday”: “Shadows never exist alone... such things as the central image, religious literature, services, rites and creeds are really the reflection or the indication of what is in our mind. We must not be surprised at some such expression of our faith. It shows that a living and vital religion is established within our mind” (Kiyozawa 1936, 66). The essence of religion takes place within the mind; all of the writings, images, rituals, and institutions are just religion’s “shadows” or “expressions.” As for how Kiyozawa came to this understanding, various hypotheses are possible. Sectarian scholars assert that Kiyozawa’s inward turn should be understood as the rediscovery of true Shin Buddhist religiosity as taught by Shinran (Terakawa 1973; Mizushima 2010). Historians and Buddhist studies scholars have explained Kiyozawa’s inward turn as part of a broader trend of intellectuals seeking escape
from the overwhelming forces of state morality campaigns and capitalist markets (Sueki 2004-2010; Fasan 2012). This chapter has shown the entanglement of Kiyozawa’s early writings on religion with Western philosophy, particularly the formulations of religion by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Max Müller. Anticipating criticism, Kiyozawa persistently defended his subjectivist approach as not implying the Buddha to be merely a content of the mind. Thus, he described faith as the result of a process of development from objectivist faith to subjectivist faith to a faith of subject-object transcendence. While an ontological position is implied here, Kiyozawa’s subjectivism was primarily a matter of practical instruction about how to approach and encounter the Infinite. It would be an overstatement to say Kiyozawa’s views of religion did not change over the course of his career; certainly, his failures in trying to reform the Ōtani administration, his reading of Epictetus, and his battles with tuberculosis were transformative events that affected his understandings of the self power-Other Power relation, of freedom, and of death. Yet none of this brought him to a newfound understanding of religion as a matter of subjectivity; such an understanding had been with him all along.

Next, it was shown that throughout his career, Kiyozawa consistently affirmed religion in conjunction with a critique of reason and science. Many factors may have contributed to Kiyozawa’s views on this matter. This chapter highlighted the significance of Kiyozawa’s reading of Herbert Spencer’s *First Principles*. Like Spencer, Kiyozawa emphasizes that reason is fundamentally “incomplete,” one proposition linking to another *ad infinitum*, none of them resting on a firm basis. To try to understand the world by reason alone is like “building a castle
in the sky.” Thus, reason and science can be said to have a basis in “faith,” and if religion is to be accused of “fancy,” the same accusations can be turned against science and reason. Scholars have often understood Kiyozawa as evolving from an optimistic view of reason’s potential (reason can “grasp” the Infinite) to the view that reason is useless (“acknowledging life’s meaning to be inscrutable”). In contrast, I have argued that Kiyozawa always saw reason as a necessary partner to faith and always insisted that only faith—not reason—can bring one to an encounter with the Infinite. In these views, Kiyozawa agreed with Spencer’s characterization of Absolute reality as “unknowable” to reason and science but disagreed that it was also “unknowable” to religious faith.

It was important to demonstrate the fundamental consistency in Kiyozawa’s conceptual understanding of religion, reason, and science to properly assess one notable change in Kiyozawa’s writings: the rise of a discourse of “religious experience.” In the chapter’s introduction, I suggested that an appeal to “experience” is generally made to defend the reality of something whose existence is under scrutiny. To say that one has “experienced” something is to say one has certain knowledge of its reality. This was especially true in Meiji Japan when the terms for “experience” and “experiment” were not yet differentiated. From early on, Kiyozawa was concerned with scientific skepticism in religion and took up the position that religious realities were to be known subjectively, not proved or disproved objectively. Again, this basic outlook remained fundamentally unchanged throughout his career. What changed was the language Kiyozawa used to argue for his position. In his early writings, Kiyozawa
followed the basic—if somewhat caricaturized—understanding of Western science and empiricist philosophy that “experience” referred only to the world of sense objects. In his middle writings, he began to explore the language of “direct perception” and “mental experience” as ways of describing the encounter with the Infinite. In his later writings, he asserted that religion was based in “experience” to certain audiences while denying this to others. I interpret this not as an expression of contradictory views but as an application of different rhetorical strategies. To a Shin audience, Kiyozawa stressed that religious realities could not be approached empirically (i.e. one cannot withhold faith until experiential proof is obtained). To a broader audience, Kiyozawa declared religious realities to be empirical (i.e. proven by experience). This redefined “empiricism” to include the derivation of certain and generalizable knowledge from “spiritual experiences.” Should “subjective” experiences be included alongside the “objective” or “inter-subjective” experiences of scientific study as a valid source of certain and generalizable knowledge? Unfortunately, Kiyozawa does not address this crucial question in his writings. By way of one hypothetical answer, it is worth noting that Buddhist psychology had always counted consciousness as the “sixth sense” by which beings interact with the world. Perhaps “subjective empiricism” is a more easily digestible concept within a framework of Buddhist thought.

Kiyozawa’s religious empiricism might also seem to differ from scientific empiricism on the count that the empirical verification of religious realities is only possible after a leap of faith, so to speak. Yet this was precisely Kiyozawa’s point about empirical knowledge in general—
scientific experimentation can proceed only after certain non-empirical assumptions are made about the world. Neither philosophical reason nor scientific experimentation is a self-contained, self-sufficient mode of inquiry, which is to say that both are based in faith. Religion is only different in that its empirical knowledge derives from a different faith commitment. In this way, Kiyozawa simultaneously questioned the notion of “empiricism” and claimed religion to be just as “empirical” as science.

Thus, I have argued that Kiyozawa’s conceptual worldview remained consistent while his rhetorical strategies changed. His attainment of faith in the years between *Skeleton* and the Seishinshugi movement did not fundamentally alter his conceptions of religion, reason, science, or their relations. If his views on these matters did not change in quality, perhaps we can say they changed in quantity. In “My Faith,” Kiyozawa re-expressed his skepticism in reason, but in a more dramatic fashion. This changed mode of discourse may signal that Kiyozawa came to know more deeply what he had always known or thought he had known. If Kiyozawa’s views remained consistent, scholars and religious heirs of Kiyozawa alike ought to confront the challenge of Kiyozawa’s whole body of work—not just his Seishinshugi writings. This means looking anew at his philosophical writings and his ascetic practices. The complexity of Kiyozawa and his place in the Shin tradition should not be covered over by a simplified view of a lost soul who found faith in the orthodox teachings.

The emergence of a language of “religious experience” in Kiyozawa’s later writings did not signal a new concern with inner experience; it signaled a new way of affirmatively speaking
about religion in an age of science that would have dramatic consequences in the period to follow. In prior ages, individual religious “experiences” (e.g. perceptions of and feelings about religious objects) obviously took place and had some importance in the lives of Shin Buddhists. Yet there had not been a pressing need to invoke the language and authority of “experience,” “experiment,” and “fact” until Western science took hold of Japanese society. Indeed, such language may have not even existed. In the following chapters, I will show how Kiyozawa’s rhetorical strategy for affirming religion vis-à-vis science was at least as important as his religious views in facilitating the long-term revival and survival of Shin Buddhism.
2. From Experience to Empiricism: Kiyozawa’s Followers and the Academic Study of Buddhism (1903-1930)

Since the Meiji Restoration, theoretical research has come to flourish in every corner of Japan. Within that theoretical research, the modern scientific research method of the West—the academic tradition of approaching everything experimentally (jikkenteki ni)—has been imported. Without experimental verification, [a claim] is useless. [Claims] that do not have experimental verification are empty principles and empty theories. Whether it be through test tubes or through actual practice, in every case truth cannot be discovered without experimental verification... As for experimentally verifying religious teachings, one cannot experimentally verify them with test tubes. One must experimentally verify them in one’s own life. I think that Kiyozawa’s shift toward actual practice rather than theorizing was greatly influenced by this trend toward an experimental academic tradition. --Akegarasu Haya, 1929 (21-22)

[Kiyozawa] emphasized not simply studying doctrine or interpreting scripture, but rather giving life to the Buddha-dharma inside oneself, putting the Buddha-dharma into actual practice. Studying Buddhist teachings from this practical standpoint is similar to the experimental research methods of the natural sciences. --Nishitani Keiji, 1963 (SRS, vol. 2: 252-53)

In the last chapter, I discussed how Kiyozawa Manshi came to adopt new language to express his religious viewpoint. Confronting scientific skepticism and drawing upon Western philosophy, Kiyozawa advanced a subjectivist approach to religion in which a process of introspection culminates in an event of unification with the Infinite. Initially, Kiyozawa actively rejected the label of “experience” to describe this event insofar as that term was understood to refer only to the world of sensory objects. Ultimately, Kiyozawa changed course and claimed “experiential/empirical” status for religious salvation—while simultaneously...
continuing to call attention to the limits of empirical science. Kiyozawa’s language of religious “experience”—representing just one strand of his thought—was taken up by his successors, so much so that his significance is now encapsulated by contemporary Shin scholars with the phrase “experimentalism” (jikken-shugi 実験主義) (e.g. Mizushima 2010, 95). This chapter considers how three of Kiyozawa’s followers, Sasaki Gesshō, Soga Ryōjin, and Kaneko Daiei, transformed Kiyozawa’s notion of religious “experience” into an ostensibly “empirical” discipline of study alongside other “sciences” in the modern university. This marked the birth of modern Shin sectarian studies (shinshūgaku 真宗学; hereafter referred to as “Shin studies”).

2.1 Problems With Experience

Scholars have long pointed to problems associated with grounding religious authority in experience, which is said to be subjective, personal, and private. First, to anchor authority to subjectivity is to deny any role to objective, rational thinking. On this point, Wayne Proudfoot forcefully demonstrated how theories of religious experience promoted by scholars like Rudolf Otto represented strategies to protect religion against rationalistic “reductive explanations” (1985). Second, to place authority in the personal experiences of individuals is to dislodge religion from its foundation in historical institutions. Robert Sharf has argued that Buddhist meditative experiences historically “were not considered the goal of practice, were not deemed doctrinally authoritative, and did not serve as the reference points for [religious practitioners’] understanding of the path” due to personal experience’s “ambiguous epistemological status
and essentially indeterminate nature” (Sharf 1998, 99). Finally, to place authority in the private experiences of individuals threatens to undermine any public significance religion might have. This has been one of Talal Asad’s primary critiques of secularization and its application to Islam (1993; 2003).

The first problem—the anti-rationalism implied by the appeal to subjective religious experience—has long been appreciated by religious practitioners and intellectuals, Kiyozawa included. In fact, Schleiermacher, the very progenitor of the modern concept of religious experience, was wary of such dangers. Schleiermacher’s theory of religious experience found fertile ground among Pietist Christians and members of the Romantic movement. Yet Martin Jay relates how Schleiermacher, on the one hand, protested against the “authoritarian super-piety based on ignorance, superstition and narrow intolerance for the views of others” characteristic of certain Pietists and, on the other hand, resisted the “ecstatic nature-mysticism” of the Romantics (2005, 93, 99). Schleiermacher sought to preserve some role for critical thought alongside mystical experience, recognizing the problems inherent in appealing totally to the authority of inner experience: Who can judge whether a person’s religious experience is

1 Interestingly, there is a recent turn in religious studies to resuscitate the category of religious experience. Most notably, Robert Orsi writes, “To insist that this experience is not sui generis (and I agree that it is not) is not to have said very much about it. To explain it as a function of cultural formation (which it is) does not adequately take into account how the people having the experience of the holy described it or how it acted upon them. Contemporary religious studies wants to stop with the sociological formation of the holy, but this is really on the beginning of understanding this human experience that earlier generations of religious theorists named ‘holy’” (2011, 90).
authentic? Do faulty views arise when the subject of an “ineffable” religious experience attempts to describe, interpret, and act upon that experience?

Kiyozawa was aware of the same problems. Although he promoted the attainment of an experience of faith above all else, he also warned against hastily rushing to the task of compassion (teaching others) without having sufficiently attended to the task of wisdom (teaching oneself) (Yamamoto 2011, 164, 183). To his followers in the Kōkōdō, especially Tada Kanae, he frequently cautioned, “One must not hurry to the path of preaching” (ibid., 138).

According to remembrances of his followers, Kiyozawa disliked the emotionalist approach to faith of Chikazumi Jōkan 近角常観 (1870-1941) (SKM, vol. 3: 213-14) and tried to “pour the cold water of rationality” upon the intoxicating religious passions of his leading follower, Akegarasu Haya (Nishimura 1951, 303). In contrast to Tada, Chikazumi, and Akegarasu, who went on to become popular preachers, Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko took up careers as scholars, seeking to conjoin Kiyozawa’s rationalism with his emphasis on experience.

Regarding the problem of institutional rootlessness, it is notable that neither Kiyozawa nor his followers sought to part ways from the Ōtani organization even after defining religion as a matter of personal experience and even after being slandered and expelled from the sect. ² It is often noted that Kiyozawa forewent a promising career as a scholar of philosophy in Tokyo

² In contrast, Kiyozawa’s senior peer and mentor, Inoue Enryō, elected to become a layperson and continue his Buddhist studies scholarship independent of the Ōtani organization.
for a life as an Ōtani educator in Kyoto, reportedly out of his sense of debt (on 恩) to the
organization that had funded his education. Desiring to reform the Ōtani organization from
within, he led a nationwide movement to topple the Ōtani administration, bring greater
administrative autonomy to branch temples, and allow more freedom of study for scholars and
students. Throughout his life, he also maintained a deep reverence toward their
denomination’s Chief Abbot. Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko likewise sought to reform the Ōtani
organization from within. In developing an “empirical” field of Shin studies rooted in the facts
of religious “experience,” they provoked a backlash from traditionalist within the organization.
Nonetheless, they remained committed to developing a more modern and intellectually
authoritative model of sectarian studies, which they hoped would be integrated into their
sectarian institution.

Finally, the threat of public insignificance arising from the appeal to personal
experience was perhaps the primary motivation for Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko’s efforts to
establish modern Shin studies. In the last chapter, I emphasized how Kiyozawa’s turn to inner
experience sheltered Shin Buddhism from scientific critique, but it equally sheltered it from
appropriation by the state. The history of Buddhism in the Meiji period can be understood as an
oscillation between separation and union of Buddhist institutions and the state. First, the new
Meiji state created separation by ending the legal requirement for citizens to register at

See especially Kiyozawa’s essay “Shimeiron 師命論” (KMZ, vol. 7: 39-44).
temples, repealing laws requiring monks not to marry or eat meat, and allowing the haibutsu kishaku persecution to unfold (Jaffe 2001; Ketelaar 1990; Collcutt 1986). Next, reconciliation was achieved through the 1872 Great Promulgation Campaign (taikyō senpu undō 大教宣布運動), in which Buddhist priests participated as instructors in a massive public program to spread nationalist ideology. This union was then terminated when Shimaji Mokurai led the drive to establish a principle of “separation of religion and state” in accordance with Western norms and extricate Buddhism from the Great Promulgation Campaign (actualized in 1875) (Ketelaar 1990, 122-30). Yet the decades that followed saw Buddhist individuals, lay groups, and sectarian institutions vying to demonstrate their nationalist spirit and service to the nation (Davis 1992, 154-87; Ives 2009, 13-53). The 1890 Meiji Constitution instituted freedom of religion “within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects.” The superficiality of the “separation” between religion and state was demonstrated in the 1891 “disrespect incident” involving Christian Uchimura Kanzō. Rather than rally to the support of Uchimura and religious freedom, many Buddhists embarked upon an unsuccessful movement from 1894-1899 to install Buddhism as the nation’s official teaching (Yoshida 1990, vol. 5: 227-43).

In regard to Buddhism’s role in public life, Kiyozawa dramatically claimed that religion, fundamentally concerned as it is with the individual’s private experiences of salvation through
faith, has nothing to do with the nation or secular morality. Scholars like Sueki Fumihiko, Ama Toshimaro, and Mark Blum have positively evaluated Kiyozawa’s argument for religion’s autonomy as potentially enabling a critique of state ideology (Blum 1988; Ama 2002; Sueki 2004-2010). Kiyozawa’s followers, however, rather than relish their autonomy and critical distance from the state, largely focused on discovering a new public significance for Buddhism. Where contemporary Buddhist studies scholars see an escape from danger and a new source of power, Kiyozawa’s followers saw a loss of power and the danger of social marginalization. Establishing modern Shin studies as an intellectually legitimate academic discipline at a publicly accredited university was a solution to this problem.

The formation of modern Shin studies by Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko is worthy of examination for a number of reasons. First, it was a crucial development in the story of Shin Buddhism’s modern institutional and doctrinal transformation, bringing rationalism, institutional standing, and social-political significance to a modernist, experience-oriented version of Shin Buddhism. Second, I will argue that modern Shin studies held an important place in the broader academic world, and so should not be overlooked in the study of modern Japanese Buddhism or modern Japanese history. Finally, modern Shin studies is of intrinsic interest as a hybrid space (straddling modern academic empiricism and traditional faith-based

See Kiyozawa’s “Negotiating Religious Morality and Common Morality” (Blum and Rhodes 2011).
exegesis) where alternative concepts of the Pure Land, Dharmākara Bodhisattva, and the Buddha, as well as of empiricism, persons, and history, were produced.

In the next section, I discuss the history of Buddhism’s public role in modern Japan’s educational sphere, emphasizing the divergent approaches taken by the creators of modern Buddhist studies (Bukkyōgaku 仏教学) and the creators of modern sectarian studies. In the third section, I show how Sasaki and Soga’s interpretation of Kiyozawa’s legacy was critical to their subsequent development of modern Shin studies. In the fourth section, I examine works by Sasaki, Kaneko, and Soga in order to trace the contours of the field of modern Shin studies. Specifically, I identify three discursive strands—which I term “confessional,” “empiricist,” and “esoteric”—that distinguish Shin studies from either traditional sectarian studies or modern Buddhist studies. In the fifth section, I examine a public debate between Kaneko Daiei and preeminent Buddhist studies scholar Kimura Taiken, which shows the two disciplines in substantial dialogue with one another, suggesting that modern Shin studies had an influential place in the broader academic world. In the conclusion, I consider this chapter’s findings in relation to recent Buddhist studies scholarship on “Buddhist modernism.”

2.2 Buddhism and Education in Modern Japan

With the rise of the modern Meiji state came the project of constructing a national education system and of redefining the concept of “learning” (gakumon 学問) so as best to advance national interests (Sawada 2004, 89-102). This project pitted Shinto nativists,
Confucian moralists, and advocates of Western technical-scientific studies against one another. 

The buzz word in debates over education was “practicality” (jitsu 実), with each position claiming this for its own kind of learning (ibid., 101). Fukuzawa Yukichi’s 1872 Gakumon no susume (An Encouragement of Learning) argued for the practicality of Western studies in contrast to Confucian studies (ibid., 95). Tsuda Mamichi’s 1874 Meiroku zasshi essay, “Kaika o susumeru hōhō o ronzu” (Discussing Methods for Advancing Enlightenment), famously categorized “learning” into two types: “empty learning” (kyogaku 虚学) and “practical learning” (jitsugaku 実学):

There is empty learning that is devoted to such lofty doctrines as nonexistence and Nirvana, the five elements and the principles of human nature, or intuitive knowledge and intuitive ability. And there is practical learning that solely explains factual principles through actual observation and verification, such as astronomy, physics, chemistry, medicine, political economy, and philosophy of the modern West. We may call a society truly civilized when the reason of each individual has been illumined by the general circulation of practical learning throughout the land. (Sawada 2004, 95)

Here the physical sciences as well as Western political economy and philosophy are deemed “practical” while the study of Buddhist teachings is included as the foremost example of “empty learning.” In the end, the 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education instituted the orthodox conception of “learning” as a combination of Western technical-scientific study and Confucian moral education, though the moral component was disassociated from the label “Confucianism”

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5 For the original, see Tsuda (1874, 7-8). The recurrence of the character for “practicality” can be seen in the phrase “explains factual principles through actual observation and verification.” Jpn. 實物ニ徴シ實象に質シテ専確實ノ理ヲ説ク
and Confucian learning’s traditional emphasis on individuality was wholly replaced by the goal of benefiting the nation-state (Sawada 2004, 101). Proponents of Buddhist learning were conspicuously absent from this debate.

During the formative years of the 1870s-1890s, Western sciences and Confucian moral education were thus defined as “learning”; aspects of Shinto religiosity were incorporated into an ostensibly “secular” Shinto state; and Buddhism and Christianity were newly defined as “religion” (shūkyō宗教). The definition of Buddhism as “religion” by public intellectuals and government officials officially excluded it from any place in the public education system. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Doctrine were established as distinct organs of the state, and the new public education system and the Great Promulgation Campaign were not meant to overlap. Yet Tanigawa Yutaka has shown that the shortage of sites and resources for a new public education system meant that temples were often used as schools, monks often served as schoolteachers, and sermons were even given inside schools. He concludes, “proselytization seems to have been used as a stepping stone to promote public schools” (Tanigawa 2014, 92). Nonetheless, a distinction between the two spheres gradually set in, and many Buddhist leaders bewailed the loss of influence this implied. In 1888, influential Honganji Shin priest Shimaji Mokurai penned an editorial entitled “Sōryo wa sumiyaka ni futsū kyōiku

* Regarding the definition of Buddhism and Christianity as “religion” and Shinto as “secular,” see Josephson (2012).
jūji subeshi” (Priests Should Engage in Public Education Immediately), noting the public good that comes of monks being able to run schools at low costs due to their separate income.

Buddhists framed their contributions to public education in terms of “charity” and the practice of “compassion,” but the underlying motivation seems to have been that, as one editorial put it, “Buddhism’s fortunes were dependent on whether or not it actually had authority in education” (ibid., 105). Buddhist institutions established many private primary and secondary schools, and in the case of the Ōtani organization, invested in and operated public middle schools (ibid., 106). In such ways, Buddhists sought to establish a foothold in Japan’s new education system.

For Buddhism to truly succeed in gaining influence in the realm of learning, it needed to achieve a place at Japan’s highest centers of learning, its universities. The 1879 establishment of a lectureship in Buddhist studies for Hara Tanzan within Tokyo University’s department of philosophy marked the beginning of this process. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hara sought to establish Buddhist studies as an empirical discipline rooted in “experiment” (jikken), thus rendering Buddhist studies a “practical study” alongside Western sciences. Specifically, he sought to bring Buddhist theory and meditational practice into conversation with Western physiology, advancing theories such as “the brain and spine are of different substances” and “delusion and illness are of the same origin.” Ultimately, Hara’s physiological approach to “empiricism” in the study of Buddhism was replaced by the historical approach of Murakami Senshō and his successors, who sought to reevaluate Buddhist history through the critical study of historical evidence (Sueki 2005). Jacqueline Stone’s analysis of
Buddhist studies during the interwar period reveals the political motivations of such scholars. She characterizes their work in terms of the search for Buddhism’s underlying, trans-sectarian truth, competition with Western Buddhist studies, defining Japan’s relationship to the rest of Asia, and serving the cause of world peace (Stone 1990, 222). The study of Buddhism was thus in the service of the Japanese nation in its international relations—not in the service of any narrow sectarian agenda.

Within research on modern Japanese Buddhism, the topic of Buddhist studies’ emergence has received considerable attention as an example of Buddhism’s “modernization” and “reform”; in contrast, sectarian studies—along with “temple Buddhism”—has been ignored as an insignificant holdover from the past. Ryan Ward has questioned this research agenda by pointing to the dynamism, creativity, and influence of so-called “conservative” Buddhist thinkers (Ward 2004). In this chapter, I will draw attention to the dynamism and influence of “modern sectarian studies.” Stone’s account of modern Buddhist studies as “an academic discipline independent of the Buddhist clergy and traditional sectarian Buddhist studies” portrays a strict bifurcation of traditional sectarian studies and modern Buddhist studies (1990, 217-18). Giving the example of Murakami Senshō’s suppression on account of his historicist claim that Mahayana scriptures were not expounded by Śākyamuni Buddha (Daïjō hibussetsuron), she writes, “Inexorably, lines were being drawn between those who wished to retain the old sectarian mode of Buddhist studies and those who opted for the Western academic approach. By the beginning of the Taishō period, the schism was complete” (ibid., 220). James Dobbins’
“The Origins and Complicated Development of Shin Buddhism as an Area in Religious Studies”

also seems to endorse this picture of bifurcation:

In effect, the study of Buddhism at these sectarian institutions took parallel tracks: 1) Buddhist studies, which claimed objectivity, methodological precision, and the search for common Buddhist themes (principles influenced by Western scholarship), and 2) sectarian studies, which focused on close interpretive reading and doctrinal explication of the school’s scriptures and texts (practices inherited from Tokugawa sectarian scholarship). (2006, 16)

His essay goes on to mention “frequent instances of cross-fertilization” between Shin studies and Buddhist studies, but besides one brief example, he leaves this point undeveloped.  

More recently, Hayashi Makoto has examined the importance of the 1920s development of sectarian Buddhist universities on the growth and trajectory of Buddhist studies. He notes that departments of sectarian studies were established alongside departments of Buddhist studies, characterizing the former in terms of a faith-based approach to studying the writings of sectarian founders and the latter in terms of an empirical approach to studying the writings of the historical Buddha (i.e. Śākyamuni) (Hayashi 2014a, 24). In Hayashi’s scheme, Buddhist studies scholars like Murakami Senshō pioneered a third type of Buddhist studies. Following the historicist methods of European-style Buddhist studies while incorporating the findings of

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7 The example Dobbins gives is of the case of sectarian scholar Nonomura Naotarō who in 1923 argued for the rejection of the notion of a Pure Land and the story of Dharmākara Bodhisattva as mere myth.
8 Specifically, he relates the founding of Shin studies (Shinshūgaku 真宗学) at Ōtani and Ryūkoku Universities, Zen studies (Zengaku 禅学) at Komazawa University, and esoteric studies (Mikkyōgaku 密教学) at Kōyasan University (Hayashi 2013b). See also Hayashi (2014a, 23-24).
sectarian studies, Murakami and his successors bridged these two disciplines in the construction of a grand historical narrative of “Japanese Buddhism” (ibid., 26-27).

Below, I provide evidence for a model of modern Japanese Buddhist studies that differs from that of Dobbins and Stone and from that of Hayashi. Specifically, I present modern Shin studies as a clear case of a “modern sectarian studies” that emerged as a third field distinct from but sharing elements with “traditional sectarian studies” and “modern Buddhist studies.”

Tokugawa period Shin scholars and their modern-day heirs, relying on an established interpretive tradition, were primarily concerned to resolve seeming contradictions in Shin scriptures and thereby demonstrate the consistency of views across the writings of Shinran and between Shinran and the seven Shin patriarchs (Nobutsuka 2011, 85-87). Modern Shin studies scholars like Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko, by contrast, made “confessions”—replete with acknowledgment of evilness and past doubts—of their personal experiences and then sought to show their consonance with the experiences of Shinran and other figures of the past. This “confessional” discourse was part of a broader trend in modern Japanese literature related to the widespread cultural influence of Christianity (see Karatani 1993, 80-96). Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko continued to work within the context of sectarian institutions, and their research was molded by sectarian commitments to specific texts and doctrines. However, their appeal to

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9 Fukushima identifies this contrast in a comparative analysis of Tannishō commentaries by Edo-period scholar Jinrei 焼励 and Akgarasu Haya (2003, 89-128). He relates Akegarasu Haya’s “confessional” discourse to broader literary trends in modern Japan, which Karatani Kōjin famously explained in relation to the genbun itchi 言文一致 movement and the related “discovery of interiority” (Karatani 1993).
personal experience enabled escape from the traditional norms and goals of sectarian scholarship into a realm of “free inquiry,” in which they could reinterpret Shin teachings in relation to a broader terrain of competing Buddhist, religious, philosophical, and scientific discourses.

Modern Shin studies scholars shared much in common with Buddhist studies scholars, including heightened attention to national and global contexts, a concern with the “historical Buddha,” and an appeal to “empiricism.” Pointing to their own personal “experiences” for evidence, modern Shin scholars asserted that Shin teachings arose out of real, measurable phenomena amenable to open philosophical and scientific investigation. The claim that the study of religious “experience” was “empirical” was persuasive in part because Japanese neologisms connoting “experience,” “empirical,” and “experiment” (jikken 実験 and keiken 経験) were used interchangeably at least through the mid-Meiji period. One consequence of this “empiricist” turn was that modern Shin studies scholars consistently expressed agnosticism regarding the afterlife. Another was their impulse, unusual in a Shin context, toward systematic practice. Shin studies thus took on the appearance of “empiricism” as well as this-worldly “practicality”—the buzz words in debates over education in modern Japan.

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10 See discussion in Section 1.1 above.
11 For example, Kiyozawa gathered information on the practices of local religious ascetics, engaged in asceticism himself, and practiced shikan 止観 meditation (regarding the latter, see Yasutomi 2003). Kaneko Daiei participated in Okada Ryöhei’s popular Seiza 静坐 meditation group. Also, Soga’s sojourn in Niigata might be understood as a practice of “seclusion.” Yet these practices never congealed into a
Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko clearly sought to construct Shin studies as a modern academic discipline, but they simultaneously sought to distinguish it from other such disciplines. This latter goal was also accomplished by defining Shin in terms of “experience.” In addition to their own inner experiences, they claimed insight into the inner experiences of historical figures like Shinran and the hidden, inner meaning of Buddhist texts. In this way, they rendered Shin teachings “esoteric,” inaccessible to textual Buddhist studies or objective science. Other scholars have explained similar tendencies characteristic of Buddhist modernism in terms of the influence of western Romanticism (McMahan 2008, 11-12, 117-37). Such influence certainly does come into play with Kiyozawa and his followers, but “esotericism” may be a more useful interpretive framework for understanding patterns present in their work. As shown below, Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko speak of Amida and his Pure Land as invisibly present in this world; of personal “encounters” with Buddhas and Buddhist teachers of the past; of becoming the Buddha in the present through subject-object reversal; of the importance of an awakened teacher (e.g. Kiyozawa); and of the identity of disparate entities on the basis of correlative thinking (e.g. Dharmākara Bodhisattva and ālaya consciousness). This approach to Pure Land teachings shares much in common with the “esoteric teachings” (mikkyō 密教) of medieval systematic methodology comparable to contemporary Buddhist “contemplative science,” let alone “scientific empiricism” as normally understood.

12 Regarding Romanticist influence, Kiyozawa studied widely in Western philosophy, including Schleiermacher’s On Religion; Sasaki references Emerson and Edwin Arnold’s romanticist Light of Asia in jikken no shūkyō (Religion of Experience) (1926); and Kaneko studied Henri Bergson, as well as a variety of German philosophers.
Japanese Buddhism, whether that of Kūkai, Kakuban, or even Shinran. Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko do not use the term “esoteric teachings,” nor is there evidence that they developed their views through study of esoteric Buddhism. However, the label “esotericism,” implying objects of investigation that are accessible only through faith, practice, and the fruition of good karma, serves as a useful contrast to “empiricism.” Moreover, it points to the basis in the Buddhist tradition (rather than Western Romanticism) for Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko’s appeal to the “inner meanings” of texts. Their “esotericism” was useful in reinstating a place for “faith” alongside “reason” in the study of Buddhism; enabling “this-worldly” reinterpretations of Shin teachings; and producing responses to the charge that Amida Buddha was a fiction concocted centuries after the death of the “historical Buddha.”

13 Regarding Kūkai and Kakuban’s thought, see Abe (1999) and Veere (2000), respectively. Regarding esoteric Buddhist thought’s relation to Shinran, James Dobbins writes, “The scholarship of medieval Buddhism did not yet have the overtly analytical and rational orientation of modern scholarship, though it did have certain forms of argumentation and expectations of evidence. One thing that inhibited a more relational style of scholarship was the prevailing Buddhist culture of hidden meanings and master-disciple revelations in medieval Japan. There was the widespread assumption that in religious situations and texts there were hidden meanings and that the primary means of uncovering them was through the guidance of one’s religious master. Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1262) was, of course, a Buddhist scholar of great learning, and he is typically regarded as resisting the culture of secret meanings and the dominance of Buddhist masters. This was definitely true compared to others of his day, but he did not break fully with such medieval conventions. For instance, in order to justify his understanding of the Pure Land sutras he argued in his Kyōgyōshinshō 教行信証 that they have a hidden meaning (shō onmitsu 彰陰蜜 [this should read 彰隠蜜]) separate from their apparent or surface meaning (ken 顕). He also treated his own teachings as simply an extension of Master Hōnen’s, whose were in turn an extension of Shandao’s, Sākyamuni’s, and Amida Buddha’s. Such justifications and styles of argumentation pervaded Buddhist scholasticism in medieval times and were accepted as a valid basis for religious claims.” (Dobbins 2006, 8)
In sum, modern Shin studies scholars developed a distinctive “third way” of Buddhist studies, using “confessional” discourse to transcend institutional norms, “empiricist” discourse to square Shin metaphysics with science, and “esoteric” discourse to combat the implications of postivist historical research.

2.3. Shaping Kiyozawa’s Legacy

Kiyozawa’s followers were in no position to launch the modern field of Shin studies in June of 1903 when their teacher died at the age of 39 from tuberculosis. They were young, finishing their education or beginning careers as professors or preachers. Shinshū University had just opened in Tokyo, where Kiyozawa’s agenda had been to introduce a broader course of study in languages, philosophy, and Buddhist studies rather than renovate Shin sectarian studies. Fifteen years later, when the government sought to incorporate “specialist colleges” (senmon gakkō 専門学校) into the national university system through the 1918 University Ordinance, the opportunity arose for Kiyozawa’s followers, now more learned and well-established in their careers, to imagine a new mode of Shin studies appropriate to the modern academic world. But in June of 1903, their primary problem was how to interpret their teacher’s significance and how to carry forward his mission.
A June 1905 editorial in *Seishinkai* entitled “Genzen no Kiyozawa sensei” (Reverend Kiyozawa Before Our Eyes), probably authored by Akegarasu Haya, outlines the three-dimensional way Kiyozawa has often been depicted (*Seishinkai* vol. 5: 2-4).\(^{14}\)

The world is not lacking of people who know of Reverend. Many know of his appearance, his genius, his scholarship, his knowledge. But few know of Reverend’s virtue. There are those who know of Reverend’s virtue. But among those, few have encountered his faith. That we and our fellow brethren have gotten to encounter that faith... ahhh, what a bright blessing it is! (ibid., 2)

Three successive layers of Kiyozawa are described: the most apparent but superficial layer is his intellect—Kiyozawa the scholar; the middle layer is his virtue—Kiyozawa the practitioner; and the inner and most important layer is his faith—Kiyozawa the mystic.\(^{15}\) A further passage characterizes Kiyozawa’s intellectual arguments as “practical learning” rather than “empty learning” insofar as they derive from mystical “experience” of “the original fount of spirit”:

Reverend was not just a man of talk or a man of writing. He was a man of “spirit.” He was not a man of empty learning. He was a man of practical learning. His arguments were confessions (hyōhaku 表白) of his own experiences. His utterances were the sound of his mind, not his lips. What he said, he had already thought. What he thought and said, he had already done. Therefore, when we trace back from Reverend’s teachings, search after his faith, and look upon his life, there we discover the original fount of spirit (rei no honsen 霊の本泉). This is none other than the crystallization of the spirit

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\(^{14}\) Akegarasu was then the journal’s main editor, and this essay is extremely similar in content and style to Akegarasu’s 1909 speech memorializing Kiyozawa (discussed below).

\(^{15}\) These three aspects of Kiyozawa’s person are often matched to stages of his biography as told by his followers: first, Kiyozawa studied and lectured on philosophy, developing his own philosophy of religion; next, Kiyozawa engaged in ascetic self-discipline while trying to reform the corruption and worldliness of the Ōtani institution; finally, Kiyozawa achieved total faith in Amida Buddha through introspection, contemplation of death, and study of the *Discourses of Epictetus*, the Āgamas, and the *Tannishō*.  

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of the Agamas. This is the manifestation of Epictetus. This is the provisional transformation (gonge 權化) of the Tannishō. (ibid., 3)

It is no surprise in a Shin context that faith would be valued higher than intellectual accomplishment or virtuous action. Yet is there any role for study or practice in the Shin religious life? What is the path to true faith?

In the case of Akegarasu, single-minded reverence toward Kiyozawa and his faith displaced any desire to emulate Kiyozawa’s life of scholarship or ethical practice. His June 1909 speech given at Kiyozawa’s memorial services again presents a three-dimensional depiction of Kiyozawa (Seishinkai 9, no. 6: 42-46):

Reverend excelled in every aspect. However, the reason that we cannot but constantly yearn for him, looking upon him more as father or mother than as a teacher, does not lie in his learning or his virtue. It lies in Reverend’s faith, which ignored study and practice as so much dust, stating that we come to have faith in the Tathāgata for reasons we cannot understand at all, and confessing that the Tathāgata saves us by selflessly taking on all our obligations and responsibilities.

Reverend initially had an interest in science, researched philosophy, studied Christianity, examined Confucianism, and inquired into all the doctrines within Buddhism, and his conclusion was that one can find a place of peace only by the great path of absolute Other Power. One might say that Reverend’s faith was really a light that arose from the encounter between Eastern and Western civilizations. Reverend’s faith was certainly not the traditional, conventional faith of “because I am a Shin monk, I have faith in Shin teachings.” Therefore, Reverend’s confession of faith was not a formalistic, technical exercise, but rather a direct confession of the conditions of his mind. “My Faith,” which he penned seven days before his death, was his final confession. In my opinion, it is like a total history of his faith. (ibid., 44)

Akegarasu acknowledges that Kiyozawa’s faith arose after a long process of investigating science, philosophy, and religion, yet he believes Kiyozawa ultimately “ignored study and practice as so much dust” and concluded that faith is an inexplicable mystery. Thus, Kiyozawa’s
followers need not repeat Kiyozawa’s long, arduous path, but should rather focus on that path’s endpoint: his final essay “My Faith.” Extreme emphasis on “My Faith” and a handful of other iconic essays and diary passages has been a notable characteristic of the representation of Kiyozawa by many of his followers from this early period through the present. Their single-minded emphasis on Kiyozawa’s faith has also entailed a particular reverence of Kiyozawa’s person. In an extreme example, Akegarasu’s 1909 memorial speech asks whether Kiyozawa is not the reincarnation of Śākyamuni and Shinran.16

The opposing view of Kiyozawa’s significance is clearly represented in Sasaki Gesshō’s June 1907 speech entitled “Kiyozawa sensei no ‘Tobira No Jikai’ 清沢先生の『扉之自誡』” (Reverend Kiyozawa’s “Title Page Self-Admonitions”) (Seishinkai 7, no. 6: 23-30). In his speech, Sasaki interprets the significance of ten aphorisms inscribed on the first page of Kiyozawa’s final diary. Those aphorisms are as follows:

I. Rectify faith and call upon the Buddha (6-7)
II. Pay no heed to bodily life (9-10)
III. Lessen cravings and know sufficiency (10-11)
IV. Wander freely according to one’s inclinations (11-12)
V. Attain detachment from sins and offenses (2-3)
VI. Study and clarify the ultimate principles (3-4)

16 “If the great world-honored Śākyamuni who appeared in India’s Kapilavistu 3000 years ago, or Saint Shinran who was born 700 years ago in Kyoto, had been reborn now in this age of Meiji, I think they would not have taken on any form other than our Reverend Kiyozawa. Because I had the chance to meet Reverend Kiyozawa, I feel no regret at all about not meeting Śākyamuni or not receiving teachings from Saint Shinran.” A similar passage also appears in Akegarasu’s “Kiyozawa sensei sangyō wasan 清澤先生讃仰和讃” (Hymn in Praise of Reverend Kiyozawa) (Tanida 2005). This hymn is still recited at Kiyozawa’s memorial services at Saihōji Temple.
Sasaki begins by declaring this list to represent the “congealing of Reverend’s experiences (keiken)” with each aphorism pointing to some aspect of Kiyozawa’s life story. He then notes how the ten aphorisms constitute five contradictory pairs: “faith” lies opposite “study”; “pay no heed to bodily life” lies opposite “protect the body”; “lessen cravings” lies opposite “keep possessions in order”; “wander freely” lies opposite “make friends”; and “detachment from sins” lies opposite “stop war” (insofar as “detachment” implies inaction while “stop war” implies active intervention). Sasaki concludes from this that Kiyozawa was a person who sought to harmonize seeming contradictions, and he devotes the majority of his speech to considering the conflicting demands of faith and study. He argues that Kiyozawa’s scholarly pursuits were by no means contained to his early Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion period. For example, he notes that Kiyozawa read the Āgamas with a scholarly eye, “carrying out analysis of its formation and its doctrines to the extent that he planned to create an index of terms, names, and such,” and he relates how Kiyozawa inspired him to research Aśvaghoṣa’s 2nd century epic poems (ibid., 26). He acknowledges Kiyozawa’s expressions in “My Faith” of admiration of Jpn. (一)正信念仏 (6-7)、（二）不顧身命（9-10）、（三）少欲知足る（10-11）、（四）逍遙自適（11-12）、（五）遠離罪過（2-3）、（六）學問窮理（3-4）、（七）衛生護身（4-5）、（八）整理財物（5-6）、（九）結交修福（8-9）、（一〇）休戰媾和（9-10）
Hōnen and Shinran’s humble confessions of ignorance, but he retorts, “not only in the course of Reverend’s search for the truth but also in the course of Hōnen and Shinran’s search for the truth, there was ‘study and clarification of ultimate principles,’” referencing a passage from the Tannishō in which Shinran urges his listeners to “study and know the Primal Vow of the Tathāgata” (ibid.). In contrast to Akegarasu’s single-minded emphasis on “My Faith,” Sasaki draws attention to Kiyozawa’s essay “Negotiating Religious Morality and Common Morality” as “Reverend’s final testament in regard to study.” Finally, Sasaki points to the significance of the numbers accompanying each aphorism, which refer to hours of the day. From six to seven o’clock in the morning, Kiyozawa devoted himself to “rectifying faith and calling upon the Buddha”; from nine to ten o’clock (after having breakfast), he devoted himself to “paying no heed to bodily life”; and so forth. In light of this, Sasaki concludes:

“Study is a waste. Morality is a waste. It is because we are ensnared by such things that we do not understand the compassion of our true parent (shinjitsu oya). Throw away all such things and just entrust in the great life of the parent.” Reverend told us such things. On the other hand, I feel we must not forget that he was regulating himself

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18 The Tannishō passage reads: “Some people say that those who do not read or study sūtras and commentaries are not assured of Birth. Such a view is beneath criticism. All of those sacred texts which expound the essentials of the truth of the Other-Power clarify that by believing in the Original Vow and uttering the Nembutsu, we shall become Budha. Besides that, what learning is necessary for Birth? Anyone who is really confused about this teaching should, indeed, study and understand the purport of the Original Vow. Even though he may read and study sūtras and commentaries, if the true meaning of these sacred texts is not discerned, it is, indeed, a pitiful thing.” (Ryukoku University Translation Center 1990, 42)

19 It is not clear from Kiyozawa’s diary what this meant in practice. Yoshida Kyūichi states that Kiyozawa “contemplated” (shisaku) each principle during the appointed hour (Yoshida 1986, 165).

20 “Parent” here refers to Amida Buddha, who is often referred to as “oya-sama” by Shin followers.
with these self-admonitions, delineating hours of the day, and engaging in practice... That Reverend carried this out right up until his death indicates that together with entrusting everything to the Tathāgata, each day we should also be diligent in self-cultivation. (ibid., 28)

Thus, Sasaki balanced Kiyozawa’s assertions of the “mysteries of faith” with the facts of his ongoing scholarship and self-discipline.

Of these two contrasting pictures of Kiyozawa, Soga Ryōjin’s June 1908 essay “Ware ni yōgō shitamaeru senshi 我に影響したまへる先師 (Reverend Who Manifested Himself to Me)” superficially bear more similarity to Akegarasu’s highly reverent, faith-heavy account. Soga’s essay begins with reflections on Shinran’s special praise of Hōnen over the earlier Shin patriarchs Shandao and Genshin. He explains this in terms of the deep significance of Shinran’s face-to-face encounter with Hōnen in contrast to his literary encounters with the previous patriarchs.

Religious faith cannot be attained on the basis of the remaining instructions of former awakened ones of a distant age... Instructions that appear via written words are nothing more than indirect traces. Dharma is transmitted through people. Seeing once is better than hearing a hundred times. We must intimately hear that thunderous sound, presently look upon that majestic radiant countenance, and directly come into contact with that powerful, divine personality. Dharma teaching through words and writing is useless. It must be dharma teaching of the six faculties of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and cognition. (Seishinkai 8, no. 6: 104)

21 The term yōgō 影向, which I have translated “manifested himself,” is a technical term usually used to describe the provisional appearance of a kami or Buddha.

22 The phrase “look upon that majestic radiance” alludes to the description of the Buddha’s countenance in the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, which is also the first quotation appearing in Shinran’s Kyōgyōshinshō.
To make this argument for direct master-follower transmission in a Shin context, Soga distinguishes between “religious geniuses” like Śākyamuni, Shandao, and Hōnen, who are able to attain the dharma directly or through dreams and visions, and “foolish beings” like Shinran, who can only attain the dharma through an encounter with a saintly figure. Soga and his audience are to be grateful for the teachings passed down to them by Hōnen and Shinran, but “unfortunately, the 700 year old teachings of Saint [Shinran] cannot enter our deaf ears, completely bound as we are by mistaken attachments to this material world.” He continues:

Yet, by whatever causes and conditions of past lifetimes, our Tathāgata of the ten directions sent down to us from afar the saintly Reverend Kiyozawa, providing him as our intimate teacher and master (shinkyō wajō 親教和上). Ahh! Good karma from our past bore fruit, and we encountered a good and wise teacher (zenchishiki 善知識).²³ Is it not the case that the original form of that past good karma is the unobstructed light of the Tathāgata which shines on worlds of the ten directions?... I truly believe it is for us the same as it was for Saint Shinran with Saint Hōnen. (ibid., 105)

In this way, Soga glorifies Kiyozawa as a messenger from the Tathāgata comparable to the seven Shin patriarchs preceding Shinran and uniquely capable of bringing Shinran’s teachings to life. This seems to imply a path to salvation not through emulation of Kiyozawa’s life and scholarship but through encounter with Kiyozawa’s person.

Soga’s essay then categorizes three possible attitudes “foolish beings” might take when confronting “religious geniuses” of the past. Those “lacking a critical eye” dwell upon the

²³ “Zenchishiki 善知識” is a traditional Buddhist term denoting reliable religious teachers. In the Shin tradition, it often refers to the sect’s Chief Abbots (SSJ, 323-24).
mysterious aspects of their deeds without attaining any recognition of “the mysterious spiritual world from which such mysterious traces originate.” This results in “superstitious hero worship.” In these comments, one can detect Soga’s critique of traditional Buddhist beliefs and study. “Historians with critical eyes,” by contrast, analyze and classify religious geniuses in a cold, rationalist way, rendering them as ordinary human beings. Here Soga gives the example of Shin thinker Inoue Enryō who portrayed Śākyamuni Buddha as a philosopher alongside Confucius, Kant, and Socrates in the Hall of the Four Saints constructed in 1904. Soga counters that the correct way to view religious geniuses of the past is in terms of mystical experience:

> The spiritual world is formless. It is mysterious. It is truly a realm of “final realization is inexplicable.” Unparalleled religious geniuses, on the basis of their own inner, mental experience and verification (shinnai no jikken jishō 心内の実験実証), are able to suddenly enter directly into the mystical faith realm of the saints of the past and the dead. (ibid., 106)

Because this “mystical faith realm” is fundamentally unknowable and mysterious, it is impossible for an ordinary being to think one’s way there without the mediation of a great personality: “Relying upon the person (jinkaku人格) of Saint Hōnen, Shinran came to witness the facts of the faith world that were the source of his person.” According to Soga, the correct way to approach a “religious genius” like Kiyozawa is with a critical eye that peers beyond the historical person and his mysterious deeds toward the “mystical faith realm” that person was

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24 Kabun fukasetsu 果分不可説. See the discussion of this doctrine in relation to Kiyozawa’s December Fan Diary in Section 1.3 above.
in contact with. Significantly, Soga infuses his discussion of the mystery, ineffability, and supra-rationalism of faith with language of “experience,” “verification,” and “facts.” Building upon Kiyozawa’s use of such language, Soga claims for Shin Buddhism a quasi-scientific basis of empirical verifiability even as he argues for its mystical, supra-rational nature. Herein lies the germ of modern Shin studies.

The remainder of Soga’s essay attempts to go beyond either “hero worship” or “cold rationalism” and articulate the “facts” of mystical faith experience as revealed by Kiyozawa. The argument he develops is consistent with the perspective of modern Shin studies that developed later. As Kiyozawa had explained, the Tathāgata and the Pure Land can only be known through one’s mind, but this is not to say they are products of or contained within one’s mind. The Tathāgata and the Pure Land are transcendent, “trans-subjective” (chōshukan 超主観) realities that descend into and become manifest in our minds. Our ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty are traces of this transcendent realm. In a reworking of Kiyozawa’s familiar phrase, Soga concludes, “It is not that one has faith because the Tathāgata exists, nor is that the Tathāgata exists because one has faith. It is only that one views the content of one’s faith in the Tathāgata as completely resting on the basis of the Tathāgata” (ibid., 109). The Tathāgata and
the Pure Land manifest as mental content, but one fully believes or knows that such mental content has its basis in a transcendent realm.  

In his 1908 essay, Soga writes of superstitious religious believers “lacking a critical eye” and historians “with a critical eye.” In further writings, Soga continues to use the analogy of “eyes” to chart a “third way” forward distinct from what he saw as the traditional and modern modes of Buddhist thought and study. His 1909 essay “Shūkyō no sōgan naru shin oyobi kyō” (Faith and Teachings: The Two Eyes of Religion) critiques both conservative sectarian thinkers and liberal free thinkers as failing to distinguish between the “two eyes” of religion:

Those who hold firmly to “doctrinal authority” (kyōken 救權) mistakenly think that just as faith is unchanging, teachings must be unchanging; those who overvalue free thought presume that just as teachings change, faith cannot avoid changing. This is ultimately to forget that religion has these two eyes of faith and teachings, and to conflate them. We can only build an unblemished faith through faith of a transcendent nature and through teachings that skillfully respond to the age and the individual, whose extreme subtlety lacks any points of obstinacy. (SRS, vol. 2: 200)

A 1911 letter written by Soga to Kaneko speaks of the “two eyes” of faith and wisdom:

In the intellectual world today, there are those without any eyes (skeptical realists lacking the first eye of faith) and those with one eye (only having the first eye of faith

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25 Soga’s statement also reflects the foundational Shin doctrine that faith in Amida and the utterance of the nenbutsu derive not from oneself but from Amida’s power.
26 The analogy of “eyes” was also used by Murakami Senshō and Inoue Enryō in their writings on different approaches to Buddhist studies Okada (2009).
27 The term “doctrinal authority” is discussed in Section 3.3 below. As evident in the passages quoted above, “doctrinal authority” stands in opposition to “free inquiry.” “Doctrinal authority” is traditionally said to reside in the Chief Abbots (and his representatives), who are able to preserve the correct interpretation of Shin teachings on account of their blood descent from Shinran (together with the careful study of the interpretive tradition).
but lacking the second eye of wisdom), and they argue over which is the true nature and which is not the true nature. Both are the true nature, yet neither is yet the true nature. What this age needs is people of two eyes—people who have an eye of faith that entrusts to the Tathāgata and a wisdom eye enlightened to the reality of the self. It was only Reverend Kiyozawa that had both the faith eye and the wisdom eye (Soga et al. 1982, 12).

In such ways, Soga expressed his dissatisfaction with traditional and modern approaches to Buddhist thought and practice. He credits those of the traditionalist camp with possessing a degree of religious faith but accuses them of lacking wisdom of the self and of holding stubbornly to an ossified, inflexible version of the teachings. He credits those of the modernist camp with realizing the need for Buddhist teachings to respond to the age, but accuses them of lacking both faith and wisdom of the self. These critiques and invocation of a “third way” were critical to the eventual establishment of modern Shin studies.

In summary, the first step toward developing a modern Shin studies distinct from traditional sectarian studies and from modern Buddhist studies lay in the interpretation of Kiyozawa’s significance. Most basically, Sasaki and Soga—in contrast to Akegarasu and others—arrived at an interpretation that placed importance on ongoing critical study.28 In addition, the three discursive strands of modern Shin studies were all, in part, a function of their interpretation of Kiyozawa’s legacy. Kiyozawa’s “My Faith” essay provided a model for modern Shin studies’ first-person “confessional” approach; his language of religious “facts” and

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28 Kaneko only became a follower of Kiyozawa after his death, so his interpretation of Kiyozawa was largely shaped by that of Soga and Sasaki.
“experiences” set a foundation for its “empiricist” discourse; and the notion that he had ushered into the world a new lineage of person-to-person dharma encounter was important to its “esoteric” dimension.

2.4 The Birth of Shin Buddhist Studies

Background

James Dobbins has described three periods of Shin studies: medieval, early modern, and modern. The first, according to Dobbins, was characterized by “the prevailing Buddhist culture of hidden meanings and master-follower revelations” (2006, 8). Although Shinran is often seen as having broken with this culture, he, too, appealed to the hidden meanings of Buddhist sutras and to the critical importance of master-disciple transmission. The early modern period then witnessed “a paradigm shift away from secret or esoteric teachings and toward open and verifiable knowledge” (ibid.). Doctrinal academies were established where a hierarchy of scholars organized, edited, and interpreted the body of Shin scriptures, with higher-ranking scholars articulating sect orthodoxy and guiding the study of students and lower-ranking scholars. These endeavors were prompted by Tokugawa government regulations that prohibited temples from propounding new doctrines (ibid., 9), and nurtured by the stability and prosperity that the Shin institutions enjoyed during this period (Williams 2006; Ambros

See note 13 in Section 2.2 above.
The exegetical study that flourished at such academies was largely characterized by the practice of defining and locating the scriptural sources of terms within Shinran’s writings in an attempt to resolve any seeming contradictions across Shinran’s writings or between Shinran and the Shin patriarchs (Nobotsuka 2011, 85-7). These studies was carried out within the bounds of an interpretive tradition stemming from Zonkaku’s Rokuyōshō, accepted as the most authoritative commentary.30

Kiyozawa Manshi helped to set Shin sectarian studies on a new footing in several ways. First, Kiyozawa articulated a distinction between the perfect and unchanging “sectarian teachings” (shūgi 宗義) and the imperfect and ever changing “sectarian study” (shūgaku 宗学) of those teachings (KMZ, vol. 7: 113). If sectarian studies are merely the flawed, human attempts to understand and express the transcendent truths of Shin teachings, there is no requirement that modern interpretations conform to prior ones. Thus, Shin teachings need not be approached through an established interpretive tradition, but can be studied directly or through the mediation of non-sectarian texts. The primary problem now confronting the scholar of Shin teachings is not to demonstrate continuity within Shinran’s writings or between Shinran and the Shin patriarchs—it is to establish continuity between Shinran and oneself (Fukushima 2003, 110). Kiyozawa also determined the trajectory for modern Shin studies by framing religion in terms of the subjective experience of the individual and by

30 For an analysis of one Tokugawa period Shin scholar’s methods, see Fukushima (2003, 89-132).
developing a discourse of religious “empiricism,” but he did not actually initiate that project in any historically significant way. Rather, that task was left to his followers.

Sasaki Gesshō

Sasaki Gesshō was one of Kiyozawa’s main followers, known as one of the “three birds of the Kōkōdō” (Kōkōdō sanbarasu 浩々洞三羽鳥). Except for a brief period in 1911, when he protested the relocation of Shinshū University to Kyoto, Sasaki was continuously employed as a professor and administrator at Shinshū (Ōtani) University from 1905 until his unexpected death in 1926. His career highlights include his 1921 study tour of Europe and America to inspect their systems of higher education; his controversial 1923 appointment as third president of Ōtani university; his collaboration with D. T. Suzuki on the English language journal The Eastern Buddhist; and his historic 1924 speech, “Ōtani University’s Founding Spirit.”

Sasaki Gesshō was distinctive in developing modern Shin studies along “historicist” lines. Of the three scholars treated in this section, Sasaki was the most interested in the historical figure of Shinran. This is evident in his biography of Shinran (1910-1911) and in the two works reviewed below, Jikken no shūkyō (1926; originally published in 1903) (hereafter

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31 Kiyozawa did carry out some work that might be characterized as “Shin studies” (e.g. Tarikimon tetsugaku gaikotsu shikō 他力門哲學骸骨試稿 and Zaishō sangeroku 在床懴悔録) that has received attention in recent scholarship (e.g. Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo 2004b; Nishimoto 2006, 2008). However, those writings were largely ignored by his followers and interpreters. His historically significant writings—especially Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion, December Fan Diary, and Seishinshugi essays—only discuss Shin scriptures indirectly and episodically.

32 For information on Sasaki’s life, see the introduction in Sasaki (2014) and Yamada Ryōken (1973, 1974).
referred to as *Religion of Experience*) and *Shinshū gairon* (1921) (hereafter referred to as *Outlines of Shin Buddhism*). Sasaki also researched the history of early Buddhism, of Mahayana thought, and Pure Land Buddhism’s development in India and China. As a historian, his work was closest to the historical approach of modern Buddhist studies, and it might be said that he contributed to and advocated for modern Shin studies without becoming a full-fledged representative of it.33 His devotion to and high expectations for the new discipline are on clear display in his historic 1924 speech:

> I am especially happy that this term “Shin studies” has become quickly accepted by society at large in just a few years. I eagerly hope that the study of Shin Buddhism as an academic discipline will be deepened in the future, and that, at the same time, as a living religion, it will become the source for the cultivation of religious character among people at large. (Sasaki 2013, 26-7)34

Moreover, Sasaki was just as convinced as Soga and Kaneko that Shin Buddhism was ultimately a matter of religious experience in the present, and his historical scholarship was ultimately concerned with the inner lives of its subjects. By targeting an international readership, engaging with a wide breadth of non-sectarian and non-Buddhist materials, and employing “confessional,” “empirical,” and “esoteric” discourses, Sasaki’s scholarship made critical contributions to the development of modern Shin studies.

33 Kaneko and Soga have always been perceived as the primary originators of modern Shin studies. Previous scholarship on the development of modern Shin studies (e.g. Mizushima 2010) has emphasized Sasaki’s role as university president but has largely ignored his scholarly work. I argue that this is an oversight. In fact, it can be argued that Sasaki’s straddling of different roles—administrator, Buddhist studies scholar, Shin studies scholar—was critical in bringing Shin studies respectability and authority.

34 The Japanese text can be found in ODH (vol. 2: 545-550).
Sasaki Gesshō’s first major work, *Religion of Experience*, published in 1903, draws out the empiricist language of Kiyozawa’s Seishinshugi writings. As early as 1901, Sasaki had defined Shin in terms of a concrete but ineffable experience of the Tathāgata, calling Shin practitioners “empiricists (*keiken ronsha* 経験論者) of the broadest kind” (*Seishinkai* 1, no. 10: 18-19). *Religion of Experience* extends this experiential understanding of religion into a historical study of Japanese Buddhism. The preface underlines Sasaki’s introspective, “confessional” approach, describing the book as “records of my actual feelings upon encountering great spirit (*tairei* 大霊) through the inspiration of these persons.” The opening and closing chapters defend

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35 Chronologically, Sasaki’s emphasis on religious experience thus postdates Kiyozawa’s “Science and Religion” but predates William James’ *Varieties of Religious Experience*. I am presuming that Sasaki received Kiyozawa’s influence in this regard, but it is also plausible that Sasaki or Akegarasu may have influenced Kiyozawa to speak of “religious experience.”

Sasaki’s statement that Shin practitioners are “empiricists” is found in the following passage of the article “Shūkyō no hongi 宗教の本義” (The Fundamental Nature of Religion):

“We always criticize theoretical knowledge and proclaim the power of faith. However, [the fundamental nature of religion] is not to be found by taking up ‘doctrinal authority’ as foundation, by making ideals the basis, by provisionally speaking of things invisible, unknowable, and mysterious and locating the fundamental nature of religion in that, telling people to have faith, to entrust in this, to call upon this.

“In a sense, we are empiricists of the broadest kind (*motto mo hanahadashiki keikenronsha nari* 最も甚だしき経験論者なり)...”

“The ‘Tathāgata’ upon which we call... cannot be an unknowable, invisible, unattainable being of the eternally distant future... When we completely abandon our own calculations and directly enter into Amida’s assembly, we can directly recognize the ‘Buddha’ of great compassion and hear the sound of ‘Tathāgata’ calling us. Reaching this, a person recognizes in this world no actual reality as clear as ‘Buddha,’ and knows nothing as firmly established as Buddha mind.”

Sasaki further states in this essay that the object of religious faith cannot be approached through theoretical knowledge, learning, or research, but only through faithful entrusting in the Buddha. This brings about an experience that enables one to recognize and to intuit the Buddha as clearly and empirically as any other fact in the world.
religion as pertaining to “subjective facts” immune from scientific or philosophical critique and invisible to the dry historicism and textualism of modern Buddhist studies. Each of the other chapters discusses the life, teachings, and formative “experience” of a Buddhist figure—from Saichō and Kūkai to Rennyō and Hakuin—giving the impression of a search for a common core to Buddhism across sectarian divides.36

The book begins with an assault on modern Buddhist studies:

There is nothing so impossible and nonsensical in the world as picking a plant from the earth or catching a fish from the river and then, without offering a drop of water, seeking in them something that does not wither or die. Yet these days, such impossibilities and nonsense are sought in religion, especially in our Buddhism. (Sasaki 1926, 1)

According to Sasaki, such is the situation of scholars of Buddhism who study it historically, doctrinally, or comparatively without bringing a drop of faith. The objectivist study of religion naturally fails to understand religion’s true nature and arrives at the conclusion that religion is a matter of “fancy” (kūsō 空想). Later, Sasaki comments, “Without faith, [the Tathāgata] certainly remains a fancy, as you say. But as an object of faith, it is decidedly not a fancy but a reality of the most firmly established kind” (ibid., 328-9). Railing against the limits and fallibility of science and philosophy, Sasaki declares Buddhism to be a living power that can be experienced but not dissected or created. Just as plants and fish ought to be studied in their

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36 Moreover, references to and quotations from Socrates, Epictetus, Tolstoy, Emerson, and Edwin Arnold’s Light of Asia (mostly in Japanese translation but occasionally in English) even suggest a perennial core to human wisdom extending beyond Buddhism.
native habitats, so should religion be approached as a phenomenon belonging to the minds of religious people:

Christianity is a religion that opened out in the breast of Jesus while Buddhism is the spiritual light of the Tathāgata that manifested in the mind of Śākyamuni. Just as one cannot investigate a living Christianity separate from Jesus, so it is extremely difficult to witness the life of Buddhism separate from the person of Śākyamuni... it is disheartening to see the Buddha dharma spoken of these days without any life or power. This is ultimately because people speak of the dharma without speaking of the person. People are failing to speak of the dharma through the person. Presently, the lack of inspiration in the Buddhist world is a result of people trying to taste the meanings of the teachings apart from the person of the founder. (ibid., 14-15)

For Sasaki, it is hopeless to study the written teachings of the Buddha without trying to encounter the Buddha and penetrate the psychological state behind his words.

Each of Sasaki’s middle chapters consists of a longer section that emotively evokes that figure’s inner psychology combined with a shorter section of dry historical biography. The text thus displaces history with psychology. For example, Sasaki’s chapter on Saichō focuses on why he retreated to Mt. Hiei, a question, he claims, that can be answered not by historical research but only by “asking Saichō himself” (ibid., 26). Sasaki proposes to do this by considering the psychology implied by Saichō’s Ganmon 願文. Part of Sasaki’s argument runs as follows:

Dengyō Daishi [Saichō], here at a pinnacle of self-reflection and self-contemplation, reached this awakening:

“i, lowly Saichō, am as ignorant as ignorant can be, as deranged as deranged can be, a dusty, bald-headed being. Above, I oppose the Buddhas. Between, I transgress the imperial rule. Below, I lack filial piety.”

Dengyō Daishi’s entrance into the mountains was not for the sake of opening a sect; it was for the sake of opening his own mind. It was not to overturn Buddhism of the south; it was to overturn the evil demons within his heart. It was not to save society from its evils; it was to save his own self from its evils... this awakening was the original
cause that led Dengyō Daishi to become the founder of Japanese Tendai and a great figure of Heian Buddhism. Dengyō Daishi died in this awakening and lived in this awakening. (ibid., 30-31)

Sasaki’s analysis thus reductively characterizes Saichō’s life and works in terms of a single experience of realization of his own lowliness—a point easily squared with Shin teachings.

One of Sasaki’s last works, *Outlines of Shin Buddhism* (1921), is primarily an investigation of Shinran’s magnum opus, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* (The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way). The opening “confession” marks off Sasaki’s work as modernist:

I humbly confess;37

Formerly, I thought my “Shin sect” was a teaching of the Pure Land opposed to the saintly path38... a teaching of the future opposed to the present... a teaching of salvation opposed to self-awareness... a teaching of faith opposed to wisdom... a teaching of kingly dharma opposed to foreign countries. However, on the basis of the sutras and commentaries, I have come to firmly believe that is not so.

Therefore, I now firmly believe that my “Shin sect” is not only Saint Shinran’s “Shin sect” but also the World-Honored Śākyamuni’s “Shin sect,” and I have no doubt that my “Shin sect” is the only religion that can henceforth awaken and bring salvation to the people of the world. (Sasaki 1921, 1-2)

Sasaki thus foregrounds his study of Shinran with a “humble” appeal to the authority of his own, newfound “firm belief.” His discovery is that Shin is not just one “sect” among many, but

37 Jpn. 私は謹んで告白します
38 The “saintly path” (shōmon 聖門) is a term used by Shin Buddhists to distinguish “self-power” forms of Buddhism from Shin, which is said to be efficacious for everyone, including “foolish beings” (bonbu 凡夫) (SSJ, 276-77).
rather identical to Śākyamuni’s Buddhism. Sasaki’s concern to demonstrate agreement between Śākyamuni and Shinran arises from the need to respond to the “theory that Mahayana was not taught by the Buddha” (Daijō hibusetsu ron 大乗非仏説論). His approach, consistent with Religion of Experience, is to try to show continuity between the inner thoughts of Shinran and Śākyamuni rather than take up historical details. Again Sasaki offers a “subjectivist history” meant to supersede “objectivist history.”

Outlines of Shin Buddhism also opens with a discussion of the relationship between Shin Buddhism and academic study. Here Sasaki is less combative, describing Shin as “the pinnacle of academic principle” rather than opposed to it:

The Shin sect is a practical religion (jissaiteki shūkyō 実際的宗教) through and through. Ordinarily, if one says “practical,” people immediately think of something opposed to scholarly principles, reason, or truth. However, the meaning of “practicality,” as I speak of it now, is certainly not in opposition to scholarly principle or truth. Rather, I apply the term “practicality” to that which lies at the very pinnacle of scholarly principle, reason, or truth... The Shin sect is none other than the practicalization of truth (shinri no jissaika 真理の実際化). (1921, 1)

His changed attitude reflects the fact that the new discipline of Shin studies was in the process of being created. He describes Buddhist history as an empirical process of discovery comparable to but distinct from modern academics:

In academic research, one researches an object and makes a discovery. If what is clarified is something people have already researched and discovered, this leads to

39 He expresses his unease at the notion that Shin Buddhism is just one “sect” among many by placing quotation marks around “Shin sect.”
disappointment and indifference. As for religious wisdom, which is the power of faith, the more the same fact[s] of faithful understanding was discovered in the past, the more joyful one is. This is perhaps the point of difference between the wisdom of academic research and the faith of religious experience. (ibid., 17)

While science accumulates new knowledge in the quest for intellectual progress, religion perpetually rediscovers the same “fact” through “experience.” Sasaki discusses Shinran’s founding of the Shin sect as arising out of his experience of this fact, which he then found confirmed in the sutras and writings of the seven Shin patriarchs (ibid., 8-9).

Sasaki’s analysis of the Kyōgyōshinshō draws on a breadth of topics, including the Flower Garland Sutra (Jpn. Kegonyō; Skt. Avataṃsaka Sūtra) and Nirvana Sutra (Jpn. Nehankyō; Skt. Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra), Indian Mahayana thought, and early Buddhist history. He seeks to show how Shinran’s text reflects the broader Buddhist tradition rather than merely building upon Hōnen and the three Pure Land sutras (ibid., 30-1). He depicts Shinran as the bearer of a tradition, stretching back to the Mahāsāṃghikas’ split from the Sthaviravādins, that has upheld “faith of experience” in contrast to “faith based on doctrinal authority” (ibid., 24). The latter tradition has reified Śākyamuni, his precepts, and the superficial shell of his words while the former has sought out the actual experience that inspired Śākyamuni and his teachings. This
discussion clearly implies a critique of the traditional sectarian studies of Sasaki’s day and its claim to “doctrinal authority.”

Sasaki’s work concludes with a study of “the ultimate and conventional two truths” (*shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦). This teaching was revived by leading Shin authorities in the Meiji period to express Buddhists’ commitment to uphold their duties as citizens. Sasaki tracks discussions of the two truths in early classifications of the four noble truths; in the writings of Vasumitra, Nāgārjuna, Açvaghosa, and Prince Zhāomíng 昭明 of Liang dynasty (502-557) China; in various Mahayana sutras; and in the work of modern Shin thinkers including Kiyozawa. Finally, he advances his own explanation that he classifies as “conventional-ultimate-conventional” (*zoku-shin-zoku setsu* 俗真俗説). Essentially, he interprets the two truths as a sequence descriptive of a practitioner’s experience of leaving the conventional realm, entering the ultimate realm, and returning, a process paradoxically sequential (*zengo* 前後) and simultaneous or identical (*soku* 即):

Conventional and ultimate depend on one another and give rise to one world. That is to say, these two are two, and they must also be one. That is to say, here the two truths resolve in the character for “being identical” (*soku* 即). The Shin sect’s two truths of ultimate and conventional must be an “explanation of the truth of faith,” and the ultimate and conventional must contain an “explanation of the truth of being identical.” We are all identical with human life, yet we see [the Tathāgata’s] light. We are identical to affliction, yet we encounter awakening. We reside in the realm of foolish beings

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40 For a discussion of the “principle of doctrinal authority” in relation to the Kaneko heresy affair, see Schroeder (2014). See also Section 3.3 below.
41 For a discussion in English, see Chapter 7 of Rogers et al. (1991).
replete with affliction, yet in this place we also see the light of salvation. Ultimate and conventional are truly this realm of not-one and not-two. By discovering the realm of faith through the reversal of subject and object, we resolve the problem of the relationship of the two truths on the basis of the character for “being identical” (ibid., 138-9).

One “sees the light of salvation” and becomes the Buddha through subject-object reversal but also remains in the state of a foolish being. The “conventional” and “ultimate” truths are “identical” in the sense of “not-one and not-two.” Such an explanation of the Shin experience of faith bears resemblance to D. T. Suzuki’s explanations of the Zen experience of *satori* (awakening). Suzuki, like Sasaki, spoke of the need to penetrate beneath the words of Buddhist texts to the psychology of the enlightened mind, and he characterized ignorance and enlightenment as “not-two, which is not the same as one” and marked by a process of the emergence of ignorance and return to awakening (which Sasaki might call “*shin-zoku-shin*”).

This resemblance is probably no coincidence, for the two were close friends and colleagues. Here is one small indication of the overlap and possible exchange between modern Shin studies and other arenas of modern Buddhist studies.

In summary, Sasaki contributed to the birth of modern Shin studies not just as a university administrator supportive of Soga and Kaneko’s work but as a Shin studies scholar himself. He developed Kiyozawa’s notion of “religious experience” into the (purportedly)

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43 *Outlines of Shin Buddhism* was published the same year Suzuki was brought—through Sasaki’s influence—to work at Ōtani University.
“empirical” study of the experiences of key figures in Buddhist history. In doing so, he argued that scholars would not be able to understand Buddhism by merely analyzing texts; rather, they must penetrate the psychological states of Buddhist teachers. This emphasis on person-to-person encounter rather than textual exegesis is an example of what I mean by “esoteric” discourse. Sasaki also justified his work through first-person “confessions” of his past misperceptions and newfound realizations. These three discourses distinguish Sasaki’s work from traditional sectarian studies (which shares none of these discourses) and from modern Buddhist studies (which also claims to be “empirical,” but in a different way). Sasaki’s work is also notable for how it draws upon a breadth of non-sectarian and non-Buddhist sources and for its targeting of an international audience.

Soga Ryōjin

Initially a critic of Kiyozawa, Soga Ryōjin eventually became one of Seishinshugi’s prominent representatives. His charged relationship with the Ōtani authorities is signified by his cycle of leaving and returning to Ōtani University. He studied and taught at the university

44 Jacqueline Stone judges Anesaki Masaharu a pioneer in approaching religious leaders from a psychological, rather than doctrinal, viewpoint on the basis of his 1916 Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet (Stone 1990, 232), but Sasaki’s work prefigured Anesaki’s by more than a decade.
45 My analysis has focused on two of Sasaki’s Japanese works, but he also published A Study of Shin Buddhism (1925) in English and promoted Shin to an international audience through the English-language journal The Eastern Buddhist.
46 In acknowledgment of this, the saying “three birds of the Kōkōdō” was expanded into “four heavenly kings of the Kōkōdō” (浩々洞の四天王) to accommodate him (Yasutomi 2010, 149).
until 1911 when he resigned over its transfer back to Kyoto. From 1911 to 1916, he lived in Niigata as a temple priest and independent researcher. Thereafter, he returned to Tokyo to serve as editor of the *Seishinkai* journal and professor at Tōyō University. In 1925, he returned to Ōtani University, only to be chased out on heresy charges in 1930. He returned again in 1941. In 1949, he was purged from the faculty by occupation forces, but was brought back in 1951, becoming university president in 1961.47

Soga was distinctive in developing Shin studies along “psychological” lines. Soga’s signature theory was that Dharmākara Bodhisattva, the pre-incarnation of Amida Buddha whose story is related in the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life*, manifests as an aspect of human psychology through the experience of faith. He became the leading voice of modern Shin orthodoxy within the Ōtani denomination, considered by many Kiyozawa’s true heir (e.g., Honda 1998; Mizushima 2010; see also Ama 1985: 259-266). In the discussion below, I will trace the discourses of “confession,” “empiricism,” and “esotericism” in his work.

Soga’s most important early work is his seven-part “Nichiren-ron” (Discourse on Nichiren) (1904), an example of Shin modernists’ efforts to justify their sectarian beliefs in relation to a broader terrain of competing Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions. As evident in the work’s introduction, Soga was particularly concerned to reveal the superhuman, supra-rational depths of figures like Nichiren, Shinran, and Śākyamuni in response to modernist

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47 For a biography of Soga, see Itō (1993).
attention to “historical Śākyamuni” as an ordinary human being and philosopher (Honda 1998, 33-36). As for why Soga wrote on Nichiren in particular, Takayama Chōgyū’s 1901-2 writings on Nichiren may have been an influence (Yasutomi 2010, 149-150). In addition, modern Shin thinkers may have harbored a particular fascination with Nichiren as the ultimate “evil person” who disbelieved in Pure Land teachings. At a time when many harbored doubts in the veracity of Pure Land doctrines, Nichiren’s slander of such doctrines presented material for the study of skepticism itself.

“Nichiren-ron” begins with an opening rhetorical flourish critical of historicist Buddhist studies and the scientific worldview:

In this age and times, people imagine themselves to be nothing more than a small six-foot body that lives for sixty years. One’s self is only one’s self, and others are only others. Śākyamuni is only Śākyamuni, and Christ is only Christ. Saichō is only Saichō, and Kūkai is only Kūkai. Shinran is only Shinran, and Nichiren is only Nichiren… In the course of forty some years, how could a person expound 84,000 sutras, greater and lesser, expedient and true? Scientific research birthed historicist research, and historicist research has analyzed the great persons of the past, trying to extinguish their spirit and their life… He preached Hinayana teachings, so he must not have preached Mahayana teachings. He taught doctrines emphasizing solemn austerities, so he must not have taught doctrines of Pure Land rebirth. He opposed theism, so he must not have preached of a person-like Amida. Ahhh, historical research takes Śākyamuni to be only Śākyamuni. They deny that Śākyamuni is a public person (kōjin 公人) and only affirm him as a private individual (shijin 私人). Unless they hear a sound or see something with their eyes, they do not accept it as knowledge. If it is not in texts, they do not accept it. They are firmly grounded, but they are shallow. They do not know the basis by which sounds and deeds arise. They do not know the basis by which historical

48 Such motivations are on clear display in Soga’s earlier essay “Shūkyōteki jinkaku-ron 宗教的人格論” (Discourse on Religious Persons) (SRS, vol. 1: 342-350).
records come forth. How can those with faith in eyes and ears have faith in their own
spirit? How can those with faith in objective facts have faith in spiritual facts? How is it
they believe in objective sounds but cannot accept the authority of their own subjective
voice? They do not understand that Śākyamuni does not exist only as a textual object
but directly becomes active in the depths of our own individual spirits... (SRS, vol. 2: 5-
6)

The opening lines argue that a person’s life is not restricted to his or her body and its lifespan.

Insofar as empiricism is defined as a method of studying external, objective facts, Soga rejects it.

He characterizes such a standpoint as “firmly grounded” but ultimately “shallow” insofar as it
fails to identify the inner source of outward appearances. Following Kiyozawa, Soga suggests
that scholars must also acknowledge the reality of “spiritual facts” alongside “objective facts”
and a “subjective voice” alongside “objective sounds.” Soga thus claims to ground his approach
to Buddhist studies not in the authority of scripture or institutional tradition but in
empiricism—albeit of a sort that prioritizes “subjective experience.”

Soga’s use of “esoteric” discourse is evident in his answer to historians’ accusation that
the Buddha did not propound the Mahayana sutras. He responds by appealing to the concept of
a “living Śākyamuni” who is more than a historical individual and who can enter into
individuals’ spirits in the present. This is very much how he will come to speak of Dharma
Bodhisattva. Soga’s argument is premised on the notion that the “historical Buddha” is the

49 Soga, like Kiyozawa and Sasaki, insits that the objects experienced “subjectively” are “trans-
subjective.” For example, he states: “We cannot be satisfied with a perfection that is merely a subjective
concept and not also an objective reality,” and “We must directly enter the realm of mystery and believe
in the reality of the Tathāgata Amida as the true absolute and ultimate subject 真の絶対至上の大主観
that transcends the individual subjectivity of all sentient beings” (Heisig et al. 2011, 274).
temporary, outer manifestation of an eternal, hidden, inner reality that one can encounter through introspection.¹⁰

In “Chijō no kyūshū: Hōzō Bosatsu shutsugen no igi” (1913) (A Savior on Earth: The Meaning of Dharmākara Bodhisattva’s Advent; hereafter referred to as “A Savior on Earth”), Soga unveils his psychological rereading of the legend of Dharmākara Bodhisattva. The essay begins with a confession of sorts:

Toward the beginning of July last year, at the home of my friend Kaneko in Takada, I attained a sense of the phrase “The Tathāgata is myself.” Then, toward the end of August, this time at Akegarasu’s place in Kaga, I was offered the phrase, “The Tathāgata becoming me saves me.” Finally, around October, I was made to realize that “When the Tathāgata becomes me, it signals the birth of Dharmākara Bodhisattva.” This may not mean much to other people, but for me—who for twenty years had been plagued by sickness and worldly worries, and who had not understood the meaning of the scriptures on this point, even though I made it my task to read from them daily—the insight I received made me feel as if I was handed a torch that all of a sudden lit up a room that had been kept in darkness for a thousand years. (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 108-9 amended; SRS, vol. 2: 408)

Soga presents his theory as the product of a series of personal religious experiences, culminating in a sudden insight that felt like being handed a torch that lit up a dark room. His sentences’ passive grammar implies that the Tathāgata brought about these experiences in him. He goes on to corroborate his theory via discussion of sutras and Shinran’s writings, but the

¹⁰ For more on Soga’s esoteric views on “personhood” (jinkaku 人格), see the June 1903 essay “Shūkyōteki jinkaku ron 宗教的人格論” (Discourse on the Religious Person). There Soga argues in agreement with Sasaki for the need to study religious persons rather than texts: “If one wants to grasp truly living religion, one must turn away from cold doctrines and truly encounter religious persons” (SRS, vol. 1: 342).
initial appeal is to the authority of his own experience. Soga’s confession ends with an apology for his boldness: “Even now, I am surprised by my boldness and arrogance, and I cannot but lament the shallowness of my thinking” (SRS, vol. 2: 409). Rhetorically, this is an apology and expression of humility, yet as shown below, Soga also considers this bravado evidence of his experience’s authenticity. If his experience had not been so powerful and convincing, he would not have dared advance such a claim.

Soga’s essay explains that for the Buddha to be a true savior, he cannot remain a “mere ideal” but must somehow reach into actual present reality. According to Soga, Dharmākara performs this mediating role. Neither a historical human being like Jesus nor a “beautiful metaphor” like Avalokiteśvara (Jpn. Kannon) Bodhisattva, Dharmākara has a “basis in present reality” via a practitioner’s experience.

What is Dharmākara Bodhisattva? None other than the subject of the surrendering faith that is mindful of the Tathāgata. His eighteenth vow is the loving expression of the Tathāgata’s experience of the entrusting child-mind of sentient beings. (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 113 amended; SRS, vol. 2: 414).

Soga’s use of the term “experience” here might be glossed as “entrance into the experience” or even “hijacking of the experience.” Dharmākara as the Tathāgata is said to enter into and become a person’s experience of faith in the Tathāgata. Moreover:

51 This personal, confessional tone pervaded Soga’s writings in the years from his 1911-1913 when he lived in Niigata and worked out his Dharmākara Bodhisattva theory. See Mizushima (2010, 97-117).
The Bodhisattva first enters the experience of the eternally deluded minds of common mortals, directly brings forth therein the Buddha-mind of sincere and joyful entrusting, and from the midst of that mind of wholehearted surrender arouses the heart of the eternal Tathāgata that makes the salvation of all the condition of his own attainment of Buddhahood. (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 116 amended; SRS, vol. 2: 419-20)

That is, Dharmākara first brings about in a person a mind of faith in the Tathāgata and then develops that into the very mind of the Tathāgata. One’s own mind becomes the Buddha’s mind; Dharmākara’s vows become one’s own vows. From this perspective, the Sutra of Immeasurable Life’s account of Dharmākara’s vows is not comprised of language descriptive of Dharmākara’s vows but connotative of vows forming in the reader’s mind. This is similar to how ritual language is said to function within Kūkai’s esoteric Buddhism. One can say Soga treats the Sutra of Immeasurable Life as an esoteric text.53

Soga’s essay goes on to offer evidence that Shinran held the same views. According to Soga’s explanation, former Shin patriarchs Shandao and Hōnen understood how two of the

52 Jan Van Bragt’s translation in Blum and Rhodes (2011) renders “jikken 実験” as “experiment with,” which I find misleading insofar as it suggests that the Buddha is “carrying out an experiment” or “trying something out.”

53 The distinction between descriptive and ritual language is discussed in Abe (1999, 146). Abe describes how language in the abhiṣeka rituals taught to Kūkai functions to reenact Mahāvairocana Buddha’s transmission to Vajrasattva: “The abhiṣeka is therefore a ritual device that evokes within itself the temporality of the scriptures’ mythopoetic, primordial origin. By doing so, the abhiṣeka spins the genealogical thread of masters and followers by Esoteric Buddhism in order to extend it into historical processes. The genealogy maintains its continuity from one generation to another by mediating between the time of history and that of mythical eternity. At the heart of this mediation is mantra’s semantic function as a ritual language—especially its effacement of the boundary between the narrative lines of the scriptures and the rituals of abhiṣeka described for readers within those narratives” (ibid.). Soga’s reading of Pure Land sutras similarly “effaces the boundary” between mythic time and present historical time, though not through any ritual action other than the recitation of the nenbutsu.
three causes for birth in the Pure Land—vow and nenbutsu—were accomplished by the
Tathāgata’s Primal Vow, but they did not understand how the third cause—faith—was
accomplished by the Tathāgata (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 113-14). This is a problem because all
causes of rebirth are to be attributed to the Tathāgata’s Other Power. How was the subjective
state of faith accomplished by the Tathāgata, who is the object of faith? Soga’s answer is that
Dharmākara as the Tathāgata enters the mind of a person and becomes that person’s faith in
the Tathāgata. Shinran’s naming of the Primal Vow as “Primal Vow of Faith and Entrusting”
indicates his discovery of this point (ibid.).

Soga’s desire to see modern Shin studies constructed on an intellectually legitimate,
“empirical” basis according to the strictures of the “academic world” is evident in the letters he
wrote to Kaneko in the early 1920s. In April 1921, he emphasized the need for such studies to
rest upon a foundation of experienced facts:

To speak on sectarian studies without an unshakeable foundation will yield nothing
more than empty theories. Concerning the facts of Shin Buddhism, upon which
sectarian studies should be built, we must seriously take up a worshipful, humble
attitude... I believe we must truly experience (taken 体験) these facts of Shin Buddhism.
(Soga et al. 1980, 138)

At times, he saw this demand as in conflict with his own identity as a priest. For example, in
October 1920, he wrote to Kaneko:

I think that it no longer works [for me] to be a priest (sōyo 僧侶). I think that to first
make a conclusion and then construct the reasons for it is a great sin in the academic
world. To the extent that one is not free from the priestly temperament (bōzu konjō 坊
主根性), the construction of a true sectarian studies is in vain. (ibid., 134)
Soga critiqued traditional sectarian studies’ reliance on an established commentarial tradition, suggesting that in such a framework, the “conclusions” are already established, so the scholar’s job is merely to “construct the reasons” for those conclusions. Rather than rehearsing the interpretations of earlier Shin commentators, Soga iconoclastically sought to set forth his own interpretations: “Although it is unreasonable to aspire to the words of the Founder [Shinran], if words at least on the level of Kakunyo or Zonkaku are not produced, the sect is doomed” (ibid., 139).

_Nyorai hyōgen no hanchū to shite no sanjin kan_ (1927) (View of the Three Minds as Categories of the Manifestation of the Buddha; hereafter referred to as View of the Three Minds) is an example of the mature modern Shin studies developed by Kaneko and Soga in the 1920s. Having previously declared Dharmākara to be a person’s “true subjectivity” equivalent to the ālaya consciousness of Yogaçāra thought (and having equated the “three stages” of ālaya consciousness with the “three stages” of Dharmākara Bodhisattva—his 18th, 19th, and 20th vows), Soga here argues for the equivalency of the “three aspects of ālaya consciousness”—self-aspect, fruit-aspect, and cause-aspect—with the “three minds of the Primal Vow”—sincere mind, joyful entrusting, and desire for birth in the Pure Land. This investigation into the hidden correspondences between different discursive Buddhist worlds is further emblematic of the “esoteric” nature of Soga’s work.

Soga explains his methodology in _View of the Three Minds_ as follows:
I am speaking on the facts of my own present consciousness. Therefore, it is neither Shin studies separate from experiences of consciousness, nor is it Yogaçara studies (yuishikigaku 唯識学) unconnected to religious awareness. That is to say, I am speaking of Shin studies that flows within my own consciousness and of Yogaçara studies that reflects upon my own religious needs. (Soga 1927, 24)

Soga thus claims to follow an “empirical” approach, attentive to the “facts” of his own consciousness, as opposed to mere intellectual speculation or philological study of texts. He also attributes the same methodology to Shinran, drawing attention to Shinran’s bravado in reinterpreting scripture:

“Though Amida Buddha discloses three minds, the true cause of attaining nirvana is the mind of faith.” These are truly bold words [of Shinran’s]. “Though Amida Buddha discloses three minds”—to restrain this, and regardless of what is said [in the sutras], to declare, “the true cause of attaining nirvana is the one mind of faith.”—I believe that he has truly said an excellent thing, and that it was precisely because he stood atop the direct fact of strong religious awakening that he was able to say such a thing. Normally, one would say, “Amida Buddha discloses three minds” and automatically bow one’s head in agreement. (ibid., 27-8)54

Soga expresses amazement at Shinran’s daring to “restrain” the sutra’s apparent meaning and boldly insist that only the “one mind of faith” matters. Soga sees Shinran’s “bold words” as evidence of the power and authenticity of his experience of the “direct facts” of awakening.

This calls to mind Soga’s previous expression of surprise at his own “boldness” at advancing his radical theory of Dharmākara (SRS, vol. 2: 409).

54 Shinran's discussion of the “three minds” appears in the third chapter of the Kyōgyōshinshō (CWS, 93-107).
In summary, Soga grounded his scholarship in first-person “confessions” of his past doubts and misunderstandings and of the religious experiences that brought about in him new, authoritative understandings; in an argument for an expanded concept of “empiricism” inclusive of “spiritual facts” and “subjective voices”; and in an “esoteric” reading of Shin scriptures as enabling embodiment of the psychology of Dharmākara Bodhisattva. By appealing to the “empirical facts” of his own introspective investigations, Soga departed from traditional sectarian studies and claimed standing in the academic world. By reframing “empiricism” and by appealing to notions of “esoteric” encounter, Soga distinguished his work from modern Buddhist studies and other academic disciplines.

*Kaneko Daiei*

Kaneko Daiei came to study Kiyozawa’s thought through Soga’s influence. After graduating from Shinshū University in 1904, he returned home to Niigata to work as a temple priest and independent researcher. During this period, he authored a 43-part *Seishinkai* article series, entitled “Jitokuchō 自督帖” (Notes on Self-Encouragement), an elaborate “confessional” account of his spiritual progress.55 In 1915, he came to Tokyo to serve as editor of *Seishinkai* briefly before being hired at Tōyō University and then Shinshū Ōtani University in 1916. He was accused of heresy and ousted from the university in 1928, ostensibly for his theory of the Pure

55 Jitoku is a technical Shin Buddhist term meaning the “encouragement and rectification of oneself” (SSJ, 220).
Land. In 1930, he was appointed professor at Hiroshima University of Literature and Science. In 1941, he was reinstated at Ōtani University along with Soga. His writings on Shōtoku Taishi were endorsed as “recommended reading” by the wartime government, which helps explain his purge from the faculty in 1949. In 1951, he was invited back to Ōtani University, where he lectured and wrote prolifically on the Kyōgyōshinshō.56

Kaneko was distinctive in developing Shin Buddhist studies along metaphysical lines. In exploring metaphysical questions such as the nature of existence, death, and the Pure Land, Kaneko read widely within Buddhism but also turned to Western philosophy, especially Kant and his Neo-Kantian interpreters. In this respect, Kaneko followed Kiyozawa in trying to identify and defend Buddhism’s intellectual value in a global context. His understanding of Western academics and philosophy put him in a position to pioneer in modern Shin studies—even as it opened him up to the critique of turning Buddhism into Western philosophy.57

Bukkyō gairon (1919) (hereafter referred to as Outlines of Buddhism) brought Kaneko repute in the broader Buddhist world, showing him to be more than a scholar of Shin teachings. Taking the form of a comprehensive textbook on Buddhism as a whole, this work seems to mark him as a scholar of “Buddhist studies” rather than sectarian studies. Yet his sectarian

56 For a biography of Kaneko, see Hataya (1993).
57 Kaneko’s appropriation of Western philosophy was controversial not only among so-called conservatives within his sect, but also caused friction within the Kōkōdō group of Seishinshugi followers. According to his recollections, the breakup of the Kōkōdō in 1917 due to a generational divide was in part related to the elders’ dismay over Kaneko’s interest in Henri Bergson and Rudolf Eucken. See “Kaneko sensei no kaisō” 金子先生の回想 in Soga (1970-1972b, vol. 5: 13-14).
commitment to Mahayana Buddhism in general and Shin in particular is quite evident. For example, he attempts to dispatch with the “theory that Mahayana was not taught by the Buddha” by arguing:

Can one really say that the thought of a genius is transmitted through the records of his words and deeds, and not through created works? Recognizing that the Buddha’s meaning cannot be transmitted by mimicry, shouldn’t it rather be said that Mahayana sutras of a created nature come close to the Buddha’s meaning while the Hinayana sutras of a transmitted nature actually stray far from his meaning? (Kaneko 1919, 9-10)

Kaneko thus sidesteps historical questions and makes the theological argument that the Buddha’s “words and deeds” may be “mimicked” in Hinayana texts, but their inner “meaning” can only be transmitted by the creative works of similarly enlightened beings. This is essentially the same argument that Murakami Senshō had advanced along with his claim that Mahayana sutras were not the words of the historical Buddha.58

Kaneko’s interpretive lens is evident in the chapter “The Pure Content of the Buddha’s Teaching” in which he explains the development of Buddhist teachings—from Hinayana through Shinran’s Pure Land teachings—in terms of the successive unfolding and clarification of the teaching of no-self. He concludes:

Thus, reflecting upon the nature of the development of Buddhist teachings, I find it is none other than the infinite manifestation of the truth of no-self experienced by Śākyamuni. Needless to say, when people become overly fixated on this latest teaching

58 See Okada (2005, 2009). Kaneko goes on to try to bolster his argument through discussion of traditional defenses of Mahayana vis-à-vis Hinayana as found in the Treatise on the Scripture of Adorning the Great Vehicle (大乘莊嚴経論).
of self-power and Other-Power, it will signify the need for a further division. At the
same time, I find that I cannot allow my research into the doctrines to stop at mere
research. Through my own true experience of no-self, I must shoulder the blessings of
Buddhist teachings of the past and become a starting point for Buddhist teachings of
the future. (ibid., 60)

Having presented Shin as the pinnacle of Buddhism’s historical development, Kaneko points to
a future when Buddhism will evolve beyond Shin. Kaneko would say he is proposing evolution
of the “forms of teaching” (kyōsō 教相), not the “principles of teaching” (kyōgi 教義).59
Nonetheless, his remark gives a sense of the freethinking, reform-minded spirit that
characterized his sectarianism.

The following chapter is titled “The Pure Form of the Buddha’s Teachings.” Skeptical
that the Buddha’s experience of awakening can be expressed straightforwardly by him in words
(e.g. in the Āgamas), Kaneko argues it is transmitted more effectively by accounts revealing the
nature of the Buddha’s person (jinkaku 人格). The Flower Garland Sutra and Vimalakīrti Sutra (Jpn.
Yuimakyō; Skt. Viṃalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra) accomplish this to a degree, but it is the Lotus Sutra (Jpn.
Hokkekyō; Skt. Saddharmapuṇḍarika Sūtra) and Sutra of Immeasurable Life that reveal the true
nature of a Buddha: Buddhas become Buddhas by virtue of contemplating and thereby
encountering the eternal Buddha.60 Here we see how the Mahayana view of an “eternal Buddha”

59 Kaneko’s distinction recalls Kiyozawa’s distinction between “sectarian teachings” and “sectarian study,”
as well as Soga’s distinction between unchanging “faith” and expedient “teachings.”
60 In the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, Ananda addresses Śākyamuni: “World-Honoured One, today all your
senses are radiant with joy... The Buddhas of the past, present and future contemplate each other. How
as the source of Buddahood is connected to the Shin modernists’ prioritization of hidden over
transparent meanings, persons over texts, and mystical encounters in the present over
salvation in the afterlife.

After *Outlines of Buddhism*, Kaneko turned to the task of redefining Shin studies. His June
1922 essay “Shūkyō no senkensei 宗教の先験性” (The Transcendental Nature of Religion)
reveals the orbit of his thought on the eve of his groundbreaking “Shinshūgaku josetsu”
(hereafter referred to as “Prolegomena to Shin Studies”) lectures. The essay is written as a
letter to his friend and colleague Kiba Ryōhon 木場了本, who was then studying philosophy in
Germany. Kaneko’s letter reveals his abiding interest in Kantian philosophy and the project of
squaring religious experience with Kant’s transcendental idealism. He depicts Kiba and himself
as fellow travelers on the path between the “two rivers”—an allusion to Shandao’s parable of
the “Two Rivers and the White Path.” Kaneko, however, declares the path to lead not to the
Pure Land but to “religious a priori” (shūkyōteki apuriori 宗教的アプリオリイ), a universal
truth (or truths) that is the source of all religious experience. His letter reviews a series of
recently published works on religious philosophy by Ernst Troeltsch, Hatano Seiichi, and Georg
Mehlis. Kaneko describes Troeltsch’s work as “taking up the material of religious experience as

can this present Buddha not contemplate the other Buddhas?” For what reason does his countenance
look so majestic and brilliant?” (Inagaki 1995, 233-4).

Kiba was a former Kōkōdō member and regular contributor to the journal *Seishinkai* from 1909-1917.
Among Kiba’s major contributions to *Seishinkai* was a serialized translation of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s
provided by [William] James and others and trying to purify it through the eyes of
transcendental philosophy thoroughly grounded in Kant.”⁶² He concludes that Troeltsch “does
not surmount the difficulty of trying to somehow synthesize religion’s transcendental quality
and its experiential quality through a transcendental philosophy that is forever on guard
against becoming metaphysics.” Kaneko’s review of Hatano’s work critiques him for not
discussing Kantian philosophy and for failing to resolve the “old problem of intellect and
faith.”⁶³ As a response to Hatano, Kaneko suggests that religious philosophy could be
constructed on the basis of an understanding of “faith” as “transcendent intellect.” In
reviewing Mehlis’s work, Kaneko surprisingly counters Mehlis’s argument for Christianity’s
superiority vis-à-vis Judaism and Buddhism by defending Judaism.⁶⁴ Specifically, Kaneko praises
Spinoza, who he feels has “deeply experienced the true nature of religion,” and Jewish Neo-
Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen, whose 1896 “Philosophical Introduction to Idealism” he
describes as presenting a view of religion “intimately familiar to those who study Buddhism.”⁶⁵

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⁶² Troeltsch was a German theologian and philosopher of religion. Kaneko discusses a 1921 Japanese translation of Troeltsch’s 1905 Psychology and Epistemology in Religious Studies (Psychologie und Erkenntnistheorie in der Religionswissenschaft).

⁶³ Hatano’s work was entitled Shūkyō tetsugaku no honshitsu oyobi sono konpon mondai (The Fundamental Nature of Religious Philosophy and its Basic Problems) (1920).

⁶⁴ Mehlis was a German Neo-Kantian philosopher. Kaneko discusses a 1921 Japanese translation of his 1917 Einführung in ein Systeme der Religionphilosophie (Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion).

⁶⁵ This was Cohen’s lengthy introduction and critical supplement to Friedrich Albert Lange’s 1866 Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart (History of Materialism and Critique of Its Present Significance). Kaneko presumably read the 1921 Japanese translation published by Ōmura Shoten.
In light of Kaneko’s comments here (as well as his references to Cohen in “Prolegomena to Shin Studies”), we can speculate that Spinoza’s theory of God as the one and only substance of the universe and Cohen’s view of Plato’s “ideas” as equivalent to Kantian “a priori laws” may have informed his theory of “the Pure Land as Idea.”

In “Prolegomena to Shin Studies” (1922), Kaneko proposes his model for modern Shin studies. Every academic discipline, he explains, has objects of study (e.g. the natural world), methods of study (e.g. “experiments”), and principles by which results are explained. The proper object of Shin studies, he argues, is the teachings contained within the Sutra of Immeasurable Life (not the Kyōgyōshinshō) while its proper method of study is “introspection” (naikan 内観) as modeled by Shinran and the seven Shin patriarchs. Introspective study of the Pure Land sutras gives rise to an experience of salvation through faith. It is the “reason” (riyū 理由) or principle underlying this phenomenon that Kaneko is concerned to explain. This is not a mere academic issue, for understanding this “reason” is essential to the process of attaining faith.

Some people say that religion is nothing more than faith. Other people say that the characteristic feature of Shin Buddhism lies in the recitation of the nenbutsu, which is

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66 Kaneko’s October 1922 lectures were published as a book in 1923.
67 Here the distinction between Shin practice and Shin studies disappears.
68 Scholars have often understood the third part of Kaneko’s formulation as the “reason” for engaging in study, a topic that is addressed in the lecture (e.g. Blum and Rhodes 2011, 167). Yet Kaneko’s work initially defines the “why” of Shin studies in terms of “seeking for reasons 理由 riyū” just as scientists seek out reasons to explain the results of their experiments, and his lecture culminates in a discussion of Shinran’s introspective discovery of the “reason” for the Pure Land (Kaneko 1966, 14-15, 90-102).
a very simple practice. Each of us individually recites Namu Amida Butsu and experiences (taiken) something in it. There is nothing else to Shin Buddhism. To take up anything else and treat it academically is actually a hindrance. For this reason, academic study is unnecessary in Shin Buddhism...

Even though it is true that faith or practice is the only important thing in Shin Buddhism, a certain realization, that is to say a certain kind of rationality, must be working in the depth of faith and practice. No matter how much a human observes an object with a microscope, if he has no brains, it’s impossible to discover any scientific truth. In just the same way, even if it is said that we should just believe or just practice, neither faith nor practice is possible as long as we have not been readied by our rational faculties. Thus, a certain kind of rationality must be working in the depth of faith and practice. Seen in this way, both practice and faith can be included within study. This certain rationality lies at the basis of Shin Buddhist Studies. (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 175-76)

Just as empirical scientists, in observing an object under a microscope, must bring a certain rationality to their work for it to yield any truth, so must Shin practitioners and scholars, in their introspective examination of their selves in relation to the Pure Land sutras, be “readied” by their “rational faculties.” The empirical nature of Shin studies—its basis in faith “experience”—is taken for granted; Kaneko’s additional claim is that such experiences be accompanied by rational thought.

The “reason” Kaneko deems essential is that which reveals the true nature of Amida Buddha and his salvific powers, thus explaining the empirical fact of salvation through faith. Kaneko relates that the search for such a reason can be carried out in two ways. First, one can seek out Amida Buddha’s “basis in things” (jiyū 事由)—the external circumstances that explain Amida’s existence. Kaneko here discusses historical accounts of how Pure Land teachings arose after Śākyamuni’s death as well as theological debates regarding whether multiple Buddhas can
inhabit the same universe and how an ordinary being burdened by past karma can qualify for rebirth in a pure land. Kaneko ultimately dismisses as “useless” these various historical, philosophical, and theological arguments that have sought to account for and evaluate Pure Land teachings (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 203).

Kaneko then approaches his explanation of the true “reason” for the Pure Land via a discussion of Nagarjuna’s critique of the concept of cause and effect: “Nāgārjuna argues that, for A to be the cause of B, A must simultaneously both exist and not exist within B. Because this is a contradiction, causation itself becomes problematic...” (ibid., 205). As a student of Kant, Kaneko believes that the necessary connection between cause and effect is not an a posteriori aspect of the world of things but rather an a priori form contained within the mind. Kaneko furthermore believed those a priori forms could be perceived through subjective experience. The inner necessity of the law of causation, Kaneko continues, can only be known by entering into “the world of awakening,” which is “the world of Ideas” (or “forms”). Similarly, the existence of the Pure Land appears groundless, but the experience of faith allows one to enter the “world of Ideas” and perceive the Pure Land as an a priori form. This a priori form manifests in the world when a person’s realization of need for salvation necessarily triggers an event of salvation.69

69 As Rhodes notes, Kaneko’s two-sided understanding of faith relates to Shinran’s “two kinds of deep faith” (nishu jinshin 二種深信) (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 163).
In Jōdo no kannen (1925) (hereafter referred to as *The Idea of the Pure Land*), Kaneko implements his vision of Shin studies through an investigation into the nature of the Pure Land on the basis of his own subjective experiences. His introspective and deeply personal approach to the study of Buddhist scripture is evident in the following passage:

My approach [to reading the scriptures] is to focus on the inspiration I feel in my heart upon reading them. What meaning do the teachings of the Mahayana scriptures hold in regard to my present, past, and future? What meaning do they hold in regards to my spirit? What meaning after all does the Pure Land taught in the Mahayana scriptures hold in regard to our society around us and to human life? Thus, I think that to go and reread the scriptures based on the meaning one grasps there is to take up eyes of truly reading the scriptures. (Kaneko 1925, 33-4)

It is also attested by the very structure of the work. Like Sasaki’s and Soga’s works, Kaneko’s *The Idea of the Pure Land* begins with a first-person account of his past doubts, transformative experiences, and newfound understanding, and it follows with arguments for agreement between his personal understanding and that of Shinran and other orthodox figures and texts of the past.

70 The shorter first section of this work has been translated into English as “The Concept of the Pure Land” by W. S. Yokoyama in “Two Thinkers on Shin: Selections from the Writings of Soga Ryōjin and Kaneko Daiei” (Soga et al. 1995). However, this translation is not without its problems, including the repeated rendering of “kyakkanteki 客観的” as “subjective” instead of “objective” (e.g. 129, 135).

71 A second research method statement is found in Tada Kanae’s June 17th Chūgai nippo article in which he claims to quote a letter from Kaneko that contained the following statement, which further underlines Kaneko’s introspective, experiential approach to scripture: “I, myself, think that personal realization and receiving the teachings are the same. It is a mistake to divide them into two and then ignore one side. Thus, I respect the holy teachings, but I take an introspective approach, believing in the equality of personal realization and receiving the teachings where [the scriptures’] meaning must become my own introspective knowledge and the content of my own experience. Please read *The Idea of the Pure Land* with an understanding of that approach.”
Kaneko’s personal understanding of the Pure Land, as presented in the first section of the book, can be summarized as follows. Thoroughgoing reflection on one’s anguish (nayami 悩み) and evilness (zai 罪) leads to a transformation of the mind and accompanying acts of entrusting (kimyō 帰命) and seeking rebirth (ganjō 順生). At this moment, the self, Buddha, and Pure Land suddenly manifest themselves. The Buddha manifests as the light of one’s true self shining upon the darkness of one’s mundane self. Simultaneously, the Pure Land manifests as the light of the true, invisible world shining upon the darkness of the mundane, visible world. Because the self only exists in relation to its surroundings and a Buddha necessarily exists in relation to a Buddha land, the Pure Land is an inextricable part of the Shin theological system.

The following passage argues for the Buddha’s (and by extension, the Pure Land’s) “purely objective” existence (as an a priori “thing in itself”) that Kaneko believes can be directly experienced through introspection. This is Kaneko’s account of the “empirical” basis of the Buddha and Pure Land in present reality.

It is not that one first understands that there is a Buddha and then entrusts in him. Rather, at the same time that an attitude of entrusting appears in me, the Buddha objectively comes forth. Therefore, when we come to know our selves purely and the act of purely entrusting then comes forth, there is no question of whether or not the Buddha exists. To say this in reverse, the words “being” and “non-being” are the problem... The Buddha that comes forth does not have “being” in the sense that we ordinarily think of it. It is something that does not apply to those words and that

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72 The Buddhist connotations of this term can be unpacked as “the mental action of self-affliction in coming to know one’s bad actions as bad actions and being stuck with this knowledge, yet not benefiting by the remonstrance of others” (Digital Dictionary of Buddhism entry for 悩, accessed November 23, 2013).
transcends so-called “being” and “non-being.” Here I will use the words “pure objectivity” \((junsui kyakkan \text{ 純粋客観})\). This is because when we ordinarily say “being,” this is not pure objectivity. It is a “being” that is manufactured by our words. Even without bringing up Kantian philosophy, [it is clear that] the concepts we have of existence are determined by the assemblage of various things like temporality, space, and cause and effect, so the determination of my being here is not purely objective. Pure objectivity is the Buddha’s appearance upon our putting hands together in worship [which occurs] prior to and transcendent of our thoughts of being and non-being. (Kaneko 1925, 19)

According to Kaneko, one does not first resolve the question of the Buddha and Pure Land’s existence before coming to have faith. Rather, through a process of introspection, reverence toward the Buddha and a desire to be reborn in the Pure Land (along with assurance of their reality) come forth “as facts in my mind” (ibid., 24). The Buddha and Pure Land both “transcend” and “exist inside” us; they are neither only out there in the world nor merely within one’s mind. Subjectivity and objectivity are entangled, so the real distinction is not between subjective and objective realms, but between the realm of mundane subjectivity and objectivity and the realm of true subjectivity and objectivity. Through an experience of self-awakening (“true subjectivity”), one is able to perceive the trans-subjective, universally valid reality of the Buddha and Pure Land (“pure objectivity”).

The second section of Kaneko’s work draws on passages from various sutras and commentaries to represent three modes of understanding the Pure Land: 1) as an invisible “Idea World” \((kannenkai \text{ 観念界})\) that forms the basis for this world, 2) as a hypothesized “Ideal World” \((risōkai \text{ 理想界})\) to be actualized, and 3) as an “Existing World” \((jitsuzai \text{ 実在界})\) to which we may go. Kaneko argues that the Pure Land, correctly understood, is the “Idea World,”
but he repeatedly warns, “the borders [of these three categories] are certainly not strict. As we gradually speak on the question of how much the content of ‘Idea’ and ‘Existence’ differ, we may no longer be able to discern [any difference]” (ibid., 37). This is because the true Pure Land as Idea World is the world that actually exists in “purely objective” terms whereas the “existing world’ we ordinarily experience and speak of is only the dream-like projection of our deluded minds. According to Kaneko, Buddhist practice must aim at the purification of one’s own mind and not turn away from one’s present self and world and seek salvation elsewhere (i.e. in an “Existing World”). Purification of one’s mind naturally has the effect of purifying others’ minds and one’s surroundings (thus apparently carrying forward a process of actualizing an “Ideal World”), but it would be a mistake to interpret Pure Land teachings as advocating social activism.

If the general tendency of Kaneko’s work is toward “empiricist” discourse, it is not altogether lacking in “esoteric” tendencies. For example, the following passage displays Kaneko’s investment in the notion that the language of Buddhists scripture is anything but transparent:

It’s fine to use the word “Buddha” or the word “Pure Land” or the word “nenbutsu” just as they are. The words used by people of the past are fine. But to only imitate their pronunciations yet express a completely different meaning is not okay. There are people who strictly say, “Believe in the teachings of the past just as they are,” but that is a big problem, I think. Is there really anything such as “the teachings just as they are”? What are “the teachings just as they are”? I heard [these questions] from a friend, and it seems to me that Plato spoke in that way of the world of ideals. Speaking to people of the world of ideals is exactly like speaking to people in a foreign language. There are the [English] words “This is a dog.” Towards those who do not know such
words, if one explains that “This” is the subject, “is” is the verb, and “the dog” is the complement, they will mostly understand the grammar and be able to mimic the pronunciation. But being foreigners, they still won’t understand what it is. In the same way, most people’s use of religious words is like parroting foreign words without knowing their meaning. I am being sarcastic here, but it really is the case that people speaking of “being saved by Amida” just do not understand what “Amida” is and what “being saved” is. (ibid., 138-9)

For Kaneko, the meaning of religious terms as found in Buddhist texts is completely obscure to those who have not experienced self-awakening. This line of argument places the authority for interpreting scripture solely in the hands of those who can claim to have had an experience of self-awakening.\(^7^3\) Such a methodology is common to many proponents of the category of “religious experience,” epitomized by Rudolf Otto’s (in)famous instructions to those readers who have never had a deeply-felt religious experience to “read no further” (Otto 1958, 8). Yet it also points to the classic Buddhist distinction between the “exoteric” and “esoteric” meanings of sutras.

In summary, Kaneko followed Sasaki and Soga in their departure from traditional sectarian studies and attempt to redefine Shin studies within the strictures of the modern academic world. Engaging with the broader Buddhist tradition, he argued that Pure Land sutras

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\(^7^3\) The same approach to interpreting Buddhist scripture is evident in “Prolegomena to Shin Studies,” where Kaneko startlingly reinterprets Rennyo’s phrase “the great matter of the afterlife” (gose no ichi daiji 後世の一大事) to mean just the opposite: “the great matter of this life” (kono se no ichi daiji この世の一大事) (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 176; Kaneko 1966, 22). Kaneko argues that the latter phrase is more effective in invoking Rennyo’s meaning, which is to call to mind the impermanence of the “actual world” and thereby reveal the truth of the “Idea world” lying behind it. By appealing to the supposed inner “meaning” of Rennyo’s phrase beyond “the surface of the words” (kotoba no jimen 言葉の字面), Kaneko makes it accord with his own view.
best express the eternal nature of the Buddha’s “person”—which is more fundamental than the Buddha’s spoken teachings. Consequently, he defined Shin practice “esoterically” in terms of personal encounter in the present with the eternal Buddha, claiming that such an encounter would unlock the hidden, inner meanings of Buddhist scripture. Engaging with Western philosophy, Kaneko tried to articulate how religious experience brought humans into contact with the “transcendental ideals” posited by Kant. Specifically, he argued that the event of salvific encounter with the Buddha was brought about by introspective realization of one’s need for salvation according to a necessary, a priori law.

2.5 Shin Buddhist Studies in Academic Conversation

Thus far, I have described the origins and examined the discursive nature of Shin studies as it was developed by three of its main representatives. Now I would like to briefly consider how this Shin studies fared in the broader intellectual world, particularly in its conversations with Buddhist studies. Whereas other scholars have seen a strict bifurcation into “modern Buddhist studies” and “traditional sectarian studies,” I have called attention to the extensive development of a “modern sectarian studies” that fashioned itself into an “academic field” and shared much in common with “modern Buddhist studies.” Were modern Shin studies scholars taken seriously by historicist Buddhist studies scholars? How was their claim to “subjective empiricism” received? Was any real dialogue formed, or did a substantial divide remain between the “theological” and “critical” studies of Buddhism?
As a first step toward answering these questions, I will examine a conversation that took place between Kaneko Daiei and Buddhist studies scholar Kimura Taiken 木村泰賢 (1881-1930) in a series of articles printed on the front page of the national Buddhist journal Chūgai nippō from May 9-July 2nd, 1929. Kimura Taiken was a Sōtō Zen priest who studied Buddhist philosophy under Inoue Tetsujirō, Murakami Senshō, Takakusu Junjirō, and Anesaki Masaharu at Tokyo Imperial University from 1903. He became a lecturer there in 1912 and a full professor in 1923. Building upon Anesaki’s work, Kimura took up the mantle of the movement to study “original Buddhism” (genshi Bukkyō 原始仏教) as the source and true nature of Mahayana Buddhism. Kimura argued that Hinayana and Mahayana teachings were interconnected and both already present in the Āgamas, which are usually labeled “Hinayana.” Part of Kimura’s project was to purify Mahayana Buddhism of its “unscientific elements” in order to “fit Buddhism to the ideas of modern people.” Kimura presumed that “original Buddhism” necessarily “holds a scientific and critical attitude,” and developed arguments to explain away its unscientific elements (for example, the Mount Sumeru cosmology) (Okada 1997, 192-197).

The Chūgai nippō dialogue between Kimura and Kaneko was incited by a lecture given by Kimura about Kaneko’s scholarship and heresy incident that was transcribed and printed in the journal Bukkyō shisō. It seems the prominent heresy incidents surrounding Kaneko in 1928 and

74 Incidentally, their conversation was carried on by others, for example in a 6-part response from August 4-10 by Itō Shōshin (1876-1963), founder of the Muga-Ai (Selfless Love) movement.
Soga in 1930 brought their work into the national spotlight. Kaneko rose to his defense, thus beginning a 2-month long (May 9-July 2nd) conversation comprising 19 front-page articles.

Their positions can be summarized with reference to five overlapping points:

1) *Rationality*: Kimura sympathizes with Kaneko’s desire to demonstrate rationalist grounds for Shin thought. Without such grounds, Buddhist teachings cannot satisfy the intellect of modern man or play a role in modern society. Insofar as Kaneko’s work attempts this task, Kimura recognizes it as a legitimate mode of Buddhist studies. However, he takes issue with Kaneko’s apparent use of Western philosophy—rather than elements within Buddhism—to purify Buddhism.

Kaneko balks at the suggestion that his views of Shin teachings are innovations intended to make Shin intellectually palatable for a modern audience. He claims to make use of Western philosophical language only to clear away the simple-minded literalism that plagues modern understandings of Buddhism.

2) *Afterlife*: Kimura critiques Kaneko for ignoring the afterlife, arguing that the teaching of the Pure Land loses its power if one subtracts the afterlife. Acknowledging recent scholarly claims to the contrary, Kimura contends that the doctrine of transmigration has been essential to Buddhism from its beginning, central to such developments as Abhidharma philosophy and Yogaçara thought. Without a belief in an afterlife, there can be no Buddhism. Moreover, to deny the soul’s persistence after death is ultimately to uphold a materialist view of the world.
no better than Marxism. In a closing comment meant to be critical, Kimura states he cannot help but evaluate Kaneko’s position as “positivist” (jisshōron-teki 實證論的).

In response, Kaneko reasserts his agnosticism. He distinguishes between the problems of “death” and “after death,” noting that the former problem is certain while the problem of what happens after death is uncertain. Religion’s genesis is intimately related to the problem of death, not to that of life after death. He adds that concern about life after death signals selfish, “materialist” motivations while discovery of present reality as a place of spirit and eternity is the more spiritual view.

3) Shin orthodoxy: Kimura takes Kaneko’s concept of the “Pure Land as idea” seriously, concluding that if Shin studies is to be established, one of its two essential projects must be to connect that concept with that of the Western Pure Land. However, he critiques Kaneko for failing to state precisely what he means by “idea,” concluding that Kaneko’s theory as it stands is incomplete and unclear. He also contends that the basic orthodoxy of Shin is “because there is a Pure Land, I have faith,” so Kaneko’s reformulation of this as “because I have faith, there is a Pure Land” is problematic.

Kaneko accuses Kimura of harboring a naïve geographical notion of the “Western Pure Land,” of approaching Buddhist teachings via “mathematical knowledge,” and of arrogantly presuming to already understand Shinran’s teachings. He defends his position “because I have
faith, there is a Pure Land” as one orthodox way of approaching the teachings, pointing to the
writings of Senmyō 宣明 (1749-1821) and Shinran. Kaneko further argues that faith based in
unreflective acceptance of the teaching that “there is a Pure Land” remains superficial; true
faith develops out of self-reflection on one’s limitations.

4) History: Kimura agrees with Kaneko that various religions and sects of Buddhism
arise out of a common psychology, noting his previous discussions of this in terms of “religious
a priori.” Yet the study of Buddhism, he continues, is not the study of this common core. From
its very beginnings in the four noble truths, Buddhism has been made up of forms. The
distinctions between Zen and Pure Land or between Amida Buddha of the West and Akṣobhya
(Jpn. Ashuku) Buddha of the East have been of utmost importance to the history of Buddhism
and the lives of Buddhists.

In response, Kaneko affirms his introspective approach. Just as the study of philosophy
and the act of philosophizing can be distinguished, so can Buddhist studies be divided into
“comprehension study” (gegaku 解学) and “practice study” (gyōgaku 行学). The former studies

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75 Senmyō was the Ōtani denomination’s sixth lecture master, succeeding the more famous Jinrei 深励. Kaneko relates that Senmyō upheld the view “Because there are sentient beings, there is the Tathāgata.”
76 Kaneko points to Shinran’s two modes of explanations beginning either from the Buddha or the practitioner (jūhō kōki no setsu 従法向機の説 and jūki kōhō no setsu 従機向法の説).
77 Shinran writes of these two approaches to learning in his Gauto kusho: “The two occurrences of ‘desire for understanding’ (niyokugaku 二欲学) are: 1. Practitioner, know that if you desire to gain understanding (ge o manaban to omowaba 解を学ばんと欲はば), you will be able to study without obstruction the teaching relevant to the stages of ordinary beings or sages or to the fruit of Buddhahood. 2. If you desire
the outer “forms” of the teachings and “copies” them; the latter studies the inner meaning of the teachings and tries to write them anew. “Comprehension study” analyzes Shinran’s writings from a commonsense, conceptual perspective; “practice study” works to cultivate in the scholar Shinran’s inner psychology, enabling a trans-conceptual, faith-based understanding of the teachings.

5) Sectarianism: Kimura admires Kaneko’s aspiration to show Shin’s grounding in the broader Buddhist tradition, but he criticizes Kaneko’s method of argumentation. The “theory that Mahayana was not taught by the Buddha” has undercut the argument that Pure Land teachings are Buddhist because they are the words of the Buddha. Scholars of Pure Land Buddhism must prove that Pure Land teachings represent the Buddha’s true intentions by examining the historical development of Pure Land teachings.

Kaneko does not address this critique. He defends his sectarian identity as distinct from traditional, narrow-minded loyalty rooted in family history and from the modernist trend toward all-inclusive, non-discriminating trans-sectarianism. He insists Shin must be consistent with the broader Buddhist tradition; thus, “awakening” must also play a central role in Shin.

Regarding this exchange, it must first be noted that Kimura actively engages with Kaneko’s scholarship. Prior to the exchange, Kimura had already read and publicly lectured on to undertake practice (gyō o manaban to omowaba 行を学ばんと欲わば), by all means follow the method of practice corresponding to your own conditions” (CWS, vol. 1: 614; JSS 534-35).
Kaneko’s work. Here he sympathizes with Kaneko’s project to render Shin teachings in a modernist form and to demonstrate their connections to Buddhism as a whole. Although dissatisfied with the vagueness of Kaneko’s use of the term “Idea,” he is intrigued by Kaneko’s theory and challenges him to chart its connections to traditional expressions of orthodoxy.

Second, it is striking to note how Kaneko comes across as “positivist” and focused on “present reality” while Kimura is critical of “positivism” and oriented toward the “afterlife.” Kimura bases his work on the empirical “facts” of Buddhist history yet he espouses an understanding of Buddhism inclusive of a non-empirical afterlife. Kaneko’s “empiricism,” by contrast, rests upon the weak basis of personal confessions and seemingly arbitrary explanations of the inner experiences of others, yet it produces an understanding of Buddhism not wedded to any position on the afterlife.

Finally, Kimura’s impatience with Kaneko’s ignorance of history is notable. If Shin Buddhism faced two major intellectual problems in the modern period—metaphysical and historical—modern Shin studies had answered the former with a torrent of novel explanations of Amida Buddha, Dharmākara Bodhisattva, and the Pure Land that rendered these mythical teachings more palatable to a modern audience. However, it had yet to deliver a substantial response to the latter problem of the historical origins of Pure Land Buddhism. Kimura’s

78 Kimura notes that he has read Kaneko’s recent work on the Pure Land as well as Outlines of Buddhism. He also comments on his previous regret that Kaneko’s heresy incident had reached a resolution without the main issue—methods of Buddhist studies—being addressed.
critique—and others like it—may have been the impetus for the Shin modernists to attempt a fuller response to the “theory that the Buddha did not teach Mahayana.” Six years later, Soga gave his landmark lecture series, “Shinran no Bukkyōshi-kan 親鸞の仏教史観” (hereafter “Shinran’s View of Buddhist History”), which presented an argument for Amida Buddha as the “origin” of Śākyamuni rather than a later creation. In conclusion, Kaneko and Kimura engaged in a substantial public dialogue that may very well have spurred on each other’s work in addition to influencing a broader readership.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has traced modern Shin studies from its origins to its appearance on the national stage at the time of Kaneko and Soga’s heresy affairs. Following Kiyozawa’s death, some of his followers understood him as having rejected scholarship as a form of self-power practice non-conducive to attaining faith in the Buddha. Sasaki and Soga came to the opposite conclusion, viewing rigorous study as essential to the attainment and propagation of correct faith. Building upon Kiyozawa’s introspective method, Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko discarded the norms of traditional sectarian study and instead grounded their scholarship in “confessions” of personal insight. Seeking to imbue Shin teachings with public significance, they deployed Kiyozawa’s language of religious “facts” and “experiences” to articulate a new “empirical”

79 For an abridged translation, see Blum and Rhodes (2011, 119-138).
discipline of Shin studies appropriate to the modern university but still distinctive from the empirical historiography of modern Buddhist studies. And inspired by their own encounter with Kiyozawa, Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko explained rebirth in Amida’s Pure Land “esoterically” in terms of personal encounter in the present and the revelation of hidden meanings contained within scripture.

These “confessional,” “empiricist,” and “esoteric” discourses, gradually accepted and installed within Ōtani representations of the Shin tradition, would fundamentally shape the modern understanding of and approach to Shin Buddhism. The acceptance of such discourses would signify a new way of talking about, of thinking about, and engaging with Shin teachings and practices. This is true not only within the world of the Ōtani organization but also in broader intellectual circles. Besides the example of Kaneko and Kimura Taiken’s debate, one can point to intellectual exchange between the Shin modernists and D. T. Suzuki (who in the 1920s worked closely with Sasaki at Ōtani University and in 1958 participated in a highly publicized round-table discussion on Mt. Hiei with Kaneko and Soga\(^8\)) and to the Shin modernists’ influence on Kyoto school philosophers Nishitani Keiji, Tanabe Hajime, and possibly even Nishida Kitarō.\(^9\)

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80 Suzuki et al. (2011). Also see abbreviated translations of the talks in Eastern Buddhist 18, no. 1: 105-119; 19, no. 1: 101-117; and 21, no. 2: 78-94.
81 Nishitani participated in a seminar discussion with Soga and Kaneko about Kiyozawa in July 1952 (Shinjin vol. 45); sent in a written response to a 1953 Shinjin journal survey (Shinjin vol. 59); moderated the above-mentioned 1958 Mt. Hiei discussion between Suzuki, Soga, and Kaneko; and wrote a series of
In addition to modern Shin studies’ historical significance, I also claimed above that modern Shin studies is of intrinsic interest as a hybrid space where novel ideas and modes of discourse were formed. In recent years, scholars have produced valuable studies showing how Buddhism came to be represented as “empirical” and “scientific” from the mid-19th century through the present (McMahan 2008; Lopez 2008; Hammerstrom 2010). Such representations have ranged from modest claims that Buddhist teachings derive from real-life experiences to grandiose claims that the Buddha foresaw the theories of Darwinian evolution and quantum physics. Over-emphasis on the latter makes it all too easy to caricaturize Buddhist modernism as having eviscerated Buddhism of its essentials to make it conform to science.

Essays on Kiyozawa in 1962 and 1963 (SKM, vol. 2). Although on the surface he appears to have been much more influenced by Kiyozawa then by Soga or Kaneko, it is possible that Soga or the Shinjin journal were a mediating influence on his views of Kiyozawa or of Shin thought.

Tanabe singles out Soga as an influence on him in the preface to his influential Philosophy as Metanoetics: “Among contemporary scholar-priests of the Shin sect, Soga Ryōjin should be mentioned for his appreciation of and deep insight into the basic notion of metanoesis (zange懺悔), as well as for his recognition of its significance for understanding Shinran’s faith. I have found his interpretation and doctrinal analysis most enlightening, and owe him a great debt of gratitude in this regard” (liii). In 1958, Tanabe contributed to Shinjin a positive but critical review of Soga’s republished Kaishin wartime writings (Shinjin vol. 119).

The influence of Kiyozawa on Nishida has been discussed in Fujita (2003). Fujita notes Nishida’s personal connections with Inaba Masamaru and Akegarasu Haya. Nishida lectured at Ōtani University in 1911 before going on to teach at the nearby Kyoto Imperial University until 1928. The proximity of Nishida, Tanabe, and Nishitani at Kyoto Imperial University and Soga and Kaneko at Ōtani University may have facilitated mutual influence. Melissa Curley, a scholar of modern Shin thought and Kyoto school philosophy, noted at a conference that Kyoto school philosophers rarely spoke forthrightly about their influences.

In sum, a pattern of interaction between Kyoto school philosophers and Shin modernists is evident, but further research is needed to determine the significance of that interaction on individual thinkers from either group.
The Shin modernists considered here represented Buddhism using the empiricist language of the day, and their heavy emphasis on personal experience did result in de-emphasis of other aspects of the Shin tradition (e.g. practices, institutions, material culture and even scripture). Yet they also fought against the materialism and literalism they perceived in a scientific worldview that misunderstood religion as superstition. Integral to their multi-faceted engagement with science was a discourse of “esotericism.” In their discussions of this-worldly salvation, of becoming the Buddha through subject-object reversal, of the hidden inner meanings of Buddhist sutras, and of transmission through personal rather than textual encounters, one can arguably hear echoes of the esoteric teachings of medieval Japanese Buddhism.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{82} Explicit interest in esoteric Buddhism was a key element of Buddhist modernism in China (e.g. Tuttle 2005). Further research might investigate the extent to which interest in esoteric Buddhism was common to Buddhist modernism as a whole.
3. From Empiricism to Authority: Kaneko Daiei and the Coincidences of History (1890-1930)

“—— this time, there is the case of a couple of professors, highly reputed within and outside the sect, who acted with no interests other than the pursuit of truth. On account of their thoroughly pure logic, fearless courage, and deep-seated passion, they infringed upon sectarian norms regarding scripture. This supplied the means for a partisan sectarian battle launched by the low-down group of ‘rotten money grubbers’ with petit-bourgeois consciousness.” —anonymous student (Ôtani Daigaku shinbun, May 20, 1928)

3.1 Coincidence

On April 10, 1928, news hit the national press of “the Communist Party incident” (Kyōsantō jiken 共産党事件), a mass arrest of 1600 or so suspected Communists that had taken place a month prior. This carefully coordinated raid of political party headquarters, labor-union offices, newspaper offices, and private homes from Hokkaido to Kyushu uncovered a larger than expected Communist Party movement that involved substantial numbers of university students. On April 11, Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi announced plans to crack down harshly on anyone who threatened the imperial family or “national body” (kokutai 国体) as well as a commitment to “correct terrible thought.” On April 17, Minister of Education Mizuno Rentarō’s official instructions for “thought guidance” were published in the Tokyo Asahi shinbun. The national leftist student organization, Shinjinkai, was forcibly dissolved; famous leftist professors at the Imperial Universities like Kawakami Hajime were forced to resign; and
the Labor-Farmer Party, All-Japan Proletarian Youth League, and Council of Japanese Labor Unions were all banned. By late June, an Emergency Imperial Ordinance was put into effect that allowed a death penalty to be applied to radical organizers and that broadened the scope of the 1925 Peace Preservation Law to anyone “furthering the aims” of an illegal organization.

On April 18, 1928, news hit the national Buddhist press of the Kaneko Daiei “heresy problem” (ianjin mondai 異安心問題)\(^1\). Kaneko Daiei had been forced on leave while the Ōtani authorities investigated complaints that his writings denied the existence of the Pure Land. On May 3\(^{rd}\), the Ōtani University newspaper introduced the problem as follows:

> The doctrinal controversy surrounding Professor Kaneko Daiei of our university’s Buddhist Studies Department is being followed with great interest not only within our sect but also by society at large, and has even been viewed as the Communist Party Incident of our sect... (emphasis added)

Before Kaneko finally submitted his “voluntary resignation” in late June, Ōtani administrators had slashed the university’s budget, eleven faculty members including the university president had resigned, and a Marxist-inspired student protest movement had arisen in Kaneko’s defense. News and commentary on these developments shared space in Buddhist newspapers with discussion of Japan’s “dangerous thought problem.”

\(^1\) On the term “heresy” (ianjin 異安心), see the discussion in Section 3.2 below.
This chapter examines the various factors that came together to produce the Kaneko heresy affair. Until the 1920s, the Shin modernists remained a peripheral element within the Ōtani organization. Kiyozawa Manshi had made waves in the Buddhist world first with his Shirakawa reform movement and then with his Seishinshugi faith movement, but when those waves subsided, the Shin modernist followers of Kiyozawa still found themselves on the margins. The modernization of Ōtani University during the 1920s created an opening for them to assert themselves and begin to shape history. Kaneko’s writings and lectures on the Pure Land sparked the 1928 conflict, but the deeper cause was his status as representative of a new introspective method of Shin studies that was coming to threaten the Ōtani leaders’ doctrinal and administrative authority. In Buddhist terms, if the rise of Shin studies was the “cause” of the incident, the long-standing institutional conflict between Shin modernists and traditionalists was among its “conditions.” As the conflict escalated and came to receive increased local and national attention, other “conditions” came into play. Discourse on the Kaneko incident became intertwined with discourse on the Communist Party Incident, the state’s “thought guidance” campaign, the rights of leftist intellectuals, and the wellbeing of the

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2 At the time, the sequence of events surrounding Kaneko’s heresy charges and forced resignation were generally referred to as the “Professor Kaneko faith problem” (Kaneko kyōju anjin mondai) or some abbreviated version of that phrase. Although this phrase uses a term for “faith,” its antonym, “wrong faith” (ianjin 異安心), which is to say “heresy,” was always implied if not used explicitly. Rather than “problem” (or “incident”), I refer to these events with the more neutral term “affair.”

3 According to recent scholarship, Ōtani priest Chikazumi Jōkan’s propagation of modernist Shin teachings was of wider influence within and outside the sect during these years (Ōmi 2014; Iwata 2014).
proletariat class. This influenced how journalists, administrators, students, and scholars viewed and discussed the affair, shifting discussion away from doctrinal matters toward issues of power relations between sectarian scholars, Ōtani authorities, and lay donors. The result was a flurry of support for Kaneko that enhanced his academic stature and helped pave the way for his later triumphant return to Ōtani.

By highlighting the influence of national events and discourses, I seek to emphasize how the modern history of Ōtani was contingent upon Japan’s national history. The almost simultaneous occurrence of the Communist Party Incident and Kaneko affair in the spring of 1928 was in one sense a “mere coincidence.” Yet many of the factors that led to the blossoming of leftist political thought on one hand and of Shin modernism on the other were the same.

Socialist thought arrived in Japan at the turn of the twentieth century when a small study group began meeting at the Unitarian Society in Tokyo to study Marx and other socialist writers. For a time, socialism remained the preserve of fringe thinkers and activists, but in the 1920s, it gained social cachet and broad influence as the basic social science at Japanese universities. Why the 1920s? There are many explanations, but one basic point is that it was in the 1920s that the Japanese university system exploded. There were simply more students taking more classes and forming more student organizations. The government felt the need to step in, arrest social science professors, and “guide the thought” of students toward proper respect for the authority of the Emperor.
A similar history can be told about Shin Buddhist modernism. At the turn of the century, Shin modernist thought was born through Kiyozawa Manshi’s engagement with Western philosophy, but only in the 1920s did it begin to gain traction among Ōtani University students and the broader public. Again, this can be attributed to Ōtani University’s rapid growth with more and more students and sect members turning their attention to the “scientific” work of scholars like Kaneko and Soga. This compelled certain powerful sect members to step in, try to get rid of scholars like Kaneko and Soga, and “guide the thought” of sect members toward traditional understandings of Shin teachings and proper respect for the authority of the Abbot and his representatives.

These parallels point to a complex relationship of interconnection and mutual influence between the religious world and Japan writ large. By acknowledging and examining the contingent nature of religious history, we can approach a more realistic view of how religions are formed and reformed.

In the first section, I consider the Kaneko affair in relation to modern Ōtani history. I discuss Ōtani history from 1890-1930 in terms of a longstanding conflict between modernists and traditionalists; examine the facts of the Kaneko incident; review previous research on the Kaneko affair; and offer initial conclusions about the internal dimensions of the conflict. Here I argue that the Kaneko affair, superficially about Kaneko’s interpretation of the Pure Land, was more fundamentally a conflict over the rising authority of Shin modernists as Ōtani’s former seminary was increasingly superseded by its modern university.
In the second section, I reveal a further dimension of the affair by examining the public discourse that surrounded it. Specifically, I examine how journalists, administrators, students, and scholars publicly discussed the affair in the national Buddhist newspaper Chūgai nippō and in the local Ōtani University newspaper. A handful of prominent scholars debated Kaneko’s interpretation of the Pure Land as well as his scholarly methods, but by and large, these discussions took place after the incident’s resolution. Journalists, administrators, and students, by contrast, advanced their views in the midst of the affair, and their attention was more often turned toward issues of power relations. In these discussions, Kaneko’s heresy problem was viewed as a test case for resolving the question of how newly instituted sectarian universities ought to relate to traditional sectarian authorities. Ostensibly a debate about the religious world, such discussions were intertwined with and influenced by contemporaneous national debates about the arrests of leftist students and professors and the government’s role in “thought guidance.” Ōtani University students, in particular, were greatly influenced by their studies of Marxist social science, interpreting the Kaneko affair in terms of class warfare.

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4 The Kaneko heresy affair was also commented upon in the popular Osaka mainichi shinbun newspaper and in the English-language Buddhist journal The Young East. In the Ōsaka mainichi shinbun, the editor notes the strong standing of Kaneko in the Buddhist studies community, and harshly critiques the Ōtani authorities for suppressing Kaneko and cutting the Ōtani University budget (without giving his ideas a fair hearing) (June 10, 1928, p. 5). Following that, Kaneko and Akegarasu published articles in Ōsaka mainichi shinbun on June 13 and June 19 respectively.

In The Young East, Masatoshi Gensen Mori, author of Buddhism and Faith (1928), and B. L. Broughton, Vice President of the British Maha Bodhi Society, exchanged a series of articles (beginning with the July 8, 1928 issue) on “liberal” and “literal” readings of Shin teachings, instigated by discussion of the Kaneko affair.
In the conclusion, I offer an interpretation of the Kaneko affair’s ambiguous resolution as a partial victory for Kaneko and the Shin modernists. I also reflect on the significance of the fact that the Kaneko affair was so contingent upon national events, social trends, and various other “secular” factors.

3.2 Modern Ōtani History and the Kaneko Heresy Affair

The Kaneko heresy incident represented only the latest and largest boiling over of a conflict that had been brewing for decades. This conflict pitted traditionalists against a group of “doctrinal modernists” descended from Kiyozawa Manshi. Between 1896 and 1930, Inoue Bunchū, Urabe Kanjun, Akegarasu Haya, Andō Shuichi, Sasaki Gesshō, Kaneko Daiei, and Soga Ryōjin were successively investigated for heresy with varying outcomes (See Table 1 below).

The term translated “heresy” here is ianjin 异安心, meaning “different from a mind at peace”

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5 Discussion of this longer history of conflict was part of the discourse surrounding the Kaneko incident. For example, see “Meiji irai no Ōtani-ha no mondai: Kaneko mondai no rekishikan” in Chūgai nippō (June 3-5, 1928).

6 The term “doctrinal modernist” (kindai kyōgakusha 近代教学者) is a label retrospectively applied by scholars. In earlier periods, this group was commonly referred to as the “Kōkōdō group” (Kōkōdō-ha) or the “Seishinshugi group.”

7 A further event could be added to this history of conflict: the murder of Senshō-in Kūkaku in 1871, likely due to his role in sect administration changes that undermined the authority of “lay retainers” 坊. Although Kūkaku’s case was not a “heresy incident” or directly related to Kiyozawa and his followers, it is significant that Sasaki Gesshō penned a lengthy article to commemorate Kūkaku’s life in 1920 and explained the “founding spirit” of Ōtani University with particular reference to Kūkaku in his 1924 presidential address (Sasaki 2013, 21-2). For information on Senshō-in Kūkaku and his murder, see ODH (vol. 1: 46-58). For information on “lay retainers” in the Ōtani denomination and their loss of authority in early Meiji, see Kashiwahara (1986, 25-34).
or “wrong faith.” The accusation of ianjin implied more than incorrect doctrinal views; it implied lack of a faith relationship with Amida Buddha and a threat to the peacefulness of the Shin community.

Ryan Ward’s analysis of the heresy incidents preceding the Kaneko affair reveals that they had less to do with the particulars of theological argument and more to do with methods and attitudes of study (2004). In particular, traditionalists found fault with the modernists’ engagement with Western learning and the impression they gave of “innovating” novel interpretations rather than faithfully “transmitting” the established teachings. I would also emphasize that these incidents can all be connected to critical institutional changes (which are discussed below): the Urabe and Inoue incidents of 1896 and 1897 to the Shirakawa reform movement and creation of Shinshū University; the Akegarasu and Andō incidents of 1910 and 1913 to tensions over Shinshū University’s return to Kyoto; and the Sasaki, Kaneko, and Soga incidents of 1923, 1928 and 1930 to the university’s promotion to official university status and the related institutional birth and development of Shin studies. While differences in belief and method of study may have provided a basis for the conflict, it was institutional changes that catalyzed tensions into action.

8 On the different historical backgrounds and nuances of the terms anjin and shinjin 信心 (both translated as “faith” in this dissertation), see Dobbins (1989, 145-46).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Accused</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Inoue Bunchū, member of Kiyozawa’s Shirakawa reform group</td>
<td>Investigated but not convicted of heresy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Urabe Kanjun, first president of Shinshū University and supporter of the Shirakawa movement reform movement</td>
<td>Investigated for heresy charges and expelled from the sect, ostensibly for his doctrinal views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Akegarasu Haya, leading follower of Kiyozawa</td>
<td>Investigated but not convicted of heresy for allegedly slandering Rennyo, denying that faith relates to one’s future fate, and placing Kiyozawa on an equal footing with Shinran and Rennyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Andō Shuichi, follower of Kiyozawa</td>
<td>Investigated but not convicted of heresy for his view that doubts may arise even after faith is attained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Sasaki Gesshō, leading follower of Kiyozawa, third president of Ōtani University</td>
<td>Investigated but not convicted of heresy in the lead-up to his appointment as president of Ōtani University, ostensibly for the contents of his <em>Outlines of Shin Buddhism</em> (1921)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Kaneko Daiei, associate of Soga Ryōjin and indirect follower of Kiyozawa</td>
<td>Investigated for heresy charges and pressured to resign his professorship at Ōtani University and his status as priest, ostensibly for the contents of <em>The Idea of the Pure Land</em> (1925) and <em>Shinshū ni okeru nyorai oyobi jōdo no kannen</em> (1926)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Soga Ryōjin, follower of Kiyozawa, 17th president of Ōtani University</td>
<td>Pressured to resign his professorship at Ōtani University, ostensibly for the contents of <em>View of the Three Minds</em> (1927)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Information was compiled from Ward (2004) and ODH (vol. 1).
The overarching trajectory of these institutional changes was from an early modern seminary to a modern university. As shown in Table 2 below, the Takakura Seminary changed names several times before merging with Shinshū University in 1911. Shinshū University had emerged from the Daigakuryō as an independent institution in 1896 (although its official founding is conventionally dated to its opening in Tokyo in 1901). What follows below is a narrative of these institutional transformations and their relation to the Kaneko incident.

Table 2: History of Ōtani University and Takakura Seminary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1665-1754</td>
<td>Unnamed seminary (in northern Kyūshū)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1754-1868</td>
<td>Takakura Gakuryō 高倉学寮</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868-1873</td>
<td>Takakura Gakuryō 護法場</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873-1882</td>
<td>Kanrenjō 貫練場</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882-1896</td>
<td>Daigakuryō 大学寮</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896-1901</td>
<td>Takakura Daigakuryō 真宗大学</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1911</td>
<td>Shinshū Daigaku 真宗大学 (“professional school” from 1907) (in Tokyo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1922</td>
<td>Shinshū Ōtani Daigaku 真宗大谷大学 (“professional school”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-present</td>
<td>Ōtani Daigaku 大谷大学 (“university” 単科大学)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Information for this table was compiled from ODH (vol. 1) and the introduction to Sasaki (2013). All the institutions were located in Kyoto unless otherwise noted. An institution’s government-granted status, if any, is noted in parentheses.
Ōtani History (1890-1919)

By 1890, just over a year into office, Head of Sect Affairs Atsumi Kaien 澐美契縁 (1840-1906) had already begun to come under fire for a number of reasons. For one, he was critiqued for his unprecedented totalitarian hold on administrative power, heading three departments (Internal Affairs, Doctrinal Studies, and Accounting) simultaneously (Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo 2004b, 54). He was also questioned for the tactics he employed in fundraising for the rebuilding of the two main halls of Higashi Honganji temple (which had burnt down in 1864) and the repayment of a massive financial debt (ibid., 53). The beginnings of the “Shirakawa reform movement,” which eventually toppled Atsumi from power, might be dated to 1890 when Kiyozawa Manshi abruptly began his ascetic lifestyle. That sect reform was one of the motivations behind Kiyozawa’s asceticism is indicated by the following comments he apparently made to a friend:

“Shin monastic ways are gradually declining. So I quit my post as president of the middle school, changed clothes, put on wooden clogs, and walked everywhere, hoping to demonstrate the sect’s true principles and to expand the sect’s customs” (ibid., 20-21).

In 1893, Kiyozawa and other reform-minded priests took charge of overhauling the administration and curriculum of Ōtani Middle School. When a student strike broke out

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11 The name (and duties) of this leading sectarian administrative position changed throughout the modern period. For the sake of simplicity, I use the term Head of Sect Affairs (宗務総長 shūmusōchō) throughout.

12 In 1884, prior to Atsumi taking office, the debt had come to exceed 3 million yen. By 1896, when he left office, it had been reduced to about 460,000 yen (Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo 2004b, 52). Regarding the history of Ōtani fundraising practices, see Kashiwahara (1986, 275-97).
protesting the school's policies (for example, students were not permitted to wear Western clothes), Atsumi intervened, firing the school president, reducing teacher salaries, and reinstating all students who had been suspended. In response, Kiyozawa and his associates began discussing plans for how to reform the sect. In July of 1895, they issued a statement demanding that sect priorities be shifted to “doctrinal study” (kyōgaku 教学) now that debt repayment and temple reconstruction had been completed. Atsumi responded by instituting a new legislative assembly (Giseikyoku 議制局) of twenty members, all appointed by the Chief Abbot, who had the power to create denominational laws and to approve or veto proposals submitted by the Head of Sect Affairs and others (Kashiwahara 1986, 117-18). Atsumi also issued a plan to raise funds for doctrinal study. Not satisfied, the reformers resigned their jobs and dedicated themselves to the cause of reform.

Based in the Shirakawa neighborhood of north Kyoto, the reformers published and widely distributed the journal Kyōkai jigen 教界時言 (Timely Words for the Religious World) (1896-1898). They critiqued Ōtani administrators’ lack of clear and effective educational policies, poor handling of public slander of the Chief Abbot, and fundraising strategies that had

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13 By kyōgaku, Kiyozawa meant both the “education” (gakuji 学事) of priests and laypeople at the sects’ educational institutions and “propagation” (fukyō 布教) of the teachings to individuals within and outside the sect (Hashida 2003, 65-6).

14 This replaced the former Shijunsho 諮詢所, which had been established in 1883 and only had powers of voting on proposals issuing from the Chief Abbot (Kashiwahara 1986, 116-17).

15 Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo reports that 5000 copies of the first issue all sold out such that 2000 more had to be printed (2004b, 60).
the effect of impoverishing branch temples. They also called for redistribution of power from the main temple to branch temples. Specifically, they proposed that the legislative assembly be made up of 100 members all elected from among branch temple priests (Yoshida 1986, 123).

Students at Shinshū University, which had just been founded the same year, issued statements of support. Expelled from the university, they then traveled the country spreading news of the reform movement. Inoue Enryō, Murakami Senshō, and Nanjō Bun’yū all got involved in supporting the movement. 20,000 Ōtani members ended up signing a reform petition submitted to Ōtani authorities (this was about 2 percent of the Ōtani organization’s one million members) (Hashimoto 2003, 26).16

In February 1897, Kiyozawa and five other reform movement leaders were punished by Ōtani authorities by having their “names removed” (jomei 除名) from the register of priests.17 Murakami Senshō was also demoted in rank. The reform movement failed to achieve many of its stated aims. However, in March 1897, reforms were enacted to the denomination’s legislative assembly, expanding the number of members to sixty and stipulating that thirty of the members would be elected from among leading representatives of branch temples (not all

16 For further discussion of the Shirakawa reform movement, see Moriya (1996), Hashida (2003), and Mori (2003).
17 The five others were Inoue Bunchū 井上豊忠, Kiyokawa Enjō 清川円誠, Tsukimi Kakuryō 月見覚了, Imagawa Kakushin 今川覚神, and Inaba Masamaru 櫻葉昌丸.
branch temple priests) across the country.\textsuperscript{18} The other thirty would be appointed, but they could not be Sect Affairs Office employees. Here were the beginnings of a representative system that had separation between executive and legislative branches. However, in practice, the powers of elected members was limited by ordinances that hierarchically classified members into three categories and that made the proposal and enactment of new laws dependent upon the Chief Abbot’s approval (Yoshida 1986, 126). Perhaps the most substantial immediate change brought about by the Shirakawa movement was Atsumi Kaien’s forced resignation and replacement by the more liberal Ishikawa Shundai 石川舜台, who would allow Kiyozawa’s reinstatement and service at Shinshū University. In April 1898, on the occasion of Rennyo’s 400\textsuperscript{th} anniversary memorial services, the “name removals” were rescinded. Two days later, the reformers halted publication of their journal.

In 1899, Kiyozawa received a request from the Ōtani authorities to take up the position of president of Shinshū University. This was a surprising turn of events considering his expulsion from the sect two years prior. He agreed to take charge of Shinshū University on the condition that it be moved to Tokyo and that he be allowed free reign to design the university policies and curriculum. Remarkably, these demands were met, and Shinshū University was reopened in Tokyo in October 1901. The curriculum Kiyozawa designed placed precedence on

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{Specifically, the heads and vice-heads of district associations (seiふく kumichō 正副組長) were allowed to vote.}
\end{footnotesize}
the study of philosophy and language in an attempt to further bring sectarian studies into a context of world thought and academic standards. At the same time, however, Kiyozawa was strongly opposed to a student movement that sought accreditation from the Ministry of Education on the grounds that this would compromise the university’s religious mission. He resigned over this matter in October 1902 and retired to his home temple, dying the following summer.

In the ensuing years, a divide grew between Takakura Seminary in Kyoto and Shinshū University in Tokyo, the former charged with “guiding” (kyōdō 敎導) sect members toward a correct understanding of the teachings and the latter with “educating” (kyōiku 教育) sect members in a broader sense. The division was exacerbated by rising enrollments at Shinshū University and declining ones at Takakura Seminary. As an effort to unify sectarian education and reassert the significance of Takakura Seminary, Head of Doctrinal Affairs Ōtani Eiryō 大谷瑩亮 introduced a bill in 1911 to the denomination’s legislative assembly to return Shinshū University to Kyōto and merge it with the Takakura Seminary.¹⁹ Heated debates ensued, with modernists counter-proposing the merging of the two institutions in Tokyo rather than Kyoto. Ultimately, the bill passed by a close vote (26 to 24). University president Nanjō Bun’yū, professors Sasaki Gesshō and Soga Ryōjin, and others resigned in protest (ODH, vol. 1: 251). In

¹⁹ In 1910, Ōtani Eiryō had presided over deliberations involving Nanjō Bun’yū, Inaba Masamaru, traditionalist Yoshitani Kakuji and ten others, which resulted in a proposal that would have shifted educational responsibilities and authority away from the Takakura Seminary to Shinshū University. Thus, it is difficult to determine what Eiryō’s personal position was (ODH, vol. 1: 246-47).
the end, a student movement in opposition to these changes eventually led to the dismissal of
certain conservative faculty formerly of Takakura Seminary and the rehiring of Nanjō and
Sasaki (ibid., 261-64).

In 1916, Kaneko Daiei was appointed to the faculty on account of the positive reception
of his 1915 book Shinshū no kyōgi oyobi sono rekishi (The Teachings and History of Shin Buddhism),
sympathetic colleagues at the university like Sasaki, and a student movement calling for his
and Soga’s appointment (Hataya 1993, 281). The flipside of Kaneko’s hire, however, was a
refusal to hire Soga. According to Kaneko’s recollection, “I heard there were people who were
quite dissatisfied, thinking that the ‘flanking attendant’ had come without the ‘main image’
(Hataya 1993, 282). Soga relates that many at Shinshū Ōtani University strongly opposed him
while Kaneko was more acceptable because he was younger and more “able to compromise.” In
fact, he even attributes the outbreak of Kaneko’s heresy problem to his own arrival at the
university in 1925, suggesting that he was the ultimate target of the traditionalists’ attack (Soga

Ōtani History (1920-1928)

World War I brought about worldwide educational reforms. In Japan, an economic
boom caused by the war created a need for more educated workers. In 1918, the Ministry of

\[\text{footnote: This refers to the main Buddha statue and flanking Bodhisattva statues in Buddhist temples. For example, Amida Buddha is frequently flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (jpn. Seishi) Bodhisattvas.}\]
Education implemented a new university system through the University Ordinance (Daigakurei大学令), which opened up the possibility of university status to private universities. By the end of the Taishō period in 1925, twenty-two private institutions had achieved official university status alongside the growing number of public universities, and enrollment in these universities leapt from about 6000 in 1915 to over 20,000 in 1930 (Marshall 1994, 96). Shinshū Ōtani University sought to take part in these social advances, so it made the necessary arrangements and eventually achieved university status in 1922. The primary obstacle to achieving such status was financial: the government required institutions to demonstrate their financial security, which included payment of a deposit of 500,000 yen or more (Hayashi 2014, 175). In addition, the government required Shinshū Ōtani University to change its name (to Ōtani University), as “Shinshū” referred too explicitly to its religious affiliation. Part of the significance of official university status was that the university would take on a public mission to serve the nation.²¹ Although such public status stood directly opposed to Kiyozawa’s wishes, the change was interpreted positively by his followers as a mandate to open up Shin Buddhism to the world.²²

²¹ The first article of the University Ordinance states: “Universities are to take as their goal the teaching of theories and application of scholarship necessary for the nation, paying heed to the cultivation of persons and the nurturing of national thought.”

²² For example, Soga commented, “Ōtani University is no longer a sectarian university. It is a transsectarian university... It is a university that follows Japan’s national university system while being managed by the sect. Therefore, the study of Buddhism is liberated from the sect into general society” (ODH, vol. 1: 293-4).
Along with its name change and expansion of purpose, Ōtani University revised its curriculum to reflect a broader, more modern education. One such change was the 1920 renaming of its “Sectarian Vehicle” (shūjō 宗乗) and “Other Vehicle” (yojō 余乗) departments as departments of “Shin studies” (Shinshūgaku 真宗学) and “Buddhist studies” (Bukkyōgaku 仏教学) (ODH 1, 274). Conservatives were displeased with this change insofar as it seemed to place the study of Shin scriptures on the same level as other academic fields.

On the heels of these changes, Kaneko gave his October 1922 “Prolegomena to Shin Studies” lectures to define the new field of Shin studies. The lectures were reprinted in the university journal Gasshō 合掌 and published as a book in 1923. Kaneko and Soga also promoted their vision for Shin studies in further articles in Gasshō and in their private journal Kenshin 見真, which they distributed widely, including to high-ranking Ōtani scholars who would later try them for heresy (Soga et al. 1982, 194). One review in Gasshō had high praise for Kaneko and Soga’s work: “The pure subjectivity research method long advocated by Soga and transmitted to Kaneko is... the pride of our university in the contemporary world of Buddhist studies... Together with the continued expansion of the objective research of Professors Sasaki [Gesshō]

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23 More specifically, the previous “departments” (gakka 学科) of shūjō 宗乗 and yojō 余乗 were converted into various “sections” (kamoku 科目): Shinshūgaku 真宗学, Bukkyō gairon 仏教概論, Shōjō Sukkyōgaku 小乗仏教学, Daijō Bukkyōgaku 大乗仏教学, and Bukkyōshi 仏教史. In 1924, the curriculum was revised to create three “departments”: Bukkyō gakka 仏教学科, tetsugaku gakka 哲学科, and jinbun gakka 人文学科. Each of these housed various “sections,” with Shinshūgaku falling within Bukkyō gakka. In 1965, Shinshūgaku became a department independent from Buddhist studies. See ODH (vol. 2).
and Akanuma [Chizen], I wish for the continued deepening of Professors Soga and Kaneko’s subjective research” (December 1922, 44).

The momentum of the reformers continued to grow when Nanjō Bun’yū’s tenure as second president of the university came to an end and Sasaki Gesshō took his place in 1923. In a historic 1924 convocation speech entitled “Ōtani University’s Founding Spirit,” Sasaki defined Ōtani University’s mission as the “liberation” of Buddhism from its sectarian confines into the academic community and society at large (Sasaki 2013, 25-26). In the speech, he also noted his pleasure “that the term ‘Shin Buddhist studies’ has become quickly accepted by society at large” and his anticipation that “Shin Buddhism as an academic discipline will be deepened in the future” (ibid., 26-7). Sasaki’s presidency was widely heralded by modernist scholars and staunchly opposed by conservatives. Students, infected with Sasaki’s optimism and spirit of reform, likened their university to a “sleeping lion” that was in the process of waking up (Yamada 1973, 55). Sasaki’s presidency lasted just long enough to see Soga Ryōjin appointed to a professorship before Sasaki died suddenly of pneumonia in March of 1926.

Incidentally, in 1925, the same year that universal male suffrage was passed in Japan, the Ōtani denomination’s legislative assembly (renamed the Giseikai 議制会 in 1921 and then the Shūgikai 宗議会 in 1929; hereafter referred to as the Ōtani Diet) was reformed such that all members would be elected from among branch temple priests. In the same year, Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōen was forced to abdicate and stripped of his priestly status due to the public scandal

As representative democracy began to take hold within the sect administration and as the doctrinal modernists increasingly gained ground at Ōtani University, Ōtani organization authorities began to tighten up their system for identifying and adjudicating cases of heresy. Prosecution of heresy trials was perhaps the Ōtani leaders’ best weapon for stemming the seatide of change being ushered in by modernists. In 1907, the Head of Sect Affairs had issued a brief set of three regulations defining and explaining the duties of members of the Jitōryō 侍董寮, the sect’s “correction committee” that makes judgments on orthodoxy.

Article One: The jitō are appointed by the Chief Abbot from among the kōshi.24

Article Two: The jitō respond to inquiries from the Chief Abbot regarding the sectarian principles (shūgi 宗義).

24 “Kōshi 講師” (lecturer) is the highest scholarly rank within the Ōtani organization. According to regulations established in August 1930, rank is bestowed by the Chief Abbot following a recommendation from the Head of Doctrinal Affairs. The first rank of jungakushi 准学師 (associate scholar) is obtained by graduating from Ōtani University. Jungakushi can proceed to the second rank of gakushi 学師 (scholar) by completing at least three credits in both Buddhist studies and Shin studies and also submitting a research paper, which is evaluated by a committee of higher-ranking scholars. The third rank of gikō 擬講 (provisional lecturer; lit. imitation lecturer) requires an additional three to five years of research and another research paper in the field of Buddhist studies or Shin studies. The fourth rank of shikō 嗣講 (secondary lecturer; lit. successor lecturer) requires five additional years of research and another research paper or presentation demonstrating outstanding excellence. The fifth rank of kōshi 講師 (lecturer) is then obtained by special order (tokumei 特命) of the Chief Abbot (Hanafusa 1937, 319-21).

At present, the jungakushi rank has been eliminated but the other four ranks remain. Academic rank is now granted by the Head of Sect Affairs rather than the Chief Abbot, and appointment to kōshi rank is determined by committee rather than a special order of the Chief Abbot (Hōki Chōsa linkai 1992, 283-84).
In 1921, however, the Jitōryō regulations were extensively revised. The thirteen articles of the new regulations more clearly defined the number of Jitōryō members (fourteen), the length of their appointments (three years), the position of the Jitōryō within the Ōtani administrative structure, and further details related to its duties (e.g. public lectures on sect teachings and quarterly reports to the Chief Abbot via the Head of Sect Affairs) and leadership structure. In addition, Article One expands the primary purpose of the committee: “Article One: The purpose of the Jitōryō is to elucidate sectarian teachings and to govern over their academic interpretations (gakkai 学解)” (ODH, vol. 2: 277). This distinction between “sectarian teachings” and “academic interpretations” recalls Kiyozawa Manshi’s distinction between “sectarian teachings” and “sectarian studies” (shūgaku 宗学), in which the former represents the unchanging truth revealed by Shinran and the latter represents the changing exposition of those teachings by Shin followers (KMZ, vol. 7: 111-23). These Jitōryō regulations thus express the authorities’ acknowledgment of and attempt to control the growing influence of modern Shin studies.

In December 1922—the same month Kaneko’s October “Prolegomena to Shin Studies” lectures were being printed in the university journal Gasshō—the Head of Sect Affairs issued an announcement in the Ōtani denomination journal Shūhō 宗報 reminding its members of the unchanging nature of religious truth and expressing regret that “recently there are those who...
mean to spread the influence of the changing intellectual world into this denomination, not
only mistaking the correct meaning of our fundamental principles but also extending this to
others” (ODH, vol. 2: 285). The announcement goes on advise Ōtani members to report upon
“any monk or layman within our sect who harbors mistaken notions of faith in the teachings”
(ibid., 285). Further instructions were issued in the following year on the specific procedures
for reporting on such matters (ibid., 286). These announcements do not name names, but all the
evidence suggests that Kaneko, Soga, and possibly Sasaki were the targets. 

In summary, a conflict between doctrinal modernists and traditionalists stretched back
to at least the time of Kiyozawa Manshi’s 1896 Shirakawa reform movement. In the course of
this conflict, the traditionalists did achieve some victories—most notably, the suppression of
Kiyozawa’s reform movement and the return of Ōtani University to Kyoto—but overall, the
modernists were clearly gaining ground. Especially with Ōtani University’s 1922 promotion to
official university status, the door was opened for Sasaki, Kaneko, and Soga to take charge of
the university administration and the study of Shin teachings. Their cosmopolitan perspective
and commitment to “empiricism” made them best suited to represent the sect as it took on a
public role in higher education. In response to this power swing, Ōtani authorities tightened up  

\[ \text{25 It is tempting to speculate on a possible connection to Nonomura Naotarō of the Honganji}
\text{denomination. Nonomura first published his controversial opinions on the Pure Land in June of 1922, but}
\text{they did not gather significant attention until they were featured in Chūgai nippō in early 1923. For}
\text{discussions of the Nonomura case that include some comparison to Kaneko’s case, see Kigoshi (2004a,}
\text{2004b).} \]
their system for controlling heresy and issued public announcements warning against the corruption of faith through “the influence of the changing intellectual world.” Battle lines had been drawn; all that was needed for the eruption of another “heresy problem” was the right spark.

*Kaneko Heresy Affair*

On November 26th 1927, a wealthy donor and member of the Ōtani denomination’s accounting committee by the name of Tashiro Jūemon 田代重右衛門 (1854-1932) made a telephone call to one of the sect’s kōshi (lecturer; see note above) to complain about Kaneko Daiei’s unorthodox teachings and report that the accounting committee was consequently discussing the option of defunding the university.26 Three days later, the same Tashiro burst into a meeting of the Jitōryō and declared that this matter was inciting problems at various branch temples.27 He went on to send copies of writings by “two professors,” presumably Kaneko Daiei and his senior peer Soga Ryōjin, to the university for review (Mihaaru 1990a, 6-7).

In response to Tashiro’s request, the Jitōryō promptly investigated Kaneko’s writings—in particular *The Idea of the Pure Land* (1925) and *Shinshū ni okeru nyorai oyobi jōdo no kannen*

26 Mihaaru (1990a) lists details on Tashiro’s consistent and sizeable donations to the sect. Newspaper reports refer to him as a “zaibatsu believer.” Details on his life and reputation within the sect can be found in Kitano (1934).

27 In particular, it came to be said that individuals who had attended a lecture of Kaneko’s in Nagoya that summer had complained to Tashiro.
(1926)—and determined that they did contradict sect teachings. They entrusted this finding to Head of Doctrinal Affairs Nunami Seiken 沼波政憲. He consulted with university officials, who ultimately placed Kaneko on leave when the new academic term began in April 1928. Kaneko had initially been willing to quietly submit to the administration’s orders but was persuaded by supportive faculty to defend himself (Mizutani 1934, 264). Also in April, Inaba Masamaru 橿葉昌丸 (1865-1944) became the new university president, replacing Murakami Senshō who had become ill. Inaba was a former associate of Kiyozawa who had played a central role in the Shirakawa reform movement. Sympathetic toward Kaneko, Inaba requested a formal meeting between him and the Jitōryō. Instead, Kaneko and just two members of the Jitōryō (Sumida Chiken 住田智見 and Kōno Hōun 河野法雲 (1867-1946)) met, but no resolution was reached. The Head of Doctrinal Affairs then proposed that a lower committee reconsider the matter, but members of the Jitōryō took offense to this and appeared on the verge of resigning. In the midst of this conflict, an accounting meeting was held, and the university budget was slashed. Next, eleven university leaders including President Inaba submitted letters of resignation, and students issued a collective statement of support. The Head of Doctrinal Affairs then

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28 ODH (vol. 1) and Mizutani (1934) both relate that Kaneko’s works were judged “to oppose sect teachings” (宗意に反する, 宗意に違する), yet neither documents any source. No official documents of the Jitōryō’s verdict have come to light.

29 Inaba Masamaru reports that Kōno was the one most insistently opposed to Kaneko’s work. (Ōtani daigaku shinbun, June 22, 1928)

30 The other ten were Fujioka Ryōjun 藤岡了淳, Ōsuga Shūdō 大須賀寿道, Yasutomi Jōchū 安富成中, Inoue Bunchū 井上法忠, Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善, Yamabe Shūgaku 山辺宗学, Suzuki Hiroshi 鈴木弘,
submitted a report to the Chief Abbot, presumably relaying the Jitōryō’s previous verdict (ODH, vol. 1: 338-341).

On June 12, President Inaba announced to a hall of students and university personnel that he had accepted and filed Kaneko’s “voluntary” letter of resignation. He also explained that he and the other ten university leaders had agreed to a process of unconditional arbitration—through the brother of the Chief Abbot, Ōtani Eiryō³¹—which resulted in the withdrawal of their resignations. Many students and onlookers were perplexed and dissatisfied with these resolutions, perceiving Kaneko’s “voluntary resignation” to have been forced upon him and wondering why the university president and leadership had agreed to such a compromise. In response, Ōtani University students banded together, drafting demands and threatening to strike. However, after a week of negotiations, they were talked down, and calm was temporarily restored to the university.

Significantly, no official verdict was ever handed down by the Chief Abbot regarding whether Kaneko’s thought was in fact heretical—despite appeals by some of Kaneko’s opponents to pursue the matter. No records of the Jitōryō’s assessment of Kaneko’s work have come to light. Ostensibly, Kaneko was under attack for his alleged denial of the existence of the Pure Land. According to Kaneko’s report, the Jitōryō was concerned that his work may have

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³¹ Ōtani Eiryō had also been at the center of the 1911 controversy concerning the relocation of Shinshū University, at which time he had been serving as Head of Doctrinal Affairs (see above).
“denied the teaching of ‘point West and posit a form’ (shihō rissō 指方立相) and descended into ‘self-nature and mind-only’ (jishō yuishin 自性唯心)” (Chūgai nippon, June 15th, 1928). Yet Kaneko also commented, “The people who claim [my work] to be heresy don’t point to anything concrete... Even in speaking with the two Jitōryō individuals and reading Mr. Murakami [Senshō]’s pieces, I really don’t get the feeling that this is a problem of heresy” (Hataya 1993, 288).

Following Kaneko’s resignation, conservative elements within the sect further tried to bolster their institutional apparatuses for defining orthodoxy and handling heretics. Alongside the Jitōryō, a new Sectarian Teachings Inquiry Board was established in September 1928 to investigate issues of orthodoxy and heresy (Mizushima 2010, 331-334). In July 1929, the Shin Buddhist Graduate Institute was established to better support traditional sectarian studies (Mizushima 2010, 331-334). To fund this institute, the Shin Buddhist Ōtani Denomination

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32 “Point West and posit a form” (shihō rissō 指方立相) is a phrase used to emphasize that Śākyamuni, especially in the Sutra on Contemplation of Immeasurable Life, described Amida’s Pure Land in “the West” with various “forms” of adornment (e.g. jewelled trees, musical instruments, ponds, birds, pavilions). The arising of a mind of faith in Amida and his Pure Land depends upon those forms. (SSJ, 223).

“Self-nature and mind-only” (jishō yuishin 自性唯心) is a doctrinal interpretation that is disparaged in the preface to the third chapter of the Kyōgyōshinshō: “But the monks and laity of this latter age and the religious teachers of these times are floundering in concepts of ‘self-nature’ and ‘mind only,’ and they disparage the true realization of enlightenment in the Pure Land way” (CWS, vol. 1: 77). According to the Shinshō Shinjiten, it is the view that beyond the pure original nature of one’s own mind, nothing exists (including Amida or his Pure Land). (SSJ, 210)
Sectarian Studies Prosperity Foundation was established in November 1930 by none other than Tashiro Jūemon, the initial accuser of Kaneko (Kitano 1934, 87-93).33

In January 1929, Kaneko quietly resigned his status as a monk (sōeki henjō 僧籍返上). Then in March 1930, Soga Ryōjin announced his own “voluntary resignation,” causing new waves of critical press, student protests, and faculty and staff resignations to erupt. By the end of June, a truce was reached. But in March 1931, institutional conflict arose again when President Inaba was pressured to resign and university policies were revised in ways that increased the sect authorities’ control over the university.34 University representatives appealed to the Ministry of Education, which rescinded the sect’s appointment of traditionalist kōshi scholar Saitō Yuishin 斉藤唯信 (1865-1957) as university president. In June, Head of Doctrinal Affairs Shimotsuma Kūkyō 下間空教 (1878-1931) died, opening up room for a compromise in regard to university policies and the appointment of a new president (ODH, vol. 1: 347-357).

33 The Japanese names of these organizations are Shūi Shingikai 宗意審議会, Shinshū Daigakuin 真宗大学院, and Shinshū Ōtani-ha Shūgaku Köryū Zaidan 真宗大谷派宗学興隆財団.
34 For example, appointment to the position of university president would be restricted to those of kōshi rank, and the university president would come under the direction of the Head of Doctrinal Affairs. Also, dual appointment as professor and university staff would be disallowed, such that the positions of academic dean (gakkan 学監) and head librarian would be filled by sect administrators rather than professors (ODH, vol. 1: 355).
Interpreting the Kaneko Heresy Affair

Previous scholarship on the Kaneko heresy problem is found in Mizutani (1934), Kikumura (1975), Hataya (1993), Miharu (1990a, 1990b), ODH (vol. 1), Mizushima (2010), and Murayama (2010). Below I review the main arguments of the three most important of these sources in regard to the Kaneko affair.

Miharu’s article (1990b), which seems to have provided the basis for the Ōtani Daigaku hyakunenshi’s official history, is the most detailed account of the affair. It begins by correcting various factual errors that appear in Kikumura’s biography of Kaneko in order to present a clear and accurate chronological account of the “heresy problems” surrounding Kaneko and Soga. It goes on to review Shin modernist Yamabe Shūgaku’s 1931 assessment of the conflict, which helps to clarify the different roles of Tashiro Jūemon, the accounting committee, and the traditionalist kōshi scholars in instigating the affair. It then probes into the underlying motivations of Tashiro and the administrator Shimotsuma, highlighting their antagonism toward Ōtani University and the sort of doctrinal study that was carried out there. Finally, it provides an extensive discussion of Kaneko’s vision for Shin studies as described in “Prolegomena to Shin Studies” and in his responses to the critiques of Tada Kanae, as well as an account of the goals and activities of the Kōbō Gakuen group founded in 1930 by Soga and Kaneko’s students after Soga’s forced leave.

Hataya’s short 1993 work, found within a volume that also contains biographies on Suzuki Daisetsu and Soga Ryōjin, can probably be called the standard biography of Kaneko. It
contains an account of the affair that is highly sympathetic toward Kaneko, emphasizing that the heresy charges were based on a mistaken, simplistic reading of his work and that his resignation was involuntary and did not signify a repudiation of his work. Hataya evaluates the historical significance of the affair in terms of two points: first, as a battle between traditionalists and modernists over the issue of academic freedom at a time when sectarian studies had just been given new life through Shin studies; and second, as the occasion for an important doctrinal debate between Kaneko and Tada. In both cases, Hataya concludes that important questions were left unresolved when Kaneko was forced out and his books were branded as heretical.

Mizushima’s 2010 work includes extensive discussion of Kaneko and his heresy affair. His account includes discussion of critics’ characterization of Kaneko’s work, the Ōtani organization’s handling of the affair, traditional sectarian studies, the student protest movement, and the broader historical context of suppression of academic freedom. However, by and large, Mizushima focuses on Kaneko and Soga’s scholarship. His account of the Kaneko and Soga affairs and the resulting birth of the Kōbō Gakuen fits into his larger narrative about the formation and perpetuation of a true Buddhist “sangha” by Kiyozawa and his followers. He concludes that traditionalists and modernists were fundamentally at odds over the nature of doctrinal study: “Modern doctrinal study is doctrinal study that tries to turn Shinran’s Buddhist path into self-awakening for the modern man. Traditional doctrinal study, which emphasizes traditional interpretation of the teachings, is naturally detached from present
reality. Therefore, it can only fear modern doctrinal study which has roots in present reality” (2010, 337).

This scholarship is unanimous in its conclusion that the Kaneko affair was about much more than Kaneko’s personal theory of the Pure Land. Miharu, Hataya, and Mizushima all interpret the affair as a larger battle between modernists and traditionalists over the future of Ōtani University and Shin doctrinal studies. My analysis is in agreement. Kaneko’s *The Idea of the Pure Land* clearly manifested his skepticism toward the notion that the Pure Land existed in a conventional sense, but skepticism toward the Pure Land’s “objective” existence and the production of non-literal, philosophically nuanced interpretations of it is a long-standing feature of the Pure Land tradition in the modern and premodern periods (Tanaka 2007). It might be argued that the modern intellectual climate, dominated by science and realism, made Shin believers especially sensitive to apparent denials of the Pure Land’s existence. Scientific skepticism in the Pure Land motivated Shin modernists like Kaneko to find more sophisticated language for explaining the Pure Land’s existence, but it also may have also provoked in some Shin believers fundamentalist views that were hostile toward Kaneko’s modernist explanations.

At a more fundamental level, though, the Kaneko affair was only a manifestation of a long-standing conflict between traditionalists associated with Takakura Seminary and modernists associated with Ōtani University. In the 1920s, power was swinging in favor of the modernists, bringing matters to a head. The modernists had developed and established an institutional basis for a new discipline of Shin studies in which individual scholars were free to
introspectively examine the “facts” of their own experiences and interpret Shin scriptures on that basis. This ostensibly rational, systematic academic discipline represented a new authority to speak on Shin teachings independent of the Chief Abbot and the sect’s “principle of doctrinal authorities.” It was this new source of authority, more than Kaneko’s personal views, that posed a threat to traditionalists within the denomination and elicited charges of “heresy.”

While Mizushima and Miharu focus on the details of how Kaneko and Soga’s research approach and conclusions conflicted with traditional sectarian studies, I highlight the conflict’s institutional dimensions—the Ōtani University’s promotion to official university status, the birth of a department of Shin studies, the appointments of Sasaki as president and Soga as professor, and counterreactions such as revision of the Jitōryō bylaws. However, our basic conclusion is the same.

Examination of the Kaneko affair itself revealed three curious points—which were widely commented upon by observers at the time—that further support this conclusion. First, *The Idea of the Pure Land* had been published and well publicized in 1925, two and a half years before the start of this incident. In fact, the theory of the Pure Land presented by Kaneko in *The Idea of the Pure Land* was already evident in his 1922 “Prolegomena to Shin Studies.” If Kaneko’s theory of the Pure Land was the real problem, why was it not addressed earlier? Second, the primary plaintiff in this case was not a scholar or even an administrator in the Doctrinal Affairs Department; rather, he was a member of the sect’s accounting committee. The same accounting committee proceeded to slash the university budget in the midst of the conflict. Even if the
conflict began as a doctrinal disagreement, it quickly developed into a dispute over the Ōtani organization and university’s administrative structure and the influence of wealthy donors therein. Third, the sudden and ambiguous resolution of the incident—secrecy of the sect’s investigation of his work, Kaneko’s “voluntary” resignation, no official verdict on his alleged “heresy,” and a compromise between sect and university leaders brokered by the brother of the Chief Abbot—left a bad taste in the mouths of many. All of these points suggest that the affair was more about politics than about Buddhist teachings.

Unsurprisingly, previous scholarship on the Kaneko affair has all been conducted by Shin sectarian scholars who are heirs of the modern Shin studies pioneered by Kaneko and Soga. This sectarian perspective may account for three shortcomings in their accounts. First, the topic of the compromise between university and sect leaders brokered by the brother of the Chief Abbot has been given little attention in scholarship even though it was viewed with great importance by students and outside observers at the time. Miharu’s article (and the Ōtani Daigaku hyakunenshi account) actually misrepresents the outburst of student protest as a reaction to university leaders’ resignations when in fact it was a reaction to the rescinding of their resignations.35 President Inaba and the other university leaders’ “surrender” (as certain

35 This error appears in Miharu (1990b, 6) and ODH (vol. 1: 341). The quotation regarding the student outburst comes from an article in the Ōtani University newspaper’s June 22 issue entitled: “The President and ten leaders withdraw their letters resignations: Professor Kaneko decides to resign.” The article’s narrative makes clear that the students’ outburst followed President Inaba’s June 12th address, not his June 4th address.
students interpreted it) to a process of mediation and their role in talking down the outraged students were arguably the critical factors enabling a resolution to the conflict. That scholars have largely ignored these details may be due to how such details complicate the tidy picture of a battle between modernists and traditionalists.

Second, sectarian bias may explain why previous scholarship has paid much more attention to Kaneko and Soga’s perspectives than it has to their critics. Scholars have noted that Kaneko’s “denial of an actually existing Pure Land” and his concept of the “Pure Land as Idea” were the main points of contention, but they have generally failed to look into the details. This is partly owing to a lack of documentation of the views of Tashiro or the kōshi scholars. Yet why have scholars not paid closer attention to the public critiques made by Tada Kanae or by Ōtani administrator Shimotsuma Kūkyō? I will rectify this imbalance by considering their views below.

Third, and most importantly, previous scholarship has approached the Kaneko affair as a sectarian conflict, failing to pay sufficient attention to its broader historical dimensions. Mizushima mentions the conflict’s historical context—the 1918 University Ordinance, the suppression of Morito Tatsu’s studies of anarchism, and the suppression of Nonomura Naotarō’s writings on the Pure Land—but only to add texture to his story; he does not attribute to that historical context any explanatory power. Mizushima, Hataya, and Miharu all note the publicity the Kaneko affair received in Chūgai nippō and other newspapers, but only to dramatize the story; they do not consider how such publicity may have determined how the
affair unfolded. In short, previous scholars have recognized that the Kaneko affair was a political battle, but their assumption that only sectarian politics were at play needs to be questioned. Below, I show that national politics also came into play.

3.3 Public Discourse on the Kaneko Heresy Affair

In this section, I will examine discourse about the Kaneko heresy problem found in the national Buddhist daily newspaper Chūgai nippō and the Ōtani University newspaper. It should be noted at the outset that the discourse surveyed below is only a small sample of the mass of commentary set off by the Kaneko affair. Over the course of the spring and summer of 1928, the incident developed into a veritable cause célèbre, which had important implications for the public image of the Ōtani organization and for the reputation and future careers of Kaneko and his associates. As demonstrated below, Ōtani authorities felt compelled to enter into the fray and voice their views in Chūgai nippō. These discussions occasionally addressed the doctrinal or methodological issues at stake in the conflict. More often, Kaneko’s research was either caricaturized or ignored altogether. Instead of attending to these details, the debate gravitated toward the issue of Kaneko’s right to intellectual freedom versus Ōtani authorities’ right to legislate orthodoxy. Arguments for both sides either explicitly or inexplicitly referenced the national discussion then taking place about the rights and duties of citizens and scholars versus the rights of the Japanese state.
A Journalist's Perspective

In this section, I will discuss how the editor(s) of Chūgai nippō discussed the Kaneko affair. Despite the fact that Chūgai nippō has been mined for research material on modern Buddhism by many scholars, there has been almost no research done on Chūgai nippō itself.

Who was the author (or authors) of the anonymous editorials that comprise the first row of text in each issue of Chūgai nippō? During the period of the Kaneko affair, the editor is listed in the newspaper’s credits as Araki Ichidō 荒木一道. It is also possible that the author was Matani Ruikotsu 真渓涙骨, founder of Chūgai nippō. According to Chūgai nippō’s website,

“Ruikotsu was a lifelong newspaper man who continued to pen the ‘Editor’s journal’ (henshū

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36 Araki does not appear in the Nihon Bukkyō jinmei jiten or any other reference materials I have found. Searches of the National Diet Library website show him to have been the editor of two books. The first is the 1921 Light From Flesh (published by the Shin Buddhist press Dōhōsha), a literary work by Andō Shōchō, a graduate of Bukkyō University, writer, and editor for Chūgai nippō. The second is the 1933 Collection of Theatrical Scripts Selected for Awards: In Commemoration of Chūgai Nippō’s 10,000th Issue (published by Chūgai Nippō Press).

37 Matani was born in 1869 in Fukui Province as the eldest son in a Honganji denomination Shin temple. In 1885, he enrolled in what is now Ryūkoku University but left after one year, at which point he trained as a follower of Honganji denomination priest Shichiri Gojun 七里恒順 for a period of three years. He then tried out various lines of work before arriving at his calling as a newspaper man, launching Kyōgaku hōchi 教學報知 in October 1897. Coming from a Shin background, Matani’s newspaper focused on news related to the Ōtani and Honganji branches of Shin Buddhism. (For example, in 1901, the paper featured articles by Kiyozawa Manshi, discussions of the duel between Ōtani administrators Atumi Kaien and Ishikawa Shundai, and extensive coverage of the storm caused by Shin scholar Murakami Senshō’s Bukkyō Tōitsuron.) In fact, it appears that Matani’s newspaper may have been printed or distributed as a pair with the Ōtani organization’s newspaper Shūhō (images of Shūhō are interspersed throughout the microfilm images of Kyōgaku hōchi). In changing the paper’s name to Chūgai nippō, Matani expanded the paper’s scope to report on news related to all the sects of Buddhism, as well as to religion generally. However, at least in the materials I have surveyed, a residual bias in favor of Shin-related news is evident. For information on Matani’s life, see Tsunemitsu (1968-1969) and Yamaori Tetsuo’s introduction in Matani (2005).
I have found no column in Chūgai nippō in 1914 labeled “Editor’s journal.” It is unclear when Matani actually began this regular “Editor’s journal” column, and how often it appeared. In any case, it seems that this “Editor’s journal” is different from the opening anonymous column. Current employees of Chūgai nippō familiar with the newspaper’s history have stated that these opening columns were most likely authored by various staff working at the paper.

Heresy cases were rampant in the Buddhist world in the 1920s. Not only were there a great number of cases, but the extent of their press coverage and the scope of the disturbances they caused within major Buddhist sects greatly increased. Major Buddhist heresy affairs of the 1920s include the Honganji denomination’s 1923 suppression of Nonomura Naotarō’s 野々村直太朗 writings on the Pure Land and the Sōtō Zen sect’s “True Faith Dispute” (Shōshin ronsō 正信論争), which began in November 1928 involving Nukariya Kaiten 忽滑谷快天 and Harada Sogaku 原田祖岳. The pages of Chūgai nippō also reveal many smaller incidents. For example, on February 24, 1928, the opening editorial commends authorities of the Kōshō denomination 興正派 of the Shin sect for publicizing the proceedings of an ongoing heresy case. The author comments:

At a time when the main temples of each of the sects has the custom of being oversensitive to matters of orthodoxy, rushing directly to decisions of “heresy” or “correct teachings,” and judging the accused, the gentle attitude of the Kōshō denomination is truly praiseworthy... When one scholarly explanation (gakusetsu 学説) has become influential, to reject it on the basis of one’s own scholarly explanation and then call it “heresy” and expel [its proponent] from the sect is just improper.

On March 15th, the opening editorial discusses yet another heresy case within the Honganji denomination involving Yanase Seishō 梁瀬斉聖. The author remarks, “It is unbearable for heresy problems to be dealt with politically or administratively. They must be publicly evaluated through research on the correct teachings.” Such comments provide a sense of the Chūgai nippo editor’s general position on heresy problems even before news on Kaneko appeared: a positive valuation of public academic deliberation and disdain toward the sectarian politicizing of doctrinal disagreements.

The Kaneko affair first surfaced in Chūgai nippo on April 13th and arrived on the paper’s front page on April 17th, where it would remain almost without exception through August 3rd.

The April 17th opening editorial first introduces the incident, expressing unease over the rumor that this problem was initially raised by “a layman possessing financial might.” It then emphasizes that the issue represents a general problem faced by every Buddhist university. The author frames the problem as follows:

A resolution of this problem must address the fundamental conflict between sects centered on doctrinal authorities and universities whose mission is the inquiry into truth. The question is whether free inquiry and the doctrinal authorities can coexist. Will the freedom to conduct research be pressured by the doctrinal authorities? Or will the doctrinal authorities themselves engage in self-reflection and explore new ways forward?
The author identifies a conflict of authority between “doctrinal authorities”\(^{39}\)—the Chief Abbot and Jitōryō—and individual scholars who independently advance theories in an academic setting. In the very framing of the problem, the author takes a clear stand on the side of “free inquiry” by suggesting that a proper resolution would require self-reflection on the part of the doctrinal authorities.

Later editorials echo these themes, relentlessly calling into question the actions of Ōtani authorities and the traditions of the sect:\(^{40}\)

This must not merely be evaluated according to the Jitōryō’s doctrinal authority but should be considered by the wider general academic world. Although it is not unreasonable to exclude from the sect a person who opposes the doctrinal authorities, those doctrinal authorities themselves ought to be carefully critiqued... What is doctrinal authority? How is doctrinal authority established? (April 18)

In the Honganji denomination, the members of the heresy investigation committee will reach a decision regarding Yanase via secret ballot. What significance does this have? Is this determining truth and falsity by majority opinion? Does this suggest that without using secret ballots, the scholars could not correctly voice their opinions? (May 24)

As a university, it is fine to fire someone who is deemed to have no value as a university professor, but short of that, it is unacceptable to force someone on leave. This must not be determined according to the convenience or inconvenience of the so-called “doctrinal authorities.” The sect’s course of action and the university’s course of action are separate matters. (May 30)

\(^{39}\) This term “doctrinal authorities” (kyōken 教権) might also be translated “doctrinal authority” or “authority of the teachings.” However, in this case, it is clear that the author has specific people and institutions in mind.

\(^{40}\) The editorials’ consistent viewpoint suggests they were all penned by the same author, or multiple authors with a similar perspective.
If there is a collision with the so-called “doctrinal authorities,” the path of development for a powerful academic theory is to bravely counterattack and try to smash the doctrinal authorities themselves... it would certainly not be faithful to see this issue buried in vagueness on account of the sect’s skillful deliberations that only seek to deflect the matter. (June 5)

Let us have the individuals of the Jitōryō, university scholars, and Kaneko himself publicly step forward into the academic world and attempt genuine evaluation and argument to throw light on the true authority. (June 6)

One force within the Higashi Honganji is the group of lay believers who partake in matters of finances. That the sect is dragged along by this force is not a good thing. At the very least, there need to be strategies for controlling this influence rationally. Being controlled by a moneyed clique (ōganbatsu) is to the dishonor of the sect. (June 7)

These editorials present an idealistic view of the separation of university and sect and of the absolute right to free research by scholars of religion. They view Kaneko’s status as scholar as separate from his status as priest such that even a judgment of “heresy” would be no grounds for his forced leave or resignation. They challenge sectarian authorities to publicize their proceedings and engage in open debate regarding Kaneko’s alleged “heresy.” The secrecy surrounding the sect’s investigations of Kaneko’s theories prompts the author(s) to call for scrutiny of the doctrinal authorities themselves.

During the same months, various opening editorials addressed the Communist Party Incident and related issues. On April 19th, the editorial discusses education in relation to the problem of understanding the plight of the “proletariat class” (musan kaikyū no mondai 無産階級の問題). On April 26th, it discusses the need for Buddhists to properly reflect upon and respond to the Proletariat Party’s (Musantō 無産党) slander of religion. The April 27th editorial
addresses the “national thought crisis” (shisō kokunan), suggesting that the Tanaka cabinet might be over-exaggerating the problem for political reasons. It concludes, “On the occasion of a national thought crisis, it is appropriate to call into question the responsibility and discretion of government officials themselves”—an argument very much like the one he directs toward Ōtani authorities. On May 5th, the opening editorial discusses patriotic movements that have sprung up in the wake of the Communist Party Incident, arguing that Buddhists ought to contribute through a “middle way” approach that transcends mere reactionary, repressive measures and tries to get at the intellectual roots of the problem. On May 19th, it returns to the topic of socialist slander of religion in a column discussing Buddhists’ involvement in national politics. On June 20th, it discusses Christian socialist Kagawa Toyohiko’s incendiary statements at the Japanese Religious Convention that too many religious followers were acting as “running dogs of capitalists.”

Chūgai nippō had been drawn into a debate about religion’s relation to poverty and class warfare. The paper’s editor(s) advise against kneejerk repression of leftist thought and call for reflection on the part of government officials. At the heart of these writings is a valorization of truth to be uncovered by researchers, propagated by educators, and expressed by politicians. Rather than resort to violence or censorship, government officials and concerned citizens ought to focus on obtaining and spreading a truthful view of the world. This same attitude informs the paper’s commentary on the Kaneko incident. Political values and religious views are thoroughly entangled.
In summary, the Chūgai nippō editor(s) set the terms for the public debate on Kaneko’s “heresy problem” by ignoring the details of Kaneko’s scholarship and approaching it abstractly as a test case for resolving the problem of how sectarian universities ought to relate to their associated sectarian institutions. Further articles in Chūgai nippō followed this lead, scrutinizing the Ōtani organization’s operations and handling of academic research. That the Chūgai nippō editor(s) approached the Kaneko incident on these terms is at least partly reflective of a concern with how the Japanese state was suppressing suspected Communists and leftist scholars.

An Administrator’s Perspective

Shimotsuma Kūkyō 下間空教 (1878-1931) was a high level Ōtani administrator who would be appointed Head of Doctrinal Affairs in January 1929. A regular contributor to Chūgai nippō at the time, Shimotsuma authored a series of three articles on the Kaneko affair that appeared on the Chūgai nippō’s front page (May 27-30). Shimotsuma’s series of articles, entitled “The Bounds of Sectarian Studies Research and Classes at Sectarian Universities,” is clearly 41

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41 For example: “Let us not kill new roots with the affair of Professor Kaneko: worries about the current state of the Ōtani denomination” (May 27, anonymous); “The obstinate three kōshi of the Jitoryo acting both as prosecutor and judge: criticism of their ignorance of academics” (June 10, anonymous); “Shin studies and Doctrinal authority” (June 20-24, Kitahara Shigemaro 北原繁薀, graduate student at Ōtani University); “Deep sympathies for the approach of a researcher and way-seeker: considering the matter of Ōtani University Professor Kaneko” (June 30 -July 3, Kiyama Jūshō 木山十彰, member of Waseda Daigaku Bukkyō Seinenkai), and “An argument for reconstructing heresy investigation law” (July 18-21; Taya Hiroshi 多屋弘, Ōtani scholar writing from Hokkaido).
directed toward the Kaneko affair, but he mentions Kaneko’s name only once and addresses the
situation in an abstract way. His defense of the sect and critique of Kaneko is more subtle and
guarded than Murakami Senshō’s or Tada Kanae’s, which probably accounts for the lack of
attention paid to it by Kaneko or later scholars. Also, it may have been overlooked because it
appeared prior to the explosion of commentary that resulted from the slashing of the
university budget on June 1st. Nonetheless, so long as the views of the Chief Abbot and Jitōryō
scholars remain obscure, it is Shimotsuma’s articles that give us the best window onto the
views of the Ōtani administration as it handled Kaneko’s alleged heresy.

Shimotsuma’s articles begin with a discussion of the famous 1920 incident in which
Tokyo Imperial University professor Morito Tatsuo was persecuted for his writings on
anarchistic thought. Shimotsuma describes how the government banned his writings, removed
him from his faculty post, and convicted him of the crime of causing public disorder. He then
presents arguments in favor of and opposed to these government actions. According to
Shimotsuma, those who agreed with the government’s treatment of Morito pointed to the 1918
University Ordinance (*Daigakurei*) that proscribed upon universities the duty “to nurture
national thought.” Moreover, university professors are government employees and thus
restricted by the official duties assigned them by the government. Those who disagreed with
the government, according to Shimotsuma, argued that the primary duty of a university is
research and instruction, whereas “nurturing national thought” is a secondary duty that
should not interfere with the primary duty. They also argued that academic discussion of
anarchist theory should not be lumped into the same category with violent anarchistic activities. Crimes require criminal intent, and such intent is not present in academic discussion. Moreover, it goes against the very nature of “research” to begin with pre-determined conclusions (including the conclusion that there ought to be a Japanese nation-state).

Shimotsuma concludes this section with one sentence of commentary, revealing his own position in the debate: “As a matter of fact, the result was a victory for those who agreed.” In the context of Shimotsuma’s articles, the clear implication is that this fact ought to settle the matter for all loyal citizens. Through its actions, the government set a precedent that restrictions can and should be placed on university research. Here is a striking example of how one Buddhist administrator looked directly to the Japanese state for a model of how to manage “dangerous thought.”

Turning to Kaneko, Shimotsuma argues that just as “anarchism” is an unacceptable research conclusion in the context of a public university system, so is “heresy” an unacceptable research conclusion for Shin scholars. As for the definition of heresy, Shimotsuma avoids doctrinal discussion altogether. Instead, he emphasizes that the Ōtani constitution, like those of all other denominations of Shin Buddhism, defines the Chief Abbot as ultimate arbiter on doctrine, a provision that is the very basis for the unity of the sect. Shimotsuma thus defends the “doctrinal authorities” system in terms of its function and legal basis. It is significant that Shimotsuma leaves out any mention of the historical and theological basis of the Chief Abbot’s authority—his blood descent from Shinran. At least in this public form, Shimotsuma and his
traditionalist peers did not find it prudent to emphasize this doctrine of blood lineage, which
pointed simultaneously to the sect’s feudal past and to the nation’s modern imperial institution.

Regarding the new field of Shin studies, Shimotsuma notes that certain individuals
doubt whether such studies are truly an “academic field” and thus deserving of “freedom of
research.” He replies that although sectarian studies must promote sectarian goals and
conform to established teachings, it is nonetheless an academic discipline in that it “applies
scientific organization to its materials” and “pursues formally philosophical methods.”

Therefore, it should be allotted some degree of freedom of research. In this acknowledgement
of Shin studies as a legitimate field of study rooted in scientific and philosophical methods, we
see the Ōtani authorities’ desire to support the growth of modern Shin studies. On the other
hand, Shimotsuma ascribes limits to that freedom:

[Ōtani University] was established for the sake of the nation and the sect in connection
with the training of necessary scholars and preachers... In our nation, whether it be
government-run, public, or private, absolutely independent universities and absolutely free
research do not exist. Without even having the power of economic independence, to
dream of absolute freedom of research without any interference into research or
classes by those who funded the university’s establishment is completely mistaken.

For Shimotsuma, the university is economically dependent on the sect and bound by its mission
of serving the nation and the sect. Such factors necessarily restrict the freedom of Ōtani
professors.

Shimotsuma concludes his article series with a discussion of the relationship between
academic theory and heresy. For Shimotsuma, “heresy” is a matter of faith while “sectarian
study” is a matter of “interpretation.” Thus, even academic theories that “misinterpret” the sect’s teachings are not the same as “heresy.” However, on a practical level, because certain scholars’ interpretations of scripture can invite wrong understanding and heretical faith, it is right for the sect to discipline such scholars.

Like the Chūgai nippō editorials, Shimotsuma wrote these articles on the Kaneko affair simultaneous to writing articles on the Communist Party Incident and government “thought guidance” campaign. On May 2nd, he had contributed to Chūgai nippō a front-page article entitled “Concerning the Communist Party Incident.” There he first stated that “the extermination of Communist party thought is probably impossible.” One reason for this is that “the powers of the state have limits; it is difficult to directly penetrate into the depths of [the people’s] thought.” Not questioning the desirability of the state “guiding the thought” of the people, Shimotsuma only notes the difficulty in doing so. He then argues for the need for a unified response by politicians, lawyers, religious leaders, political commentators, educators, and scholars in combating Communist thought. However, he is skeptical this will be achieved so long as socialist thought holds sway among those groups, leading many “to deny the capitalist system,” “to oppose the existence of a state controlled by non-laborers,” “to argue that religion is the opiate of the people,” to view educators as “running dogs for the capitalists,” and so forth. Finally, analyzing Communist Party planning documents uncovered by the recent government raids, Shimotsuma argues that the Communists’ next course of action will likely be to try to plunder the land and wealth of Buddhist temples. He concludes, “Needless to say, temples’
power of resistance does not lie in temple buildings; it ultimately lies in the ‘faith’ of priests and laypeople.” This article reveals Shimotsuma’s antagonism toward socialist thought as well as his authoritarian, anti-democratic perspective.

On July 8th, he contributed another front-page article entitled “Guiding ‘Thought Guidance,’” which sharply critiques the “Thought Guidance” policy proposals and adoptions by the Interior Minister, the Cultural Affairs Minister, the Osaka Shrine and Temple Division, and the Kyoto Yamashina Elementary School Principals Association. He critiques the national policy proposals for their inconsistency regarding whether the state would manage religion directly or merely provide assistance to religious organizations and also for their vagueness as to which religious doctrines and practices would be promoted. Regarding the latter problem, he comments, “The nenbutsu is either thought to be a practice that assures rebirth or a practice that must be repeated incessantly. Which view will be adopted and which rejected? If one presumes that assistance provided to heretics (itansha 異端者) only yields sinfulness and evil, then isn’t it impossible to pay reverence uniformly [to the variety of religious beliefs]?”

Shimotsuma then mocks the regional and local policies as means of “compelling people to urinate who already feel the urge to do so.” That is to say, the general promotion of shrine visitation only encourages people to continue praying for material benefits, such as romance or success in business; it does nothing to advance spiritualism or patriotism. In conclusion, Shimotsuma offers seven startling, unrealistic policy recommendations: 1) stop the import of Communism from Russia and hedonism from the US; 2) transfer the objects of kami worship to
government offices and distribute shrine assets to the proletariat; 3) give a death sentence to any government officials who steal public property; 4) strictly punish anyone wearing non-cotton clothes; 5) strictly punish anyone eating any kind of fish, poultry, or meat; 6) strictly punish anyone living in a dwelling that exceeds a certain limit; and 7) prohibit Christianity. These astounding proposals would suppress foreign ideologies and non-Buddhist forms of religiosity, crack down on government corruption, and impose strict austerity measures on the people. This further reveals Shimotsuma’s conservative, authoritarian political views as well as his general intolerance for religions other than Shin Buddhism.

In summary, Shimotsuma’s articles on the Kaneko affair, like those of Chūgai nippō’s editor(s), refrain from discussing the particulars of Kaneko’s scholarship. Instead they address the general question of the sect’s right to censor or otherwise discipline Shin scholars. He explicitly considers the government’s past suppression of “dangerous thought” in order to find a model for how the Ōtani authorities should proceed, concluding that the application of limits to the “free inquiry” of Kaneko and other Shin scholars is justified. Just as Marxist thought threatened the Japanese state, so too might Kaneko’s theories threaten Shin Buddhism. In all three articles discussed here, Shimotsuma shows little interest in understanding alternate religious or political viewpoints. From the outset, he places his trust in existing political and

\[42\] Perhaps most surprising is the recommendation to punish those eating fish or meat, for the Shin sect historically allowed all its members to do this in contrast to other sects. Shimotsuma is probably promoting this austerity measure for its potential benefits to the economy rather than for any concern about harming animals or religious discipline.
religious authorities (specifically those political and religious authorities he agrees with) to govern the lives and thought of their citizens or members. The only question for Shimotsuma is how best to do so. As in the case of the Chūgai nippō, it is hard to say whether Shimotsuma’s religious views inform his political views or vice versa.

Students’ Perspectives

On June 12th, 1928, Ōtani University president Inaba Masamaru gave an address to the university community to inform it of Kaneko’s “voluntary” resignation. His address, and the subsequent one-hour question and answer session, also revealed that he and the other ten university leaders who had previously resigned had consented to a process of unconditional arbitration, whereby the brother of the current Chief Abbot of the denomination had dictated terms of a settlement. What the university leaders won through the process is unclear; what is clear is that their resignations were withdrawn as a result. When the assembly had ended and the university professors had exited, the following reportedly occurred:

Suddenly a student appeared on the stage and adamantly striking the table, called out to the students filling the hall that it is easy to imagine how the university president and leaders must be feeling, yet this way of resolving the problem only represents defilement of the university and surrender to moneyed influence. Many students then stood up in agreement, and tears streaming down their faces, they urged on the hall of students to sweep away the ugliness of their capitalistic sect, defeat the moneyed tyrants, and fight with all their might for the freedom of study. A thunderous storm of applause went on and on. It was like an impromptu general student assembly, and each class formed committees and got to work preparing for the battle. (Ōtani Daigaku shinbun, June 22, 1928)
From this account, it seems that certain Ōtani University students understood the Kaneko affair in terms of a battle between the “moneyed tyrants” of their “capitalistic sect” and themselves, defenders of freedom. On June 6th, the students had previously held an all-student assembly and drafted a mission statement, declaring their support for the university leaders who had resigned and for the principle of freedom of study. Following the rally described above, they met with President Inaba and other university officials to inquire further into the reasons for Kaneko’s resignation and for the withdrawal of the eleven university leaders’ resignations. These meetings convinced the majority of students to discontinue the movement so as not to endanger the university itself. A group of second year students from the Buddhist Studies track persisted, submitting a further petition to the President Inaba. That petition demanded 1) the establishment of an organization dedicated to the protection of freedom of study; 2) the establishment of a lectureship for Kaneko at the university; 3) clarification of the reason for the withdrawal of the eleven university leaders’ resignations; and 4) the establishment of a deliberative organization composed of student representatives that would have a role in the university’s administration. In response, university officials stated their acceptance of only the first and third of these demands. The student protesters disbanded their group the following day, issuing a declaration that concluded as follows:

We hereby swear that this school to the last ought to be a palace of truth and freedom and that we will earnestly strive for this. In sadness, we decide to halt the movement to defend Professor Kaneko. Finally, we make this warning, that if we desire the true revival of this university, let us help it attain economic independence—otherwise, it will mean suicide for the university. (Ōtani Daigaku shinbun, June 18, 1928)
The students were persuaded that protesting Kaneko’s exit from the university was a lost cause and that their fight ought to turn toward addressing the more fundamental problem: without economic independence, academic freedom could never be secured.

There was a basis for the students’ economic, vaguely Marxist interpretation of the Kaneko affair—the incident had been instigated by the complaints of a wealthy layman and escalated due to the actions of the sect’s accounting committee. Yet it is easy to imagine other ways this conflict might have unfolded. The students might have ignored the matter or reacted less dramatically; focused their attention on doctrinal or methodological issues related to sectarian studies; turned their anger on the Chief Abbot, the senior Jitōryō scholars, or the university leadership; or sided with the sect against Kaneko. To understand why the students responded as they did, it is necessary to consider the broader historical context.

The period from 1928 to 1932 was Japan’s so-called “age of chronic student disturbances.” Henry Smith explains this “tremendous, unprecedented wave of student rebellion” in terms of a long-standing economic depression (which only worsened in the decade’s final years), the psychological stresses of an increasingly competitive school system, and the conscious agitation of radical students in response to the massive state suppression of March 1928 (Smith 1972, 214-5). Burgeoning intellectual interest in the “social sciences” (dominated by Marxism) in the late 1920s was also a factor, and in this regard, Ōtani University was no exception. “Social studies” (shakaigaku 社会学) was a central part of the university’s
The following reminiscence of Ōtani thinker Yasuda Rijin, a student involved in the 1928 protests, suggests that interest in Marxism was pervasive on Ōtani University’s campus at the time.

It was an extraordinary age on the eve of the Manchurian Incident. It was a time when enthusiasm for research on Marxist theory was overwhelming among the students of the university and preparatory school. Also, Kyoto was the scene of a somewhat wild faith movement in Shinran among the students. (ODH, vol. 1: 358-9)

Although it is possible to imagine how the booming popularity of Shinran in the 1920s might have figured into the conflict over Kaneko (Kaneko and the Shin modernists’ work contributed to and mediated that trend), all the evidence I have found shows that enthusiasm for Marxist theory was more relevant.

Below I present four articles from the Ōtani University newspaper preceding and during the Kaneko affair that corroborate Yasuda’s statement and show the influence of Marxism on the thought of Ōtani University students. The first discusses a “Religious Movement Research Association” that combined study of “proletariat economics” with “modern Shin studies.” The second and third discuss the government’s “thought guidance” campaign and the Communist Party Incident from Marxist standpoints. The last analyzes the

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43 “Social studies” and “economics” were taught at Ōtani University in 1903 ("Mai Gakunen Kaku Gakka Tannin Hyō," 1901-1911). When the university relocated to Kyoto in 1911, Kyoto Imperial University professor Yoneda Shōtarō 米田正太郎 (1873-1945) was brought in to lecture on social studies, and in the 1920s, the revised curriculums created in response to Ōtani University’s 1922 promotion reserved a place for "social studies" among the required courses (ODH, vol. 1: 321-331). Although we do not know what was taught in these classes, it is at least important to note that social studies were an essential part of the curriculum at this Buddhist sectarian university.
Kaneko affair from a Marxist perspective, calling for the establishment of a student representative body.

In a February 10th article, Matsubara Yūzen 松原祐善 (1906–1980)⁴⁴, a student of Soga Ryōjin’s, describes the recent founding of the Religious Movement Research Association (Shūkyō Undō Kenkyūkai 宗教運動研究会) as an explicit response to the rise of Marxism:

Previously, seeing that Marxists were trying to “light a fire on top of ice,” we organized a new religious research group. On the basis of our claim that religion is not the opiate of the masses but rather “a method of practice for realizing one’s independent self,” we have for the past three months met twice monthly for discussions of faith and for a reading group concerned with the study of proletarian economics.

Matsubara’s metaphor of “lighting a fire on top of ice” (hyōjō nenka 氷上燃火) comes from Tanluan’s Jingtulun zhu, in which Tanluan describes the futility of trying to kindle the mind of desiring rebirth in the Pure Land oneself—the ice will melt, and the fire will be extinguished by the water (SSJ, 420). Matsubara’s use of this metaphor implies that Marxists have the right goal but are trying to accomplish it all wrong. Matsubara’s group was clearly founded not to combat Marxism but rather to complement it. Both groups are concerned with economic justice and the wellbeing of the proletariat class, yet Matsubara’s group is skeptical that Marxism will accomplish anything without the aid of religion.

⁴⁴ The author’s name is actually listed as Matsubara Yoshi 松原善, but this is clearly either a misprint or a pen name. Matsubara Yūzen 松原祐善 was an ardent follower of Soga’s and Kaneko’s who was a second year student in the Buddhist studies department at Ōtani University at this time (Mizushima 2010, 316). He was one of the four students responsible for founding Kōbō Gakuen in 1930.
The article goes on to answer critiques that two socialist thinkers had directed toward their group. For example, Matsubara states:

At first glance, one might perceive great strength in the arguments against religion by socialists, who use as their weapon materialist dialectics. Yet I do not think theories of atheism or materialism pose any danger for Shinran’s teachings, which take non-discrimination as the essence.\(^{45}\)

Matsubara’s point is that Shinran’s teachings do not rest on any theoretical basis—theism, spiritualism, or otherwise; rather, they rest on the very opposite—a mind devoid of discrimination and theoretical calculation. Thus, the socialist arguments against religion miss the mark.

In his conclusion, Matsubara outlines the two methods by which his group seeks to carry forward its mission:

In general, our movement takes two directions. The first is to try to bring universal validity to faith in Shinran’s teachings through the construction of a religious-philosophy-like Shin studies (shūkyō-tetsugaku-teki Shinshūgaku). An important motivation for us in this regard was the progress of contemporary scholarship. The other sort of ossified study of the teachings is no longer the true study of the teachings and is nothing more than a commentarial study that conducts stale analyses...

The other direction is to try to reform the content of religion at ordinary temples on the basis of social awareness and to improve the social order on the basis of true Shin studies. Think of how pitiable it is that Shin temples, which originally were without property, today have death registers (kakochō 過去帳) as their only capital and are maintained solely on the basis of an etiquette of economic exchange. Moreover, priests who are supposed to be “neither monk nor layman” have become professionalized and are always threatening certain groups of people, rousing their

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\(^{45}\) The phrase “take non-discrimination as the essence” (gi naki o gi to su 義なきを義とす) comes from Hōnen, and appears in a slightly different form in Chapter 10 of Shinran’s Tannishō.
hope for a better life in the next world and peddling tickets of admission to this other world on the basis of their scriptural reading...

Truly, Shinran’s teachings are not the opiate of the masses. The vows of Dharmākara Bodhisattva of ten kalpas ago are not simply a story of the past, but are active in the eternal present...

Matsubara places the construction of a modernist Shin studies and the social-economic reform of Shin temples side by side as related projects. They are connected insofar as (mistaken) emphasis on an afterlife underlies Shin temple priests’ exploitation of laypeople. Thus, Soga Ryōjin’s revelation that Dharmākara Bodhisattva’s vows are accessible here and now in the “eternal present” contains the potential for social reform, Matsubara implies. This article thus presents a clear case of Ōtani University students enthusiastic about modern Shin studies and sympathetic toward Marxist goals of reforming the economic basis of society in favor of the proletariat.

On May 5th, a third-year student using the penname O Inaura (お・いなうら) published an article entitled “Our Attitude Regarding the Communist Party Incident.” The article begins by discussing the spread of Marxism from the intelligentsia to society at large in the wake of World War I. According to Inaura, with this transition came a departure from the crucial problem of how abstract theory and revolutionary practice ought to be balanced toward

46 His family name was Inaura (probably 稲浦), and his personal name began with the syllable “O.” He is not giving his full name or its kanji due to the controversial nature of the article’s content.
an over-emphasis on taking action. Inaura then reveals how he sees his own role in regard to these developments and the recent Communist Party Incident:

There arises a need to investigate what firm basis there is for the theories held by activists. This is why we students recognize the necessity for “social science research.” Shameful as it is, social science students were recently implicated in the Communist Party Incident. I would attribute the reason for this to their mistaking their true purpose, which I just described. Their infantile resort to violence was not due to “reality determining their consciousness” [as they would have it] but rather to “temporary intellectual trends influencing their consciousness” via faith in Fukumoto-ism.47

Inaura does not promote the study of social science merely for the purposes of understanding the thought of the enemy. Rather, he views Marxist thought as giving expression to the experiences and desires of the people and consequently feels a sense of obligation to investigate its social scientific basis. He unhesitatingly condemns those who took up ranks with the Communist Party for falling under the spell of Communist leader Fukumoto Kazuo and for their supposed readiness to engage in violence. Yet his article goes on to clearly express support for a (non-violent) socialist agenda against perceived reactionary tendencies of the Japanese state. His conclusion also raises the question of Buddhism’s significance in relation to these issues:

47 Fukumoto Kazuo 福本和夫 was the leading Marxist theorist at the time. He was among those arrested in the 1928 incident and subsequently imprisoned for 14 years.
Two thousand years ago, Śākyamuni taught that time periods change according to the schema “true, semblance, and final.” It is true that living in an ancient age, he was unable to recognize that time periods change according to a “dialectical” process. Yet statesmen nowadays do not even recognize that time periods change. They presume the laws created by their forebears are legitimate even in the present. Especially in the present reactionary Tanaka [Giichi] cabinet, there are those who would try to control the sun as it goes to set in the west.

Time periods always change according to a struggle between two [forces] opposed to one another whereby that which ought to arise does so through a process of sublation. All you religious followers who are living in the present but contemplating eternity, are you not hiding within a castle of ideals? Will you not enter the real world?

The records of Shinran’s life show him working for change in the real world in the face of abuse and scorn. He lived a true life that pointed to the historical age that was to come while also contemplating the other world of eternity. We ought to try to live according to Shinran’s life as reflected in the mirror of present reality.

Inaura presents Śākyamuni’s teaching of the “three ages” of Buddhist teachings as basically in line with the Marxist understanding of historical change (ignoring the obvious discrepancy between Śākyamuni’s theory of devolution and Marxists’ theory of evolution). Śākyamuni becomes a proto-social scientist attuned to how the world evolves through a regular process.

Inaura then presents Shinran as a model for social activism that remains mindful of “the other world of eternity.” Admittedly, Inaura’s comments on Buddhism are somewhat cursory, seemingly tacked on to appease or persuade his audience of Buddhist students. Nonetheless, the article is significant in demonstrating the trend among Ōtani University students to be sympathetic toward Marxism and critical of the government.

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48 Jpn. Shōzōmatsu 正像末. This traditional Buddhist doctrine states that the “dharma” (i.e. Buddha’s teachings) passes from a “true dharma” period through a “semblance dharma” period to a “final dharma” period, before disappearing from the world. See Nattier (1991).
Also on May 5th, an anonymous column “What is Thought Guidance?” was published that critiqued the recent government campaign. The column begins:

In all quarters, one now sees the policy of “thought guidance” being proclaimed in response to the Communist Party Incident. Lacking any proper understanding of the incident itself and avoiding any coming to terms with the true nature of the incident, this policy only works to hoodwink our nation’s people. By promoting formalistic, seemingly praise-worthy behavior, it would plunder the living spirit of our nation’s people that ought to be free and vigorous. Seeing these trends, I cannot bear the extreme absurdity of it.

The author critiques the “thought guidance” campaign on two fronts: it ignores the real problems that lay behind the Communist Party Incident, and it tries to enforce patriotic behavior, which ought to arise freely. As examples of the government’s “absurd” effort to promote patriotic behavior, the author notes instructions to police officers to visit and worship at shrines each morning, the modeling of patriotic behavior by public and honorary officials (kankōri meiyoshoku 官公吏名誉職), radio broadcasts by the governor, and the creation of shrine worship organizations. Regarding the real problems that lay behind the Communist Party Incident, the author notes that it is not simply a matter of the “degradation of thought.” Rather there are economic, social, and political causes, which the purveyors of “thought guidance” would do good to reflect upon. The column concludes as follows:

What is most concerning is how the thought of our nation’s people has been made ugly, wily, and desperate by the infinitely vile Diet, which has fundamentally betrayed the people’s trust. We see a need of thought guidance less for our nation’s people and more for public and honorary officials.
Like Inaura, the author of this column presumes that Communists are in the wrong, but he is most concerned with broader social and political problems that have led people to turn to Communism in the first place. His suggestion that government officials are the ones in need of “thought guidance” resonates with Shimotsuma’s critique of the same campaign and with the Chūgai nippō editors’ challenge to Ōtani organization officials. This article is consistent with other student articles in evidencing a concern with poverty, an antagonism toward politicians, and a critique of government attempts to regulate the “spiritual” lives of the people.

On May 20th, an editorial was published entitled “Proposal for a Representative Student Assembly” that critiqued the Ōtani establishment and called for student action in defense of Kaneko and intellectual freedom. The editorial begins with a brief Marxist-inspired discussion of historical change through the development of class-consciousness:

People living under a soon-to-collapse feudal system always long for and dream of a world of absolute freedom because of the [economic] substructure of the time period and the unjust oppression it produces...49

These empty longings and dreams of individuals develop into public opinion through awareness of group unity. Through the addition of a theoretical, scientific foundation, this is able to develop into material power.

The author’s discussion of the “substructure of the time period,” an emerging “awareness of group unity,” the role of a “theoretical, scientific foundation,” and “material power” clearly

49 The phrase “substructure of the time period” (jidai no kasō kenchiku) refers to the Marxist theory that society is composed of an economic “base” and a cultural, political, and ideological “superstructure.” The leading Japanese Marxist theorist at the time, Fukumoto Kazuo, discussed this in terms of “substructure” (kasō kenchiku) and “superstructure” (jōsō kenchiku) (Fukumoto 1926).
suggest a Marxist orientation. It is therefore not surprising that the article was censored in numerous instances, with the original text replaced by dashes. In spite of that censorship, the author is able to get across much of his Marxist critique of the Ōtani establishment and its treatment of Kaneko.

For example, in the second section, the author turns his attention to sectarian politics:

Reflecting back upon our sectarian organization, on the empire of Honganji, one can see that it is in fact a feudal country on its way to future collapse. Although it pretends to have a constitutional representative system and a legislative assembly, that is only like a cat trying to draw a lion.

The author’s analysis implies that the sect’s inevitable transition from “feudal,” authoritarian rule to democratic rule requires a revolution whereby the old system is overthrown. From that perspective, the gradual steps the sect has taken toward representative government are mere posturing. Following a censored passage that is difficult to reconstruct, the argument proceeds as follows (censored text is denoted by dashes):

...one can only be a “priest” insofar as one stubbornly adheres to tradition and acts on behalf of a class that rules by force (ien kaikyū 威厭階級). In such a time, needless to say, the sectarian organization is controlled and dragged along by its ears by a bunch of “rich crooks” (kanemochi no kusaregashira 金持の腐れ頭).

--- this time, there is the case of a couple of professors, highly reputed within and outside the sect, who acted with no interests other than the pursuit of truth. On account of their thoroughly pure logic, fearless courage, and deep-seated passion, they infringed upon sectarian norms regarding scripture. This supplied the means for a partisan sectarian battle launched by the low-down group of “rotten money grubbers” with petit-bourgeois consciousness.

All you students working to pursue truth and defend freedom, stand up! This is a place of learning that ought to be free. Let us plan our escape from this imprisoning, feudal disciplinary control! Regardless of what [high] position such persons may have,
if they revolt against the clear truth, we must gather together on the side of truth, and bravely take on the matter and ———

In this passage, the author depicts the Ōtani establishment and the majority of its priests as being “dragged along by its ears” by those with money; in contrast, he depicts Kaneko Daiei and other modernist Shin scholars as interested in nothing but the “pursuit of truth.” Again, the language of “class,” “petit bourgeois consciousness,” and “escape from imprisoning, feudal disciplinary control” is all suggestive of a Marxist orientation.

In the third and final section, the author speaks of the urgent need for an officially recognized legislative assembly with the power to make judgments on incidents within the sect’s schools. Only this way will the outcomes of such incidents derive from “legal processes” rather than the whims of a “contemptible group.” As a first step forward, the author urges students to take action toward establishing a representative student assembly to stand alongside the university’s teacher’s association and staff association.

The Ōtani University newspaper articles discussed here were all written by students influenced by Marxist thought, which was then sweeping Japan’s intellectual world. In the first article, Matsubara Yūzen described a Religious Movement Research Association formed out of enthusiasm for modernist Shin studies and its potential for helping to serve the proletariat cause through the reform of the temple system. In the second article, Inaura expressed his opinion that social science research was a necessary project and that a certain affinity existed between dialectical materialism, Śākyamuni Buddha’s teachings on the decline of the dharma,
and Shinran’s supposed social activism. In the third article, an anonymous author lampooned the government’s efforts at “thought guidance.” And in the fourth article, an anonymous author framed the Kaneko affair in terms of a battle between truth-seekers and a feudalistic Ōtani institution beholden to its petit-bourgeois patrons. This outline of part of Ōtani’s intellectual climate helps explain why the Kaneko affair was characterized as “the Communist Party Incident of our sect” and why the student response to the Kaneko affair unfolded as it did. Matsubara’s group may have had some interest in Kaneko and Soga’s research, but the stronger impetus for Ōtani University students’ protests seems to have been a concern with intellectual freedom and its suppression by moneyed influence. Moreover, for at least some Ōtani students, the Kaneko affair was interpreted in terms of Marxist class warfare. Viewing the Kaneko affair through the lens of contemporary events, these students saw Kaneko as one more champion of the proletariat being suppressed by the violence of a still feudal state under the influence of the bourgeois.

Scholars’ Perspectives

Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851-1929) was an early pioneer in Buddhist studies who famously propounded (and was made to resign his status as priest for) the “theory that the Mahayana was not taught by the Buddha” (Daijō hibussetsu ron 大乗非仏説論). Murakami weighed in on the Kaneko debate with a three-part article series in Chūgai nippō (June 13-16). His articles are written from his perspective as the former Ōtani University president, offering
guidance to administrators. His perspective thus straddles the bounds between administrator and scholar, sometimes addressing the pragmatics of the situation, sometimes dipping into doctrinal issues. The following comments display Murakami’s administrative perspective:

As an administrator, one’s first thought is to try to let sleeping dogs lie, to try to conclude the matter quietly. When I was still in office, I even had such thoughts. But at this point, with the matter already announced to the world through the newspapers, and with Kaneko himself denying that he can see anything wrong in his thinking, the matter can no longer be concluded quietly. In quietness, there exists a sense of ambiguity, and that cannot stand. One must make a clear judgment of right and wrong.

As an administrator, Murakami feels that a clear response is required now that news reports have publicized the dispute. Before coming to any discussion of Kaneko’s work, Murakami makes clear his recommendation for harsh treatment of Kaneko and those who support him, even if it means mass resignations and a temporary school closure. Yet he also expresses skepticism that university officials like President Inaba or Superintendent Fujioka will take this strong approach insofar as they and Kaneko are likeminded (i.e. they are all in the “modernist” camp).

Murakami proceeds to depict Kaneko as an arrogant, naïve young scholar out to make a name for himself with theories that would “destroy our sect at its roots.” Referencing a well-known saying from the Brahma Net Sutra (Jpn. Bonmōkyō), which also appears in Shinran’s letters, 50

50 For discussion of Murakami’s conservative turn in later years and his critique of Kaneko, see Ward (2005). Murakami had served as Ōtani University’s president from 1926 until April 1928 when he resigned due to illness. He expressed regret at having failed to quietly bring closure to the Kaneko incident while in office.
he declares Kaneko to be “the worm in the lion’s body” (shishi shinchū no mushi 獅子身中の虫) (CWS, vol. 1: 566). The astounding aspect of Murakami’s critique is that he piles insult upon insult after admitting he has not even read The Idea of the Pure Land. Instead of taking up the content of Kaneko’s works, he judges Kaneko on other bases, such as his referring to Shinran as “Shinran” instead of the more respectful “Saint Shinran.” Through such arguments, the well-reputed senior scholar showed himself to be out of step with the spirit of the times that valued fair and open academic dispute. For these reasons, Murakami’s articles provoked a series of critiques in the ensuing issues of Chūgai nippō, both in the anonymous opening editorials and in full-length articles.51

The following passage gives a sense of Murakami’s flippant treatment of Kaneko’s work and rather unfounded attack on his character:

There are people who will ask whether anyone can really believe that in a far-off corner in the world a hundred thousand million lands to the West there exists a Pure Land of infinite bliss. This argument has been ongoing since Song dynasty China. I don’t think there is any need to listen to the new explanations of Kaneko now. However, I am reminded of the explanations of our late Master [Shaku] Unshō, who said, “If one does not understand the mind-only Amida and Pure Land, one will not understand the existence of the world of infinite bliss a hundred thousand million lands to the West. And if one doesn’t understand the world of infinite bliss a hundred thousand million lands to the west, one will not comprehend the mind-only Amida and Pure Land.” Master Unshō was a man of the Shingon sect, but he pursued Tendai studies and was famous for his firmness in upholding the precepts. I would like to relay these words to

51 For example, see critiques by the lead columnlist (June 17); by Rinzai Zen priest Ozeki Hankō’s 尾関本孝 (June 21-22); and by Ōtani University graduate Fujii Sōsen 藤井草宣 (June 26). Murakami apparently took these critiques to heart, for he went on to write a book Ga kan Shinshū 我観真宗 (Shin Buddhism As I See It) (1929) that explicitly responded to the content of Kaneko’s work.
Mr. Kaneko. Although it is rude to say, Mr. Kaneko, could you please advance a step further in your studies? It seems you are still wet with milk, unaware of how infantile and immature your studies still are. Denying the Western Pure Land and saying this is your philosophy... Perhaps you are just trying to shock people’s ears. Perhaps this turns the ears of half-wise, half-liberated young students, but it won’t prompt even a laugh from the wise. It is blather that licks at the dregs of Zen master Zhijue and Master Tianru of China. When your studies mature somewhat, you will refrain from saying such things.

Murakami thus sidesteps any substantial doctrinal discussion of the nature of the Pure Land by gesturing to the long history of the debate and by referencing the ambiguous aphorism of a respected, traditionalist priest. His subsequent assault on Kaneko displays his prejudice against younger scholars. It also evaluates Kaneko’s work as “licking at the dregs” of two medieval Chinese Chan (Jp. Zen) masters, whose notions on Pure Land teachings hold little status within the Shin tradition. Murakami shows no interest in Kaneko’s theories or in the growing field of modern Shin studies. Instead, he emphasizes the need to recall the glorious tradition of sectarian scholarship during the Tokugawa period that laid the foundation for the modern Ōtani organization and its university.

52 “Zen master Zhijue” 智覚禅師 is an appellation for Song dynasty monk Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (Jpn. Enju) (904-975) who is famous for combining Zen and Pure Land teachings (Zengaku Daijiten Hensanjo 1985, 111). Shinran’s Kyōgōshinshō contains a short quotation of Yongming’s: “Chih-chüeh of the Ch’an school praises the practicer of the nembutsu: ‘How wondrous! The power of the Buddha surpasses conceivability; never has there been such a power’” (CWS, vol. 1: 123).

“Master Tianru” 天如和尚 refers to Yuan dynasty Rinzai Zen monk Weize 惟則 (Jpn. Isoku) (unknown-1354), who is known for a work on the Pure Land called Jingtu huo wen 净土或問. He is not mentioned in Shinran’s writings.
Murakami’s perspective on the significance of Tashiro Jūemon is also notable. Where modernists see the unwarranted intrusions of a financially powerful donor into doctrinal and academic affairs, Murakami sees the ineptitude of the sect authorities:

Is what I have heard really true that the raising of this matter was according to the call of a layman? This is truly most shocking and even shameful. That it was a layman who was paying attention and first noticed this, isn’t this the most outrageous thing? One cannot help but say that the authorities’ lack of attainment in sectarian study is self-evident.

Elsewhere, Murakami takes up the issue of the sect’s obligations to donors like Tashiro:

The Honganji... is not preserved by a school but by the General Assembly Hall (Sōgaisho). It is not preserved by scholars of philosophy, science, English, French, and so on but by the faithful of the various places who gather in the General Assembly Hall. Without the treasury that is gathered from the donations of the old men and women of the countryside who come to the General Assembly Hall and listen to the preaching of the dharma, there would be no salary for anyone at the university, from the president on down to the office boys, custodians, and guards. I wish the various professors of Ōtani University would take this to heart a little.

Murakami implies that Kaneko, in philosophizing upon the nature of the Pure Land, has lost sight of his proper mission to serve the masses of countryside Shin believers who are less educated. How do they benefit from his abstruse renderings of Shin teachings? Murakami’s views thus dovetail with Shimotsuma’s: both reject the principle of complete freedom of study by appealing to scholars’ obligations to those who financially support them.

In summary, Murakami’s articles omit any actual analysis of Kaneko’s scholarship, proceeding directly to the conclusion that Kaneko has denied the Pure Land and should be exiled from the sect. Like Shimotsuma, he emphasizes the obligations of Ōtani University
professors to lay donors. Unlike the Chūgai nippō editors or Ōtani University students, he sees no problem in the fact that a wealthy layman instigated the affair.

Tada Kanae, as one of Kiyozawa Manshi’s three foremost followers, was a long-time friend and colleague of Kaneko and Soga. However, in 1914, Tada experienced a crisis of faith and turned his back on Kiyozawa and joined the “doctrinal authority” camp (Kaku 2005). He spent the majority of his career as a temple priest in Aichi prefecture rather than in the corridors of Ōtani power in Kyoto, yet his stature is signified by the sect’s awarding him the title of sōkōshi (honorary lecture master) in 1941 (a title awarded to Kiyozawa Manshi and Akegarasu Haya only in 1967). Five years before writing his much-noted critique of Kiyozawa (Tada 1933), Tada offered the most prominent doctrinal critique of Kaneko’s The Idea of the Pure Land in an eight-part article series printed in Chūgai nippō (June 17–26). Tada’s articles include rather thorough and fair-minded summaries of many of Kaneko’s arguments in The Idea of the Pure Land as well as frequent discussion of and quotation from Kaneko’s former works. It thus represents the most extensive and clear doctrinal response by a traditionalist to Kaneko’s work.

Tada’s critique begins from the assertion that Kaneko has confused “personal realization” (koshō 己証) with “personal understanding” (jige 自解). According to Tada, the former results from “listening and reflecting on” (monshi 聞思) the teachings, which causes the “transmitted dharma” to descend into oneself; in contrast, “personal understanding” rises up from one’s own calculations rooted in self-power. Tada claims that Kaneko’s failure to properly
listen to the teachings and entrust to Other Power is revealed concretely in *The Idea of the Pure Land*’s analysis of Vasubandhu’s *Jingtulun* (Jpn. *Jōdoron*) and more generally in Kaneko’s frequent exhortations to “introspect” and seek out “awakening.” According to Tada, Kaneko has mistakenly presumed “awakening” and “entrusting” to be identical when in truth, “awakening” only comes about through the act of “entrusting” (June 19).

Tada expresses agreement with Kaneko’s explanations of “the Pure Land as Idea world” and “the Pure Land as ideal world,” but disagreement with his explanation of “the Pure Land as existing world.” After an extensive summary of Kaneko’s argument in that regard, Tada offers the following assessment:

Kaneko’s work is just like peering into a well and speaking about the sky. It is a product that arises from the impossibility of trying to grasp Shin teachings within principles that are based in personal introspection. His work would make Shin Buddhism into a kind of introspective philosophy. At the very least, it would make Shin

53 The first section of Kaneko’s *The Idea of the Pure Land*, which details Kaneko’s personal views of the Pure Land, is written as a commentary on the opening lines of Vasubandhu’s *Jingtulun*. Kaneko’s commentary explicitly ignores the first two characters of Vasubandhu’s text (*seson* 世尊), in which Vasubandhu calls out the Buddha’s name. Tada interprets this omission as evidence of a great gulf between Vasubandhu’s selfless mind of entrusting and Kaneko’s self-centered mind of calculation.

54 See Section 2.4 above.

55 This is a reference to a famous parable of the frog in the well from the “Autumn Floods” chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. In that parable, the limited knowledge of the world possessed by a frog who lives within a well is contrasted to that of a turtle who has come from the ocean (Watson 1964, 107-9). Although the parable is now referenced with the phrase “sitting in a well and looking at the sky” (za i kan ten 坐井觀天), the original parable does not say the frog is stuck at the bottom of the well, but rather that the frog is content living in and around a well (rather than seeking out the joys of the great ocean). This may explain why Tada says Kaneko’s work “peers into a well” rather than “peers out from a well” (Jpn. *I o ukagaite ama o kataru you ni* 井を覗いて天を語るやうに).
Buddhism into a gate of the so-called saintly path. It is certainly not work that comprehends the fundamental meaning of the rebirth of foolish people. (June 22)

In fact, Tada does not wholly disagree with the “product,” or content, of Kaneko’s introspective research. He later goes on to affirm Kaneko’s argument that the existence of the Pure Land cannot be understood in terms of ordinary notions of “being” and “non-being” (June 23). That is, Tada agrees with Kaneko that the existence and location of the Western Pure Land cannot be conceptualized in a naïve, geographical way. In expressing his disagreement, Tada returns again and again to Kaneko’s introspective method. Not only does an introspective method fail to place proper importance on the scriptures, according to Tada, but it transforms Shin Buddhism into a self-power discipline for “saintly” persons, unconnected to Shin’s original spirit of offering salvation to even foolish people. Here we see resonance with Murakami’s critique of Kaneko as blind to the needs of ordinary Shin believers. Employing a famous Buddhist analogy, Tada asserts that Shin teachings are not fingers pointing toward the moon; they are the moon itself (June 20). Tada accuses Kaneko of employing a methodology of trying to awaken oneself to the truth through introspective practice, whereas Shin teachings ought to be understood as that which reveals the truth to the faithful (June 23-24).

Considering his persistent critique of Kaneko’s research methods, we might expect Tada to oppose the development of modern Shin studies. Yet like Shimotsuma, Tada is supportive of and optimistic about the new discipline:

I also recognize the establishment of Shin studies and anticipate that research’s development. What is important in this research, of course, is one’s research approach.
Researchers of sectarian studies, just like general scientists, must always take up an impartial and selfless approach. That is to say, just as botanists who study the various plants reject their own subjective judgments and apply themselves to investigating the universal laws and the unique phenomena that describe the workings of those various plants... researchers of sectarian studies, taking up the true words of the Buddhas and the interpretations of the great patriarchs, must also reject personal discriminations and instead shed light on the unique meanings of those teachings and the principles that unify them... So-called freedom of research must be rooted in this selfless sincerity. This selfless, scientific research of sectarian studies will perfect sectarian studies and become the basis for actual practice. (June 21)

Like Shimotsuma, Tada acknowledges the validity of a modern Shin studies rooted in “scientific” methods. For Tada, however, Kaneko violates scientific principles insofar as he allows personal discriminations to enter into his research. Scientific objectivity here is defined as a matter of the researcher’s attitude and character (“selfless sincerity”). Essentially, Tada’s critique here takes the form of an attack on Kaneko’s character.

In the conclusion to his article series, Tada returns to the topic of modern Shin studies, expressing his own vision for how that discipline should be constituted:

[Shin] sectarian studies is not an ordinary discipline of study. It is the study of the great path of birth in the reward land accomplished by the Buddha’s vows. It is a study that casts off all of the workings of one’s own mind—whether it be introspection, reflection, despair, self awakening, prayer, and so on, every kind of cultivation through our thoughts, words, or deeds—and advances based on the great dharma that was granted us through the Buddha’s true teachings. (June 26)

In Tada’s model of Shin studies, the role of the individual scholar’s interpretation (associated with self-power) is extremely limited. The Buddha’s teachings have already been granted to Shin followers. The task of a Shin studies scholar is to cast off personal calculations and allow the teachings to clarify themselves.
In summary, Tada’s discussion of the Kaneko affair is unique in that it actually examined the contents and methods of Kaneko’s scholarship. His analysis is in agreement with Shimotsuma, Chūgai nippō editors, and the Ōtani University students (but in disagreement with Murakami) in recognizing the validity of the modern discipline of Shin studies. In contrast to Murakami, Tada’s doctrinal critique is not founded on an accusation that Kaneko has denied the existence of the Pure Land. Rather, he critiques Kaneko’s introspective method of study as inconsistent with the attitude of selfless, uncalculating entrusting and “listening” that ought to characterize Shin studies. Tada’s articles are also unique in nowhere mentioning the principle of freedom of study, the relationship between the university and the sect, or the role of lay donors. While the other journalists, administrators, and students had all been concerned with the political dimensions of the affair, Tada only considered doctrinal questions. These were two different discussions altogether.

Kaneko responded in his own defense first in a brief statement published both in Chūgai nippō (June 15) and the Ōtani University newspaper (June 22) and then in a 12-part, front-page Chūgai nippō article series (June 17-July 12) entitled “My Shin Studies,” which ran concurrently with Tada’s articles.56 In his initial statement, Kaneko begins by asserting that all of his research, including the work at the center of this controversy, is intended to correctly understand Shin

56 The full text of Kaneko’s initial statement and abbreviated texts of Kaneko’s articles are reproduced in Miharu (1990b).
teachings: “The Tathāgata became manifested through the Primal Vow; the Pure Land was adorned through the Primal Vow; and sentient beings are saved through the Primal Vow. The only purpose of Shin studies is to correctly understand the meaning of these teachings.” He goes on to defend the specifics of his writings on the Pure Land in response to the Jitōryō scholars’ concern that he may have “contradicted the teaching of ‘point West and posit the form’ and fallen into ‘self-nature mind-only’ views.” He admits that his introspective methodology may give this impression but insists that introspection leads beyond “self-nature mind-only” views. He concludes by expressing his commitment to proceed on his present research path, hoping that his work will be better understood in the future. Kaneko’s statement is notable for its focus on doctrinal matters and its reaffirmation of the contents and methods of his controversial research.

In the 12-part article series, Kaneko devotes the majority of his attention to the issue of his introspective research method rather than the contents of his theory of the Pure Land. He spends only one article responding to Murakami Senshō’s critique, restating his view that introspection into one’s own evilness and desire for rebirth in the Western Pure Land are two sides of the same coin. This may give Murakami the mistaken impression of a “self nature, mind-only” view, but the truth, according to Kaneko, is that introspection is actually the basis for transcending such views.

By contrast, Kaneko devotes six articles to the task of responding to Tada’s more substantial critiques. Kaneko distinguishes two basic methods of sectarian study: the first is to
make pronouncements on the meaning of the teachings by transmitting the results of past scholarship; the second is to strive to understand the teachings oneself, transmitting the spirit of past scholarship. The former method, according to Kaneko, presumes that the teachings are already understood and merely need to be received and transmitted. Kaneko makes the following objection to that approach:

According to Tada’s explanation, all one should do is receive the Buddha’s name (myōgō 名号) presented to one in the teachings. However, by just listening in that way, I cannot attain any kind of impression, but rather am left wondering in vain about the meanings of “good and wise teacher” and “have faith” and “Tathāgata” and “Buddha’s name.” (July 1)

Skeptical that scriptural language is transparent and can be passively “received,” Kaneko instead promotes active, introspective engagement with scripture and its relation to one’s inner self. In so doing, one makes scripture into one’s own “flesh” and “blood” and opens up the possibility for a personal encounter with the Tathāgata’s Primal Vow.

Kaneko notes he is often accused of arrogantly advancing his own innovative ideas about the teachings rather than obediently transmitting orthodox interpretations of the past. He responds that the presumption that one can speak for teachers of the past is itself arrogant, arriving at the following assessment of the difference between his and Tada’s approach: “My
Shin studies speaks for the inner yearnings of sentient beings, trying to understand the teachings; Tada’s Shin studies speaks for past teachers, trying to explain the teachings.”

In sum, Kaneko’s contributions to the discourse surrounding his heresy affair are almost exclusively concerned with academic, doctrinal questions. Specifically, he focuses on defending his introspective research method, not his theory of the Pure Land. This is further evidence that *The Idea of the Pure Land* was just a spark that ignited a conflict more fundamentally concerned with how and by whom Shin teachings would be studied. Regarding sectarian politics, Kaneko does argue that modern Shin studies scholars are intent on seeing Shin teachings brought to the world at large in contrast to those more narrowly focused on serving the immediate interests of the sect. Yet like Tada, he completely disregards the issues of freedom of study, the relationship between the university and the sect, and the role of lay donors. He also evidences no awareness of broader national events. Public doctrinal debates about the Pure Land and methods of Buddhist studies, initiated by Kaneko and Tada but eventually involving many other voices, was brought forth by all the publicity surrounding Kaneko’s heresy affair. That it to say, it occurred after that affair had largely been resolved and so had no bearing on the affair itself. Historically, it was religious and national politics—of which Tada and Kaneko appear blithely unaware—that largely determined the course of the affair; the doctrinal debates were only an afterthought.

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*Jpn.* 私の真宗学は大衆の内面的要求を代表して教法を領解しようとするものであり、多田氏の真宗学は、善知識を代表して教法を説き現わそうとするものである。
3.4 Conclusion

The Kaneko affair was resolved in a highly ambiguous way. Although the Jitōryō determined that Kaneko’s works contradicted sect teachings and their report was submitted to the Chief Abbot, the incident’s resolution took the form of Kaneko “voluntarily resigning” without any public verdict coming down from the Chief Abbot or Jitōryō. As Mizushima comments, “The sectarian institution avoided the debate on ‘heresy,’ and tried to reach a resolution by acting ‘administratively’ and as much as possible ‘neutrally’” (2010, 334-5). A similar pattern unfolded in relation to Soga Ryōjin’s “voluntary resignation” in 1930. Again the Ōtani authorities handled the situation administratively, avoiding public comment on Soga’s alleged heresy. Emblematic of this are the comments of Shimotsuma Kūkyō, then the very Head of Doctrinal Affairs, who faced questions at a sectarian assembly as to whether Soga had been punished for heresy. He responded, “I am not a sectarian scholar so I do not know whether it is heresy. But because [Soga’s] writings gave rise to controversy within our denomination and there was a fear that they would destroy the peace of doctrinal study, he graciously resigned, so this was an administrative matter” (ODH, vol. 1: 349). These incidents’ ambiguous, “administrative” resolutions makes sense given all the evidence presented above that it was not Kaneko’s theory of the Pure Land—or Soga’s theory of Dharmākara Bodhisattva—that were on trial. The real issue was the modernist group as a whole and its promotion of an independent Shin studies.
Sect authorities might have treated Kaneko and Soga more harshly if they felt modern Shin studies posed a serious threat. Perhaps the faculty resignations, student protests, and public outcries of support for Kaneko and Soga made a real impact, dissuading the Ōtani authorities from harsher measures. It is also likely that among the ranks of the Ōtani authorities were many who supported Kaneko and Soga’s work. The Ōtani organization’s modern history was characterized by competing goals: to carry on the former Takakura Seminary’s tradition of sectarian studies while also developing a modern university and new approaches to sectarian studies. With the explosion of Japan’s university system in the wake of the 1918 University Ordinance, the 1920s were a period that favored those who supported the latter goal. Therefore, it is likely that many Ōtani authorities did not want to condemn Kaneko and Soga outright or decisively cut ties with them. Just as sect authorities had been keen to capitalize on Kiyozawa Manshi’s intellectual talents, leadership skills, and religious devotion, they must have viewed Kaneko and Soga as outstanding scholars who had the potential to turn Shin teachings into an intellectually legitimate object of study and belief. Thus, they may have sought to leave the door open to Kaneko and Soga while temporarily appeasing the interests of more traditional-minded scholars and wealthy lay members.

Yet the Kaneko affair cannot be sufficiently explained if one only considers its intra-sectarian dimension. Japan’s development of a modern university system, the rise of Marxist social science, the government’s suppression of suspected Communists, and the burgeoning influence of the press were also factors that contributed to the production of the Kaneko affair.
and its ambiguous resolution. The coincidences of Ōtani history and Japanese history—the coincidental rise and suppression of socialist and Shin modernist thinkers in the 1920s and 1930s—were no mere coincidences. These two historical sequences unfolded at the same times in the same spaces among people concerned with both histories. Even if Shin scholars were often unaware of it, journalists, administrators, and students’ views of Shin scholarship and its suppression were intimately related to their views of the Communist Party Incident and related events. Was it their religious views that determined their political views or their political views that determined their religious views? To try to answer this question and untangle religious from political influence would be methodologically difficult if not impossible. Moreover, the question itself threatens to feed into the mistaken perception that religion and politics exist in separate worlds. Shin modernism’s path to religious orthodoxy did not unfold within an isolated religious world; it was affected by national political events and discourse as much as by religious events and discourse. In other words, Shin modernism did not become Shin orthodoxy by its own account; it depended upon institutional developments, ideological trends, the political views of a journalist, the political ambitions of young students, and many other factors.
4. From Authority to Responsibility: Soga Ryōjin and the Question of War (1930-1945)

“Even those who commit the ten evils or the five grave offenses are saved. At the time of death, everyone becomes Buddha. People who die for the country become kami. Becoming kami, they will also become Buddha. Amida’s Primal Vow and the Emperor’s Primal Vow are in accord.” --Soga Ryōjin, 1941 (Hokurikugun Shosha 1982, 15-16)

Thus far, I have tracked the history of modernist Shin thought from its philosophical birth through its institutional elaboration to its major public debut, in all cases noting how sectarian history was entangled with broader Japanese and world history. To summarize, Shin practice and thought was first reframed by Kiyozawa Manshi through his engagement with Western philosophy as a matter of introspective “experience.” This development was made possible by the new Meiji government’s declaration that “knowledge shall be sought out throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule,” a policy connected to the establishment of Japan’s university system and to the recruitment of top Western scholars like Kiyozawa’s philosophy teacher Ernest Fennelosa. Sasaki Gesshō, Soga Ryōjin, and Kaneko Daiei then elaborated upon Kiyozawa’s insights in their building of the new academic discipline of “Shin studies.” The possibility and force of this development depended upon the expansion of Japan’s university system in the wake of World War I. Following Sasaki’s death, Kaneko and Soga were accused of heresy and ousted from their posts in a well-publicized dispute that brought disrepute to the Ōtani authorities and public sympathy for Kaneko and
Soga. This development was intimately related to the government’s persecution of suspected Communists and the public’s sympathy for the targets of the government’s persecution and subsequent “thought guidance” campaign.

All of these developments were critical to the forging of a modernist Shin orthodoxy, but perhaps the truly pivotal event was Kaneko and Soga’s reinstatement into the sect in 1939-1941. This was the moment when the Ōtani organization suddenly vaulted Soga and Kaneko from heretical outsiders to top-ranking scholars. In 1928-1930, the the Jitōryō board denounced Kaneko and Soga, pressuring them out of the university. In 1941, Soga was himself made a Jitōryō board member. How did this turn of events come to pass?

Compared to the heaps of scholarship on Kiyozawa’s life and thought and the modest amount of scholarship on Kaneko’s theory of the Pure Land and related heresy incident, there is next to no scholarship on Kaneko and Soga’s reinstatement. This might be explained on a number of levels. To begin with, Kaneko and Soga’s reinstatement was carried out quietly without any of the sensationalism of Kiyozawa’s reform movement or Kaneko’s heresy trial. During these years, something sensational was happening—the escalation of war with China and the rising threat of war with the US, Britain, and their allies. Compared to the question of how Buddhists contributed to or protested against Japan’s war efforts, the details of why two scholars were reintegrated into their sect appears to be an inconsequential administrative matter. Moreover, an easy answer seems ready at hand: war mobilization required people to put aside their differences and work in harmony for the nation. Cannot Soga and Kaneko’s
reinstatement be explained simply as the sect authorities’ attempt to unify its members and utilize all the weapons at its disposal?

Yes and no. As will be demonstrated below, Soga and Kaneko were indeed reinstated so that they could be put to use in the war effort. But this reinstatement was far from uncontroversial within the sect. Ōtani scholars, administrators, and preachers did not unproblematically lay aside their doctrinal differences and unite as one in common cause with the nation. Although “war cooperation” is the general pattern one finds within the Ōtani organization—and within the greater Buddhist world—there were many different ways to cooperate, and these differences were not inconsequential. The disturbing discovery of this chapter is that Soga and the other Shin modernists’ “war cooperation” was more thoroughgoing than that of their traditionalist counterparts, and this accounts for why they were reinstated and rapidly promoted within the sect during the war years. Moreover, their enthusiastic war support was not just a function of their personal demeanors or ambitions; rather, it was grounded in their modernist views of Pure Land teachings as a matter of religious experience in this world. Returning to the question of why so little scholarship has examined Soga and Kaneko’s reinstatement, one has to wonder whether it is because of the disturbing associations between their reinstatement and their war support. The overwhelming emphasis in biographical accounts of Soga and Kaneko on their persecutions by the sect rather than their reintegration with the sect makes them into martyred individuals not complicit in the actions of their sectarian institution.
In this chapter, I first review past scholarship on the ways in which Buddhist institutions, especially those of the Shin sect, contributed to the war effort, highlighting the practice of assuring rebirth in Amida’s Pure Land to Japanese soldiers through the Kikyōshiki 帰敬式 rite. I then examine the details of Kaneko and Soga’s reinstatement, clarifying the chronology of events and persons involved. This shows that sect authorities intentionally took the initiative in reinstating Soga and Kaneko as part of a strategy to respond to government pressure for more active and effective war mobilization. In the following sections, I examine Soga’s wartime career prior to and following the reinstatement. I focus on Soga, rather than Kaneko (or Akegarasu), because his wartime career has been less studied and because his promotion within the sect was most central to the postwar establishment of a new modernist orthodoxy. Kaneko’s considerable role in the production of what has come to be called “Imperial-Way Buddhism” (Kōdō Bukkyō 皇道仏教) has been well-documented (Ishii 2012; Kondō 2013, 192-230). In works like The Forty-Eight Vows as National Ideals (1935), Prince Shōtoku Reflected in Shinran Shōnin (1939), and Empire and Buddhism (1943), Kaneko promoted imperialist ideology, especially by drawing connections between Shinran and Shōtoku Taishi (the sixth century prince who was instrumental in initially bringing imperial support to Buddhism). His

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1 Regarding Akegarasu Haya’s wartime career, see Fukushima (2003a) and Kondō (2013, 192-230).
2 The Japanese titles for these works are Kokka risō to shite no shijūhachi gan 国家理想としての四十八願, Shinran Shōnin ni eizeru Shōtoku Taishi 親鸞聖人に映せる聖徳太子, and Kōkoku to Bukkyō 皇国と仏教.
wartime views will be on display below in a discussion of the 1941 Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium.

This chapter reveals that Soga was also a strong supporter of Japanese imperialism during the Fifteen Year War. I explain Soga’s nationalist standpoint with reference to three interconnected beliefs he held: that the Pure Land is an immanent reality; that karma can be understood as “instinct” (honno 本能), defined in contrast to “reason” (risei 理性); and that kami and Buddhas are expressive of the same fundamental reality. These views led Soga to defend—contra traditionalist scholars—the practice of telling Japanese soldiers they would be reborn in the Pure Land if they died in battle. In the conclusion to the chapter, I relate these findings to analyses by Ichikawa Hakugen, Ugo Dessi, and Robert Sharf of the wartime actions of Japanese Buddhists, considering the relationship between social ethics and Buddhist views of “nonduality,” “suchness,” and “peace of mind.”

4.1 Buddhism and War in Modern Japan

Sectarian Institutions

The undaunting efforts of Buddhist institutions to cooperate with the Japanese government from the onset of the Meiji period (1868) through the end of the Fifteen Year War

On the connections drawn between Shōtoku Taishi and Shinran during the Fifteen Year War (especially by Tokyo Imperial University professor Hanayama Shinshō), see Klautau (2013). On changing images of Shōtoku Taishi, including during the Fifteen Year War, see Ishii (2012).
(1945) have been well-documented by scholars. The goal of cultivating a harmonious relationship with the state was a natural continuation of Buddhist institutions’ policies during the Tokugawa period. This goal took on a new urgency in the modern period as Buddhist institutions faced an array of crises. The policy of “Separation of Shinto and Buddhism” (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離) and the dismantling of the temple certification system (*terauke seido* 寺受け制度) undercut temples’ traditional economic base and brought about the need for reform and restructuring. New laws were passed legalizing “marriage and meat eating” (*nikujiki saitai* 肉食妻帯) for priests, effectively stripping them of their privileged status. Buddhist leaders sought to find ways to reconstitute an economic base, regain government favor, and dispel negative public perceptions. In regard to the latter, Buddhism was critiqued for its non-productivity in a time of economic development; its foreign origins in a time of increasing nationalism; its ancient origins in a time of modernization; and its philosophy of no-self in a time of individualism and personal responsibility.

The overwhelming response of Buddhist institutions was to try to prove Buddhism’s patriotism and social contributions (Ives 2009, 13-53). As Japan gradually developed an empire from Okinawa, Hokkaido, and Taiwan to Korea, China, and Manchuria, Japanese Buddhist institutions raced to be of service. Materially, Buddhist institutions and their members contributed vast financial and human resources through war bond purchases, financial donations, metal (e.g. temple bells), military service, and the repurposing of temples as military facilities. In addition, Buddhism contributed through funeral and memorial services for the war
dead; jingoistic sermons, lectures, books, and pamphlets; establishment of patriotic
organizations; military chaplaincy; and missionary work. Scholars have shown how Buddhist
teachings and rituals provided reassurance to military officers (e.g. General Nogi, Ishiwara
Kanji, Tojo Hideki), soldiers, and the population of Japanese civilians at home and abroad

History shows plainly that Japan’s large Buddhist institutions were conservative across
the board. That is, they sought to conserve basic elements of the religious status quo (e.g. the
social dominance of Buddhism vis-à-vis Christianity or “new religions”) by obediently serving
the political demands of the Japanese government. Such political conservatism seems endemic
to large, socially inclusive religious organizations more generally—regardless of how radical or
antimonian their origins may have been (Davis 1992, 37). At times, Shin Buddhist communities
have been famous for their violent resistance to political authorities (e.g. ikkō ikki 一向一揆
uprisings in the Warring States period and gohō ikki 護法一揆 uprisings in early Meiji) and for
their marked opposition to the ethics and customs of other local communities (e.g. worship of
kami). But a long process of growth, institutionalization, and adaptation to political pressures
resulted in extremely conservative institutions responsive to government demands.³

³ By saying this, I do not mean to endorse the view of Tokugawa Buddhism as in decline (datsurakuron 脫
落論). In many ways, Buddhism flourished like never before during the long, peaceful Tokugawa period
(Ambros 2012). Yet it seems undeniable that the Shin institutions accommodated themselves to the
demands of the Tokugawa bakufu (e.g. accepting the division of the two Honganjis, carrying out the
In modern Japan, the two main Shin denominations comprised two of the financially richest of Japan’s Buddhist organizations with some of its largest populations of followers. With their headquarters located adjacent to one another in downtown Kyoto, these two institutions had especially close relations with the imperial family and shogunal authorities. For these reasons, the Shin institutions were especially targeted by the modern Japanese state for assistance, financial and otherwise. It has been claimed that the Shin institutions outpaced all other Buddhist institutions in terms of the extent and enthusiasm of their war cooperation (Niino 2014, 18). The following outline of that war cooperation provides some credence to that claim.

**Doctrinal Development:** In 1871, the Honganji denomination’s Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōnyō issued a statement of his “last words,” in which he advanced an interpretation of the Buddhist teaching of “the ultimate and conventional two truths” (shinzoku nitai 真俗二諦) that would become dominant across the Shin world until the end of World War II. According to a traditional Madhyamaka interpretation, the two truths denote reality as understood by enlightened and unenlightened beings respectively. An enlightened being perceives the ultimate truth that all things are ultimately empty of inherent existence while unenlightened beings perceive only the surface reality of a world of distinct and solid entities. Kōnyō temple registration system, articulating a single orthodoxy, etc.), becoming increasingly attached to the political and social order of the time.
interpreted the two truths in relation to Rennyo’s well-known teaching on the correspondence of the “king’s law” (ōbō 王法) and the “Buddha’s law” (buppō 仏法). After quoting Rennyo’s instruction, “On your brow, wear the king’s law; within the depths of your heart, treasure Buddha’s law,” Kōnyō tells the Shin community his wish:

That they will not err in regard to the dharma-principle of the ultimate and the conventional as two truths; that in this life, they will be loyal subjects of the empire and reciprocate the unlimited imperial benevolence; and that in the life to come, they will attain birth in the West and escape aeons of suffering. (Rogers et al. 1991, 322 amended)

This mapping of the “conventional truth” onto the “king’s law” (i.e. being a loyal subject of the Emperor) became the doctrinal basis for unquestioning obedience to the Japanese government for both major Shin denominations.

Missionary Work: The Shin denominations spearheaded Buddhist efforts to assist the new Meiji government in colonizing Hokkaido. In 1876, the Ōtani organization was the first to establish a branch temple in China (Shanghai), and in 1877, the Ōtani organization was the first to establish a mission in Korea. From then on, the two main Shin denominations continued to play leading roles in missionary work throughout Japan’s growing empire (Niino 2014, 152-251).

Memorialization of the War Dead: From 1877, war dead from the Seinan civil war began to be memorialized at Yasukuni Shrine (then known as Tōkyō Shōkonsha) and at local monuments and shrines for the war dead (chūkonhi 忠魂碑, shōkonsha 招魂社). From at least 1883, the Shin Chief Abbots paid their respects and carried out Buddhist memorial services at such monuments for the war dead (Hishiki 1993, 31-33).
Chaplaincy: In August 1894 (one month after the start of the Sino-Japanese war), the Honganji Chief Abbot’s eldest son, Ōtani Kōzui, visited Japanese soldiers in Ōtsu city near Kyoto and conducted a kikyōshiki 訪敬式 rite for them. Through this rite, initiates take refuge in the “three jewels” (the Buddha, his teachings, and his community), have their heads symbolically shaved, and receive a “dharma name” (hōmyō 法名). Carried out specifically for groups of soldiers shipping off for war (or already on the warfront), this ritual took on particular connotations of preparing soldiers for death. For example, in the same year, Honganji Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōson declared the following to over 1600 soldiers gathered at a temple in Himeji city for a kikyōshiki rite:

Buddhism is not only about attaining future liberation. Along with aiming for future liberation, Buddhism’s fundamental meaning also lies in perfecting loyalty. One must carry out one’s duties, giving one’s life and body for the sake of the nation and ruler. This is the “ultimate and conventional two truths” of our sect. Now at this time of crisis, Shin followers in this army barracks, you must entrust in the vow power of the Buddha. And with single-mindedness, without thoughts of doubt or fear, you must contemplate the essence of the imperial commands. Treat them as greater than mountains. Treat death as light as a goose feather. For the sake of the nation, with utmost bravery, you must assist the imperial mission and shine forth your nation’s majesty. (quoted in Niino 2014, 63)

Kōson urges his audience of soldiers to realize that Buddhism is made up of “two truths,” one of which is the “conventional truth” of “perfecting loyalty” to the Emperor by fighting bravely in

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4 A similar rite is also carried out at the time of death, so if one has not already gone through a Kikyōshiki rite while alive, one can still posthumously receive a dharma name and become a follower of the Buddha then (Andreasen 1998, 137).
the war. His unstated message is that “future liberation” is assured, such that one can confidently “treat death as light as a goose feather.”

In 1937, the Prime Minister of Japan Hayashi Senjūrō attended a conference held by the Buddhist journal Daihōrin. A former army commander, Hayashi described his memories of serving as a soldier in the Russo-Japanese War back in 1904: “From the mouths of all the half-dead soldiers came forth the chanting of the Buddha’s name. When it became night, they all kept chanting ‘namu Amida butsu’ such that it was actually quite noisy. There was not a single person who called out to say ‘help me.’ This experience caused me to really feel the power of Buddhism of the northern provinces [i.e. Shin Buddhism]” (ibid., 67). This account shows the importance and power of Shin Buddhist faith for Japanese soldiers facing death, as well as the interest of leading politicians in trying to mobilize that power.

Posthumous Naming: From November 1894, the Shin sects established an ordinance that sect members who died in battle at the rank of officer would be awarded honorific posthumous names (ingō hōmyō 院号法名) while war dead of lower ranks would be awarded ordinary posthumous names (hōmyō 法名). In addition to honoring the war dead, this ordinance signified a financial gift. The war dead were posthumously named free of charge while ordinary Shin followers were required to pay. Such a practice was apparently not adopted by other Buddhist sects for ten more years (Hishiki 1993, 34-6).

This phrase is a quotation from the 1882 Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors.
Ritual Worship of the Emperor: From 1895, memorialization of the war dead became standardized within the Ōtani organization as the Memorial Service for Mourning the War Dead (senbotsusha tsuichō hōyō 戦没者追弔法要), a regular series of rituals held annually in the main hall at Higashi Honganji temple. This event includes the “Rite of Repayment for the Virtue [of the Emperor]” (shūtokue 酬徳会). The offering table in front of the main image of Amida Buddha is covered with a fabric decorated with the chrysanthemum imperial crest, and to the right of the main altar is installed a scroll listing the dharma names of the line of Japan’s Emperors along with those of distinguished sect members, including those who died in battle (Hishiki 1993, 37-41).

Reverence toward the Emperor and his family went hand in hand with reverence toward the Chief Abbots of the Shin sects. In fact, the two families were closely related. Honganji Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōzui (served 1903-1914) and the Taishō Emperor (served 1912-1925) were married to a pair of sisters in 1898 and 1900, making them brothers-in-law. Shōwa Emperor Hirohito (served 1926-1989) and Ōtani Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōchō (served 1925-1993) then married a pair of sisters in 1924, making them brothers-in-law. As supposed blood descendants of Shinran, the Chief Abbots of both denominations were revered by many as “living Buddhas”; the Emperors, supposed blood descendants of Amaterasu, were revered as

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*Nagako and Satoko, the first and third daughters of Kuninomiya Kuniyoshō 久邇宮邦彦王.*
“living kami.” This parallelism may have pre-disposed the Shin Chief Abbots and Shin believers toward Emperor reverence (Tahara 2004, 20-26).7

**Financial Donations:** In 1897, the Honganji denomination Chief Abbot received an imperial citation for his success in encouraging sect members to buy war bonds and make donations during the Sino-Japanese War. In the 1940s, the Honganji denomination raised funds to purchase and donate more than twenty war planes, all of then named “Honganji” (Ives 2009, 29, 43).

**Involvement in International Affairs:** In the late 1920s, former Honganji Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōzui publicly critiqued Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijurō’s attempts at diplomacy (Ives 2009, 29). In 1931, Ōtani Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōcho sent a telegram to the League of Nations declaring the legitimacy of Japan’s actions surrounding the Manchurian Incident (Fukushima 1995, 166).

**Censorship of Scripture:** In 1936, the Honganji denomination censored problematic passages in Shinran’s writings. One such passage is found in Shinran’s autobiographical postscript to his *Kyōgyōshinshō*:

> The emperor and his ministers, acting against the dharma and violating human rectitude, became enraged and embittered. As a result, Master Genkū (Hōnen)... and a number of his followers, without receiving any deliberation of their [alleged] crimes, were summarily sentenced to death or were dispossessed of their monkhood, given

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7 According to journalist David Suzuki, “Up until the end of the war most countryside members [of the Ōtani organization] kept framed pictures of the Abbot and his wife in their butsudan (Buddhist altar) or tokonoma beside pictures of the Emperor and his wife—both Abbot and Emperor being regarded as ‘divine’; the Emperor as a Shinto god and the Abbot as a living Buddha. A number of such pictures can still be seen today” (Suzuki 1985: 50-51). I have been unable to substantiate this claim.
Both denominations proceeded to warn its members about other problematic passages that they should refrain from reading. For example, sect members were advised to avoid the term *chokumei* (imperial command), which Shinran had used to speak of Amida Buddha’s commands. This was problematic during the war period because *chokumei* could only come from the Emperor (Ives 2009, 33). Other passages in Shinran’s writings that seem to express a nationalist message were emphasized, especially a letter in which he says, “it would be splendied if all people who say the nenbutsu, not just yourself, do so not with thoughts of themselves, but for the sake of the imperial court and for the sake of the people of the country” (CWS, vol. 1: 560).

*Total War Mobilization:* In the period of full-scale war in 1937-1945, both denominations responded actively to the government’s calls for participation in a Spiritual Mobilization Campaign, for celebration of the supposed 2600th anniversary of imperial Japan’s birth, and for contributions to the establishment of a “New Order” in Japan and East Asia by reorienting sect activities toward the war effort. They did this through jingoistic public statements and sermons, publications, the recording and distribution of Shin-inspired patriotic songs, institutional

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8 At the Kiyozawa Manshi Memorial Hall, the largest piece of Kiyozawa’s calligraphy on display is of this line of Shinran’s: “For the sake of the imperial court and for the sake of the people of the country.” Although one should refrain from reading too much into this without knowing the back story, it is suggestive of Kiyozawa’s patriotism.
restructuring, mandatory military training for Ōtani University students, and patriotic organizations supportive of soldiers and their families.

Lay Buddhism

In view of these trends, scholars of modern Buddhism interested in social and political questions—especially regarding the potential within Buddhism for resistance to imperialism—have tended to focus on lay individuals and groups free from the confines of Buddhist institutionalism. Rising levels of education, improvements in transportation and communication technologies, and an increase in religious freedom were all conducive to the proliferation of lay Buddhism. Lay Buddhists increasingly participated in reading about, writing about, and practicing Buddhism in ways formerly reserved for Buddhist priests. In regard to the lay-priest distinction, the Shin sect is an anomaly—it had rejected monasticism from the outset under the banner of Shinran’s “neither monk nor layman” principle. Yet practically speaking, it was characterized like other Buddhist sects by a clearly defined Buddhist institution run by a population of professional priests. In the modern period, the Kiyozawa-associated Seishinshugi movement, Chikazumi Jōkan’s Kyūdō Kaikan community in

9 It is more accurate to say that there was an increase in freedom among certain groups to practice certain forms of religion. Along with an increased freedom to register or not register at a temple or to profess belief or disbelief in Buddhas or the Christian God, restrictions were increased on various beliefs and practices labeled “superstitious.” See Josephson (2012).
Tokyo, and the boom of popular interest in Shinran and Shin teachings outside the Shin institution all paralleled trends toward lay Buddhism in the greater Buddhist world.

As one would expect, the lay Buddhist world contained greater diversity of responses to the issues of Japanese imperialism and war. On one end of the spectrum, lay Nichiren preacher Inoue Nishō established an ultranationalist group responsible for a series of political assassinations in 1932. On the other end, Seno’o Girō, also a lay Nichiren preacher, founded the Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism in 1931, an explicitly socialist Buddhist organization that propagated anti-government views. Both Inoue and Seno’o were arrested and imprisoned for their illegal activities. Prominent lay Buddhist thinker D.T. Suzuki avoided either of these extremes, and evaluation of his wartime views and actions has been the subject of much scholarly debate. While nationalist aspects of his thought have been sharply critiqued by Sharf and Victoria, more thorough analyses have demonstrated that Suzuki was relatively unsupportive of Japan’s modern wars and, at times, publicly critical of the Japanese government and its war efforts (Sato 2008; Sato and Kirchner 2010; Suzuki 2014-2015, vol. 1: xi-lvi).¹¹

¹¹ In his response to Victoria’s 1997 Zen at War, Sueki Fumihiko emphasizes that the topic of Buddhists’ positions toward the war ought not be over-simplified into a binary categorization of war supporters and war resisters (Sueki 2004-2010, Vol. 2: 18-20). Indeed, as jingoistic as Japanese society was during this period, Japanese citizens undoubtedly held complex views about their state, its ideology, and its imperialist mission. By immediately categorizing anyone who cooperated with the war effort a “war supporter” and then moving on, we miss out on the details of that person’s war experience, the pressures and cognitive dissonance he or she may have felt, and the reasons he or she ultimately decided to
Soga Ryōjin stood between these worlds of “institutional Buddhism” and “lay Buddhism.” As discussed in Chapter Two, his career took him back and forth between the sect’s center and its margins. He grew up in a Shin temple and received his education at Shin schools and universities, but he became a devoted member of Kiyozawa’s Kōkōdo group, which existed independently from the Ōtani institution. Soga’s disagreements with sect and university authorities led him first to leave Ōtani University voluntarily out of protest and second to be forced out on heresy charges. Throughout the 1930s, he had no substantial connections with Ōtani University or Ōtani organization authorities. Yet in 1941, he was suddenly called back to serve his sect. Soga—along with Kaneko—was in a unique position to potentially mediate the powerful world of “institutional Buddhism” and the free-thinking world of “lay Buddhism.” If ever there was an opportunity for free-thinking individuals to steer a Buddhist institution away from blind submission to government directives, was this it? Unfortunately not. Examination of Soga and Kaneko’s careers prior to their reinstatement reveals the thoroughly nationalist conclusions to which their “free-thinking” had led them. The reality was that a certain degree of “free-thinking” and argumentation was going on inside the sect already, and Soga and Kaneko’s arrival may have even stifled that. But before examining their views, it is important to clarify the details of their reinstatement.

support the war effort in a particular way—details which are critical for approaching an understanding of why history unfolded as it did, and what role religion played in it.
4.2 Reinstatement

While biographies of Kaneko generally at least mention his imperialist writings as a factor behind his wartime reinstatement, most accounts of Soga’s life skip over the fact of his reinstatement with little or no explanation (e.g. Itō 1993, 203; Blum and Rhodes 2011, 105; Mizushima 2010, 436). The evidence presented below suggests that Soga and Kaneko’s reinstatement was the result of a deliberate plan of conservative Ōtani authorities who, given the wartime context, had changed their minds about Kaneko and Soga.

For the better part of the 1930s, Kaneko worked as a professor at the Hiroshima University of Literature and Science. His status as priest had been rescinded (soseki henjō僧籍返上), so he had no professional standing within the Ōtani denomination. Meanwhile, Soga lived in Kyoto with his second wife and young son.12 His temple in Niigata was being run by his younger brother whom he had previously adopted as a son. Soga, now in his 50s and 60s, spent his days lecturing in Kyoto and occasionally at temples elsewhere in Japan. He retained his status as priest within the Ōtani denomination, but he had little or no interaction with Ōtani University or the Ōtani administration. Below is a chronology of events relevant to the history of their reinstatement (with key names underlined and changes in Kaneko and Soga’s status marked in bold):

12 He married his first wife, Kei ケイ (敬), in 1897 when he was 22 years old. After she died in February 1925, he was remarried to Koharu コハル (小春) in November 1926. They had a son, Shin’yū 信雄, in March 1928.
• 1936 May: Kiyozawa sympathizer Sekine Ninnō is appointed Head of Sect Affairs.
• 1938 May: Yasuda Riki replaces Sekine Ninnō as Head of Sect Affairs.
• 1939 March: the National Diet passes the Religious Organizations Law.
• 1939 Fall: the issue of restoring Kaneko’s status as a priest is raised within the sect administration.
• 1940 April: the Religious Organizations Law takes effect.
• 1940 June: the Jitōryō reinstates Kaneko as a priest.
• 1940 October: a meeting is held on the relation between Shin teachings and imperial ideology. The research report forms the basis for discussion at the following February’s colloquium.
• 1941 February: Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium (Shinshū kyōgaku kondankai) is held.
• 1941 April: Ōtani Eijun, brother of former Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōen, replaces Yasuda Riki as Head of Sect Affairs. Eijun presides over implementation of a new sectarian constitution and overhaul of the sect’s administrative structure.
• 1941 May: At his 60th birthday celebration, Kaneko delivers a lecture entitled “Wa no sekaikan” (Worldview of Peace).
• 1941 June: Kaneko is appointed to be a member of the Doctrinal Consultative Council (Kyōgaku Shōgikai) (a level below the Jitōryō).
• 1941 July: Soga is appointed to be a member of the Jitōryō board.
• 1941 August: Soga is awarded the status of kōshi by the sect. Around the same time, Tada Kanae—former follower of Kiyozawa who became the most outspoken critic of Kiyozawa, Kaneko, and Soga—is appointed sōkōshi (honorary lecture master). He had died in 1937.  
• 1941 August 31st: Sekine Ninnō replaces Ōsuga Shūdō as President of Ōtani University. He would be succeeded by modernist Yamabe Shūgaku in 1943 and Ōtani Eijō in 1944.
• 1941 November: Kaneko and Soga are appointed as professors at Ōtani University.

13 Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo only lists the year—1941 (2004a, 343). I have not yet been able to track down the month. Interestingly, the years 1940-1942 saw five such sōkōshi appointments whereas the years 1925-1939 had seen none. There was also an unusually large number of kōshi appointments made during this period (at least 10 in the years 1941-1944) (ibid., 341). Those appointed include many modernists (e.g. Akanuma Chizen, Urabe Kanjun, Soga Ryōjin, Sekine Ninnō, Yamabe Shūgaku, and Inaba Masamaru) and some traditionalists (e.g. Tada Kanae, Katō Chigaku, and Kawasaki Kenryō). We might explain this trend as the result of a new wartime spirit of cooperation, of political trade-offs, or both.
• 1942 July: Soga delivers the main lecture at the summer retreat (ango 安居). His lecture is entitled “Tannishō chōki” (Listening Notes on the Tannisō).
• 1943 August: Kurube Shin’yū is appointed dean (gakkan 学監) at Ōtani University.
• 1943 December: Kaneko is appointed as a member of the Jitöryō board.
• 1944 July: Kaneko is awarded the status of kōshi by the sect.
• 1944 October: At the newly established Ōtani Doctrinal Studies Research Institute, Soga is appointed Head of the Shin Studies Department and Kaneko is appointed Head of the Japanese Doctrinal Studies Department.
• 1944 October: The Essentials of Shin (Shinshū no yogi 真宗の要義), authored primarily by Kaneko and Soga, is published.
• 1945 January: Kiyozawa sympathizer Miyatani Hōgan is appointed Head of Sect Affairs.

To review: first, Kaneko’s status as priest was restored; second, Soga was promoted to the ranks of kōshi and Jitöryō member; third, Soga and Kaneko were hired at the university; and fourth, Kaneko was promoted as kōshi and Jitöryō member. Other points worth highlighting are that 1) the timing of the Religious Organizations Law, the Ōtani organization’s restructuring, and Kaneko and Soga’s reinstatement was highly coincidental; 2) Kaneko and Soga’s reinstatement into and promotion within the sect preceded their rehiring at the university; and 3) besides Soga and Kaneko, Shin modernists like Sekine Ninnō, Yamabe Shūgaku, Kurube Shin’yū, and Miyatanai Hōgan also received important promotions within the sect and university during these war years.

Kaneko’s Reinstatement

The story of the restoration of Kaneko’s status as priest is related in the diary of traditionalist scholar Saitō Yuishin, who was one of the top scholars on the Jitöryō board when
Kaneko and Soga were ousted. Saitō remained on the Jitōryō board throughout this period, and persuading him to change his mind appears—at least in the narrative he tells—to have been the main obstacle to having Kaneko reinstated.

According to his diary, the topic of Kaneko’s reinstatement was broached at a meeting on November 29th, 1939. Interestingly, Saitō refers to Kaneko as “a certain gentleman” (bōshi 某氏), as if his disgraceful name could not even be spoken of. On January 17th, 1940, Head of Doctrinal Affairs Isato Sejun 為郷世淳 paid a visit to Saitō’s home to discuss the issue. Isato carried with him a petition asking for Kaneko’s reinstatement that he had received from Takenaka Shigemaru 竹中茂丸 (1870-1943) three months prior. Takenaka was one of a handful of Advisors (sanmu 参務) in Head of Sect Affairs Yasuda Riki’s cabinet. Isato urged Saitō to consider the matter. Isato then mailed Saitō a package of former Jitōryō documents related to the Kaneko incident. Saitō comments:

Judging from a certain gentleman’s response in these records, it appears that a certain gentleman did not understand the truth that he himself was the source of the arising of the so-called problem of the certain gentleman. Instead, it appears that he mistakenly thought I had provoked believers out of my own calculations, giving rise to the problem. Reading these mistaken records without knowing their mistakes and the truth of the matter, judging from these records alone, I think that Mr. Isato seems to think there is no reason not to allow his reinstatement. I presume that is why he keeps consulting me about the reinstatement. (Saito 1959, 136)

14 It was a meeting of Jitōryō members and kōmon 顧問 (advisors). Among the attendees was former Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōen, who had been forced to resign in 1925 over a financial scandal.
The exact contents or present-day location of these Jitôryô records are unknown, but apparently they contained reports by Kaneko that gave the impression that Saitô was guilty of instigating the heresy charges—rather than lay believers, as was generally thought. On February 13th, Doctrinal Affairs Section Head (kachô 課長) Maruyama 円山 (dates and full name unknown) visited Saitô’s home and raised the issue of Kaneko’s reinstatement. On May 4th, Maruyama returned again on behalf of Department Head Isato, who was sick. Saitô comments, “As usual, he raised the problem of a certain gentleman... and as usual, I expressed my opinion.”

On June 17th, Saitô’s 77th birthday celebrations were to be held at the Kyoto Hotel, attended by over a hundred people, including the Chief Abbot and Head of Sect Affairs. For that event, a commemorative book would be produced, and the frontispiece was to be created out of photos of all of his writings. After handing over copies of all his works, he was asked whether it would be okay if they excluded pictures of his writings that related to the heresy problem, as that might put off the young people at the celebration. On June 8th, conservative kôshi scholar Kôno Hôun and Section Head Maruyama visited Saitô’s home to discuss the Kaneko issue. After much deliberation, they decided to speak about the matter again later. On June 12th, Maruyama called to ask whether it would be convenient to have the next Jitôryô meeting scheduled for June 17th—the same day as his birthday celebration! Saitô replied that he was busy on the 17th, so the meeting was moved to the 18th. On June 14th, Ōtani University President Ōsuga Shûdô visited Saitô’s house in regard to the Kaneko issue.
Saitō then recounts the wonderful experience of being honored with gifts, visits, speeches, and shouts of “banzai,” calling the celebration the greatest honor. Immediately following this account and his recording of the letter of gratitude he received from the Ōtani organization (signed by Head of Sect Affairs Yasuda Riki), Saitō relates the details of the June 18th Jitōryō meeting attended by Jitōryo members, Head of Sect Affairs Yasuda Riki, Takenaka Shigemaru, and others. Saitō relates how he reported to the meeting all the details of his deliberations with Isato, Maruyama, and others. Finally, he stated that he “would consider the matter if the certain gentleman submitted a letter of repentance” (Saitō 1959, 143). On June 27th, the Jitōryō members were reconvened to revisit the issue now that Kaneko had submitted a letter of repentance. It was decided Kaneko’s status as priest could be restored on the conditions that the writings of his that had instigated the affair be discontinued and that he refrain from public preaching for the time being. Saitō concludes, “The so-called problem of a certain gentleman that had remained for many years in a corner of my mind was also, through that gentleman’s repentance, resolved, and I have peace of mind. I am glad that I devoted myself to the last for the sake of the preservation of the great dharma” (ibid., 144).

Saitō’s narrative reveals a number of important points about Kaneko’s reinstatement. First, it appears that top-level sect administrators, especially Takenaka Shigemaro and Isato Sejun, were the driving force behind Kaneko’s return. Takenaka’s comments during the Shin

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15 There are no extant records of Kaneko’s letter.
Doctrinal Studies Colloquium reveal him to be a practical-minded, non-intellectual administrator, seeking the assistance of scholars in finding clear responses to the demands of the time.\(^1\) (Yasuda also attended the colloquium, but said very little.) In confronting the crises of that time, it was Kaneko and later Soga that sect administrators like Takenaka wanted to turn to.

Second, it shows that traditionalist Jitōryō scholars like Saitō—and possibly Kōno and Ōsuga\(^2\)—were the obstacles standing in the way. It appears that Kaneko’s restoration as a priest could not proceed without Saitō’s agreement, and it is fascinating to see how sect administrators proceeded to deal with this problem. One after another, administrators come to Saitō’s home to badger him into changing his mind. By scheduling the Jitōryō meeting concerning Kaneko’s reinstatement the day after Saitō’s birthday celebrations, sect administrators were probably being strategic. How could Saitō stubbornly maintain his oppositional stance against sect leaders and scholars who had just showered him with honors

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\(^1\) For example, following a heated exchange between Akegarasu and Ōsuga regarding the significance of the Emperor and Shotoku Taishi’s historical role in furthering the Shin Buddhist tradition, Takenaka interjects: “This is a gathering of scholars. In the end, from the standpoint of our sect, is it necessary to unify Amida and the Emperor? If not, can Shin not be established? Can they be separate? I would like you to give a clear statement.” Interestingly, after Ōsuga defers the question, it is Kaneko who steps in and offers an extensive and emotionally charged response (discussed below).

\(^2\) Saitō’s narrative gives the impression that he was the one needing convincing. He is clear on the fact that Takenaka and Isato were in support of Kaneko’s reinstatement, but he says nothing about the position of Kōno and Ōsuga, who came and visited him to discuss the matter. Given Kōno and Ōsuga’s vehement arguments with Kaneko and Akegarasu at the 1941 Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium, it is reasonable to speculate that they, too, were obstacles to Kaneko’s return.
and praise? The birthday celebration softened him up. Moreover, the request that pictures of his works related to Kaneko’s heresy affair be excluded from the commemorative volume further demonstrates that these two happenings were related, and that Kaneko was on his way to being reinstated.

_Soga’s Promotion_

The story behind Soga’s sudden rise within the sect in 1941 is narrated in a 1988 lecture by Kurube Shin’yū entitled “Tannishō Chōki.” Kurube was the major player in the Kiyozawa-inspired postwar reform movement of the Ōtani organization. A preacher and administrator more than a scholar, Kurube looked upon Soga and Soga’s follower Yasuda Rijin as his dharma teachers. Thus, his narrative of Soga’s reinstatement can hardly be approached as an objective account.

Kurube’s narrative is framed as the story of how Soga’s 1942 _Tannishō chōki_ (Listening Notes on the Tannishō) lectures came to be.¹⁸ Kurube relates the story of Kaneko and Soga’s heresy charges, their ousting from the sect, and their students’ passionate responses. Soga was ousted just as Kurube and his classmates, all fiercely devoted to Soga, were graduating. At that time, everyone dispersed, and the matter was temporarily settled. Then came Kaneko Daiei’s 60th birthday celebrations in May of 1941, which Kurube attended along with his friend and

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¹⁸ These are the lectures that Soga gave on the _Tannishō_ at the prestigious summer retreat in 1942, which were later published in 1947. Kurube notes that Soga had once commented, _if ever_ his works were compiled into a “collected works,” _he_ only wished that _Tannishō chōki_ not be left out.
former classmate Matsubara Yūzen. At the event, Kurube and Matsubara spoke with their fellow classmate Takeda Kōryū 武田香龍. All three of them had been in the same graduating class of 1930 with Soga Ryōjin as their adviser. Takeda was now employed as a secretary (rokuji 録事) within the Doctrinal Affairs Department. He told Kurube and Matsubara that he had a pressing matter to discuss, so they all went to Takeda’s home that evening to talk.

On that night, Shigeta-kun, whom I spoke of earlier, said, “Well, today it is a bit unthinkable, but I actually want to make our Reverend Soga a kōshi.” Kōshi is Honganji’s highest scholastic rank. He said, “Well, I want to take our teacher, who was not clearly called heretical, but was forced to resign from the university, and after the passing of ten or so years, I want to make him kōshi.” Normally that sort of thing can’t be done. Can’t be done. But for Shigeta-kun, Reverend Soga was his advisor, so he was thinking of doing it somehow. “Right now, it can be done,” he said. “Right now, Reverend Soga can be made a kōshi. With the present cabinet, if I said it, it could be done. But what would happen then I just don’t know. The big question is whether it is best to do it or not.” You see, those who don’t know about Honganji wouldn’t understand, but I was also torn up about this.

Soga was like a lion who had been released into the wilderness. In the wilderness, he was free to roar. From one point of view, looking at it from a pessimistic point of view, to make Soga a kōshi would be like trapping a lion in a cage in a zoo. (Tahara and Hashikawa 1999, 230-1)

Kurube’s narrative continues with a discussion of their deliberations, emphasizing that only then in May of 1941 did they have this opportunity and that Soga could always resign again if he wanted. They consulted with Soga, who apparently approved. Kurube’s account then jumps directly to the facts of Soga’s promotion and invitation to give the summer retreat lecture. His essay goes on to assess Soga’s reinstatement and consequent Tannishō lectures as a critical turning point in the sect that paved the way for the sect’s postwar transformation on the basis of “Kiyozawa Manshi’s doctrinal studies.”
Kurube’s narrative suggests that he, Takeda, and Matsubara were behind Soga’s promotion, but that seems somewhat implausible. What influence could Takeda have had as secretary within the administration? Kurube’s narrative ignores all the broader context—including Kaneko’s former restoration as priest, the Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium, and the whole onslaught of wartime mobilization. Instead, he dwells upon the issue of Kurube and his friends’ concerns that Soga’s return to the sect might stifle his free spirit.19

Kurube’s account contains at least one point of valuable evidence: the perception that Soga’s promotion had been made possible by “the present cabinet.” A month prior in April, Yasuda Riki’s cabinet had been replaced by Ōtani Eijun’s. Ōtani Eijun 大谷薫潤 (1890-1973) was the 11th son of former Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōei, brother of former Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōen, and uncle of the current Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōchō. The change of cabinets was carried out in conjunction with the implementation of the new sect constitution (shūsei 宗制) that had just been passed in March. This, in turn, was expressly a response to the April 1940 Religious Organizations Law (shūkyō dantai hō), an important legal reform that finally synthesized and

19 It may be that Kurube just wanted to dramatize his story by playing up this worry about “caging a lion.” Yet the group’s reluctance to have Soga restored may also carry a deeper significance. In retrospect, it appears that Soga, Kaneko, Kiyozawa, and many other figures within this history were consistently loyal and devoted members of their sect. It is easy to fall into the assumption that Soga, Kaneko, and Kiyozawa, even during their periods of banishment from the sect, always maintained a desire to return and fight for the advancement of their sectarian institution. Kurube’s passage gives a sense that Soga’s followers, and perhaps Soga as well, may have also harbored ill will toward the sect or a desire to be free from it. What was it that kept bringing them back? A sense of obligation? A commitment to the sect’s mission? A desire for power? Dependence of some kind? Probably all of the above.
clarified the nation’s laws governing religious organizations (similar proposals had failed in 1899, 1929, and 1935, largely owing to the protests of Buddhist leaders). The 1940 law emphasized the state’s right to step in and manage or revoke the rights of religious organizations or preachers who failed to uphold their duties as subjects of the Emperor (Kashiwahara 1990: 242-3). In response to this new law, various Buddhist denominations revised their denominational laws and administrative structures to appease the government’s demand for more active patriotism. In the case of the Ōtani denomination, one change was the establishment of a new “Raise Asia Department” (tōbu 東亜部). It seems that Ōtani Eijun was brought in to lead the Ōtani denomination’s efforts to intensify their war efforts.

Three months prior in February, Eijun had convened and moderated the Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium—which had the express purpose of determining how Shin teachings could most effectively be presented to bolster the war effort and imperialist ideology. Soga and Kaneko were invited to participate, enabling their reunion with the sect after a decade of separation. As described below, during the colloquium Eijun calls frequently upon Soga for his opinion—more than any other participant. This all suggests that Eijun was a driving force behind Soga’s promotion.

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20 Buddhist leaders’ resistance seems to have been related to anxieties over having Buddhism placed on an equal footing with other religions like Christianity.
21 The 1940 law draws upon language from the Meiji Constitution, which had granted religious freedom “within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects.” But the emphasis has shifted from acknowledging religious freedom toward highlighting the need for religious organizations and preachers to uphold their “duties as subjects.”
According to Soga's own testimony, it was due to the great efforts of Eijun's older brother Ōtani Eijō 大谷瑩誠 (1887-1948) that he was promoted to the Jitōryo and became kōshi. Eijō had actually been Head of Sect Affairs when Soga was ousted from the university in 1930. In contrast to the bungling of the Kaneko affair by the previous Head of Sect Affairs, Eijō was widely viewed as having handled the Soga affair deftly. For this reason, Soga's follower Kurube Shin'yū viewed him as an arch enemy. When Eijō was appointed Ōtani University president in 1944, Kurube, then employed as a dean at the university, immediately submitted his resignation. Eijō proceeded to apologize to Kurube for his past mistakes and urged him to stay on (and Kurube agreed) (Tahara and Hashikawa 1999, 234). Ōtani Eijō also attended the 1941 Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium, but did not speak throughout the proceedings. In any case, given Soga's evidence, it is likely that Ōtani Eijō along with Ōtani Eijun were behind Soga's promotion as kōshi. This suggests that at this period in time—and perhaps more generally—the Chief Abbot's family (known as renshi 連枝) held much authority within the denomination, and it was their strategic decision-making that determined the course of Ōtani history. In 1928-1930,

22 Soga goes on to narrate: “At that time, President Ōsuga submitted his resignation, saying that with the long continuance of the war, it was really impossible to maintain the school. Later, Sekine Ninnō became president, and he had Kaneko Daiei and me brought back to the university” (Soga 1970-1972b, vol. 5: 8-9). Thus, Soga attributes his promotion within the sect to Ōtani Eijō and his return to the university to Sekine.
they were behind the ousting of Kaneko and Soga. In 1939-41, they were behind Kaneko and Soga’s reinstatement.

Of course, all of this begs the question, exactly what role were Soga and Kaneko expected to play by Ōtani Eijun, Ōtani Eijō, Takenaka Shigemaru, and others? What unique contribution could Soga and Kaneko offer? Sasaki Yū’s assessment, contained with a memorial essay written at the time of Soga’s death in 1971, provides a clue.

At that time within Japan, all forms of ideology or faith that opposed nationalism were being proscribed. It was not possible to respond to those circumstances through the Takakura Seminary style [of sectarian studies], which stood by the theory of the Pure Land as actual substance (jōdo no jittairon), so the idea arose to have Soga and Kaneko brought back and placed out front as a bulwark. (quoted in Fukushima 1995, 144)

Sasaki suggests that Soga and Kaneko’s modernist, non-substantialist interpretation of the Pure Land was the critical factor. Indeed, as shown below, the question of whether the Pure Land should be interpreted “substantially” or “symbolically” was at the heart of wartime doctrinal debates and at the center of Soga Ryōjin’s wartime writings.

23 Besides Ōtani Eijō’s work in managing Soga’s dismissal, Ōtani Eiryō had been brought in to mediate the dispute between university leaders and the sect during the Kaneko incident. See Chapter Three.
24 Sasaki Yū 佐々木悠 was a modernist involved in the founding of the Shinjin Society reform movement, which is discussed in the next chapter.
25 Jpn. 防波堤として再び前面におし出された感があった.
4.3 Soga’s Career 1930-1941

A review of Soga’s life and writings during the period of 1930-1941 demonstrates the nature of his wartime doctrinal and political views while living and working outside the context of the Ōtani organization. He was at that time, in Kurube’s words, “a lion released into the wilderness.” As far as I have determined, he had no job or regular source of income during this period, separate from the various lectures he was invited to give in Kyoto and at temples elsewhere in Japan. It may be that he was supported through income from his home temple, now managed by his younger brother. A couple of books of his lecture notes were also published, which may have provided some income.

In September of 1930, months after leaving Ōtani University, four of his students who had just graduated (Matsubara Yūzen, Yasuda Rijin, Kitahara Shigemaro, and Yamazaki Shun’ei) founded the independent Kōbō Gakuen 興法学園 (Raise the Dharma Academy), where they lived together and received dharma instruction mainly from Soga and Kaneko. Kurube was also involved in the founding of the academy, though he did not take up residence there (ODH, vol. 1: 357). From June 1931, they published the Kōbō journal. Kaneko was hired at Hiroshima University of Literature and Science in 1930, but remained in Kyoto, only traveling to Hiroshima for two days at a time to give lectures. In 1933, he moved to Hiroshima, which led Kōbō Gakuen to close. Around that time, Soga began lecturing students at his home under the name of Rannonkai 鴨音会 (Shinran’s Voice Society) (ibid., 359-60). By 1935, many of Soga’s
students had returned to their hometowns or taken up jobs outside of Kyoto. In order to continue to receive the teaching of Soga, Kaneko, and Takamitsu Daisen (a preacher closely associated with Akegarasu Haya), they established the Kaishin journal. Despite not doing any advertising, the readership expanded to about 1000 readers (Soga 1970-1972b, vol. 1: 4). This journal continued until 1944, and Soga contributed a short article to it almost every month until July 1941 (the month of his reinstatement as kōshi). These articles are said to be the last things that Soga ever wrote—all of his works from this period forward were lectures that were transcribed. Besides the Kaishin articles, another highlight of Soga’s career during this period was the lecture he gave at his 60th birthday celebration in 1935, entitled “Shinran’s View of Buddhist History” (published 1936).26

Kami

First, regarding the journal’s name, the presence in the title of the character 神 (shin) is significant, for it is suggestive of kami (神), Shintō (神道), divine country (shinkoku 神国), and so on. In fact, the presence of the character 神 in the title likely accounts for why it was allowed to continue publication all the way up until 1944 when many other journals were forced to discontinue (Mizushima 2010, 439-40). Soga was responsible for naming the journal. In his first article in the journal in June 1935, he explains that he discovered the phrase 開神悦体 (kaishin

26 This lecture was a theological response to the dominant positivist narrative of Buddhist history put forward by Buddhist studies scholars. A section of this work has been translated into English by Jan Van Bragt in Blum and Rhodes (2011).
etsutai; tamashii o hiraki, mi o yorokobashimete) in a passage from the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life* on the jeweled pond in the Pure Land. In English, the passage has been translated as follows:

If the bodhisattvas and followers enter these jeweled ponds and wish that the water cover only their feet, the water will only cover them up to the feet. If they wish that the water reach only to their knees, the water will reach up only to the knees... How warm or cool the water will be is regulated spontaneously, naturally, and exactly as they may wish it to be. *It opens the mind, delights the body* 開神悦体, and washes away all impurities from the heart. It is pure, clear, and limpid—so pure that it is imperceptible. (Gomez 1996, 182; JSS, 35-36)

Soga further explains his interest in this phrase:

Generally, one excludes words like soul 魂, kami 神, spirit 精, or spirit 靈, and expresses the principle that all dharmas have no self with words like mind 心, thought 意, or consciousness 識. Yet in the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life*, one finds use of the phrase “kaishin 開神” just at the point where the marvelous world of bliss and adornment is presented. This really caught my attention. (SRS, vol. 5: 11)

He goes on to note the further appearance in the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life* of a number of other terms containing the character 神 (魂神, 天神, 神逝, 神明, 神闇, 精神, 降神). His further analysis specifically discusses the following phrases: *tenjin kokushi* 天神尅識 and *shōjin tsūku* 精神痛苦 originally found in these passages:

The Buddha said: “The second evil is that people in this world... have no regard for obligations and ethical principles of any kind and fail to obey the law of the land... In their present lives they carry out their evil deeds again. *The deities of Heaven keep an accurate record* 天神尅識, inscribing these persons' individual names. (Gomez 1996, 206-8; JSS, 64-65)

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In Inagaki’s translation, the phrase is translated “comforts the body and refreshes the mind” (1995, 262).
The Buddha said: “The fourth evil is that people in this world give no thought to the cultivation of the good... Their crimes and transgressions drag them away—they must go to face their new destination. The retribution of transgression comes naturally, they cannot avoid or escape it. Their former actions will only allow them to enter the red-hot cauldrons of Hell. Then their bodies and mind will be torn to pieces and crushed, and their spirit will suffer the torments and the pain 精神痛苦. (ibid., 209-10; JSS, 68-69)

Soga comments:

Truly, as for the kami (deities) and tamashiki (spirits)28 spoken of in “the deities of Heaven keep an accurate record” and “their spirits will suffer the torments and the pain,” there is between them a distinction between inner and outer, high and low, great and small, but at the same time, an overpowering feeling of majesty and sacredness is imparted. This is fundamentally different than the impression of naturalness of purity and serenity that comes from words like “Tathāgata Buddha” and “mental consciousness.” Why in the former is one asked to have faith irrationally while in the latter case one is asked to have faith out of a principle of pure truth? Isn’t it because within this defiled world of the karmic path (gyōdō 業道), we absolutely cannot transcend that karmic path? Isn’t it because it is only in the Pure Land of the Primal Vow that one can naturally be obedient to one’s karmic path and thereby transcend it? (SRS, vol. 5: 12)

In explaining the journal’s title, Soga refrains from any direct reference to Shintō, couching his decision to name the journal Kaishin in terms of a theological discussion of passages within the Sutra of Immeasurable Life. Yet his sudden interest in this character 神 at a time when Shintō ideology was on the rise can hardly be coincidental. It seems Soga was searching for a way to talk positively about kami from a Shin perspective.

As he shows, references to 神 (kami, shin) do appear frequently in Shin scriptures.

According to his interpretation, the language of “deities” and “spirit/soul” is used in these

28 Here Soga renders “kami” and “tamashiki” in katakana.
passages rather than that of “Tathāgata” and “consciousness” to make a certain emotional impact on the reader. The language of “deities” emphasizes a distinction between outer and inner, high and low, which communicates to the reader a feeling of awe. This is contrary to the “purity and serenity” felt when using language more closely tied to the notion of non-dualism. In the former case of more substantialist language (which says that there is a majestic deity “out there” knowing and recording your every action and that you do have a soul that is trapped in a cycle of suffering), one is compelled to discard one’s own, self-powered rationalist search for truth, accept one’s karmic path, and fully entrust oneself to Amida Buddha. In the latter case of philosophical language (which says that there is a truth about the world theoretically discoverable by anyone and that there is ultimately no “self” that is suffering), one is motivated to try to discover that truth oneself. The key word here is “irrationally.” Shin Buddhism, for Soga, is a path to truth that requires one to give up one’s dependence on reasoning and give oneself over to faith. Rationality is tied up with self-power, presenting a major obstacle to finding salvation. Thus, Soga uses the topic of kami to explain the “irrationality” and “substantialist” language one finds in Shin teachings.

In the rest of his Kaishin articles, Soga occasionally references “the national crisis” and obliquely relates his ideas to pressing social-political issues, but on the whole, the articles are quite abstract and theologically focused. However, there can be no question that Soga’s writings on kami had imperialist implications. In 1958 when the articles were republished as a book by Soga’s followers, it was given the title Kokoro o hiraku— an unconventional
pronunciation that avoids the sense of a connection to Shinto or imperial ideology—and five articles were not included. The same five articles were also not included in the 1970-1972 Soga Ryōjin senshū (Selected Works of Soga Ryōjin). One of these articles, “Kami and Buddhas,” written in 1938, is quoted in Fukushima (1995: 170). There, Soga describes kami and Buddhas together as an essential part of Japanese culture from antiquity that brings forth in Japanese people their “Japanese instinct.” He goes on to state that kami and Buddhas are equally absolute, neither of them lesser than or dependent upon the other, each with their own historical function. Such statements’ endorsement of the existence and significance of kami, whatever deeper meaning Soga may have intended, are examples of Soga’s “war cooperation” that were blotted from the historical record due to their embarrassing nature.

An Immanent Pure Land

The immanence of the Pure Land is a familiar theme, directly connected to Kaneko’s The Idea of the Pure Land. Soga first raises the topic in Kaishin in an October 1935 essay written as a reflection on Kaneko’s Kokka risō to shite no shiijūhachi gan (The Forty-Eight Vows as National Ideals).” Soga writes:

I believe that the many Buddhas of the six directions described in the Amida Sutra are ultimately not elsewhere than this earth. I also think that one should not jump to the conclusion that Amida Buddha’s Western land of bliss necessarily lies beyond an expanse of space...

29 I do not currently have access to these five articles.
Our contemplation of the Pure Land in faith signifies naturally coming to reside there... whatever may be the case, it is clear at least that our spirits will not fly a million lands to the West after we die. (SRS, vol. 5: 16)

Five years later, he is still returning to the same theme. For example, in a June 1940 essay entitled “The Eyes of Shin,” he begins:

Since the passing of our Founder [Shinran], already 670 years have passed, yet there remains as before a lack of clarity in regard to Shin teachings. This is extremely regrettable. Even today, people still take rebirth and becoming Buddha in another land after death as the main principle. In the end, they cannot transcend the domain of self as residing in this present body, [a view] which is characterized by idealism. (ibid., 125)

The essay concludes:

The relationship between the defiled land and the Pure Land is certainly not a geographical one of separate bodies (bettaiteki 別体的), as we normally think. Rather, their relationship is one of inner necessity of cause and effect of an earlier thought and a later thought. In the earlier thought is death; in the later thought is rebirth.

If one contemplates Amida’s name, then the present fact has obtained of “one thought of entrusting is equal to entering definite determination” (一念帰命即是入必定). Within “right determination” (shōjō 正定), nirvana has changed from an ideal to a fact. At the stage of “right determination in the present life” (genshō shōjō 現生正定) we feel ultimate satisfaction, and there is no point of dissatisfaction left. This one thing only is our greatest concern. Future rebirth and Buddhahood should totally be left in the hands of the Tathāgata. (ibid., 126)

Soga explains rebirth in the Pure Land in terms of a succession of thoughts. One thought of faith brings about the state of “right determination,” in which nirvana and ultimate satisfaction are realized. This state is a Shin follower's only goal. Once one’s salvation in the Pure Land has become “determined” through the act of faith, the distinction between assurance of future salvation and actual present salvation becomes meaningless. Likewise, the distinction between being embraced by the Buddha and becoming a Buddha oneself becomes meaningless. One has
already left behind such self-motivated concerns. “Rebirth” and the “Pure Land” have their primary meaning, for Soga, in relation to this life and this world. Soga’s views here are basically consistent with Kiyozawa’s agnosticism regarding an afterlife and Kaneko’s explanation of the Pure Land.

**Instinct**

Soga’s interest in “instinct” (honnō 本能), on the other hand, is a new departure. According to Murayama Yasushi’s analysis, Soga’s use of the term “instinct” was part of a larger project of substituting modern language for technical Buddhist terms, just as he substituted the term “symbolize” (shōchō 象徴) for “adorn” (shōgon 莊厳) (Murayama 2011, 24, 30). Such a pattern is also characteristic of Kaneko’s work (e.g. rendering the “Pure Land” using Western philosophical language of “Ideas”) and in Kiyozawa’s work (e.g. speaking of “Amida Buddha” as “the Absolute Infinite” and “faith” in terms of “religious experience”). Soga uses “instinct” as a more accessible rendering of “accumulated karma” (shukugō 宿業). “Accumulated karma” traditionally refers to the good and bad deeds one has performed in the past, which naturally produce good and bad results in one’s present life. By switching from “accumulated karma” to “instinct,” Soga moves away from the idea of past lives toward a more abstract, time-neutral term. Just as the Shin modernists are generally agnostic regarding the afterlife, Soga is here agnostic regarding previous lives. Soga gives no explanation as to where he drew this term from, except to contrast his use of the term with its connotations in the West as “humans’ base
appetities” (Kaishin: 65). The terms for “instinct” (honnō 本能; literally “root ability” or “root power”) and for the core Shin teaching of the “Primal Vow” (hongan 本願) contain the same character hon 本, meaning root or fundamental. If the “Primal Vow” is expressive of the compassion and power of the Buddha, “instinct” is what human beings are at their root. In Soga’s telling, this root nature is twofold: it is our evil nature and also our potential to be saved and to become Buddhas. This aligns with the Shin teaching that “evil persons are the true object [of Amida’s vow]” (akunin shōki 悪人正機).

In a January 1936 article in Kaishin, following a discussion of that Shin teaching, Soga introduces his reading of “accumulated karma” as “instinct”:

I understand “accumulated karma” as “instinct.” Although we think as if all our actions (all activities of walking, standing, sitting, and laying down) are determined by our moral reasoning (dōtokuteki risei 道徳的理性), if one deeply reflects, one painfully realizes that they are all determined by instinct. Human life is truly painful and pitiful. Life and death are all by instinct. What layer of phenomena is more basic than this?

In relation to instinct, we are all just accidental, unknowing, powerless. This is why we try to resist instinct through the use of reason. Once one has truly reflected upon the delusion of reason and introspected upon its powerlessness, one may come to hear in this dreadful instinct the voice of the summons of great compassion. In moralistic reasoning, by contrast, one only encounters voices dispatching one in the wrong directions. (SRS, vol. 5: 22)

Soga thus sets up a dichotomy between “instinct” and “moral reasoning,” in which the former is the true determinant of our decisions and actions and the latter is our deluded attempt to

30 There is resonance here with the Chan/Zen term “original face” (honrai menmoku 本来面目), a term used to indicate people’s innate Buddha-nature or clarity of mind.
resist this inevitability. “Instinct” is dreadful, the all-powerful source of our “painful and pitiful” existence, but it is also the means by which we become embraced by the Buddha’s compassion.

“Instinct” is thus not something internal to and possessed by humans; it is the manifestation of a relationship between humans and the larger world. Thus, elsewhere, he defines instinct as “the interaction of empathy and response” (kannō dōkō 感応道交) (Itō 1993, 202). This Buddhist teaching refers to the “emotional receptivity” (kan 感) of sentient beings to the saving power of the Buddha and the “response” (ō応) of the Buddha to the desires of sentient beings.31

Regarding the proper attitude toward “instinct” or “accumulated karma,” Soga writes in an August 1936 Kaishin article:

> As I see it, accumulated karma is the [collection of] natural facts that we can do nothing about. However, we are free to view it as we wish. We of course must not look upon it lightly, but on the other hand, we also must not conceptualize and construct laws regarding it, trapping it, arbitrarily praising the good and fearing the bad. (SRS, vol. 5: 35)

The course of our actions are determined by instinct, but our minds are free to think about instinct as we wish. Rather than judging instinct a problem to be objectified, judged, and controlled, humans ought to accept and learn from it.

Further explanation is found in the following Kaishin passage from February 1941:

> They [who rely upon reasoning] simply grasp onto the principle of cause and effect, but have not introspected into the deeper truth of causes and conditions. They do not realize that beyond cause and effect there lies a limitless world of conditions. The world

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of cause and effect is the object of reason. The world of causes and conditions is the object of instinctual feeling (honnō-teki kankaku 本能的感覚). (SRS, vol. 5: 139)

In contrast to moral reasoning, which takes causes and effects as its object, instinctual feeling takes causes and conditions as its object. In the former case, there is the presumption that the process can be controlled by intellection and deliberate choice. In the latter case, one perceives the deeper structure to the law of causation, whereby an infinity of “conditions” interacts with “causes,” affecting the resulting “effect.” By “instinctually feeling” this infinitely complex reality of causes and conditions, one realizes the ultimate futility of moral reasoning. Instead of trying to control the course of one’s life or the world through moral reasoning, one learns to give oneself over to the flow of “causes and conditions,” which is to say, one learns to entrust oneself to Other Power.

Soga’s November 1940 Kaishin essay provides his fullest explanation of the difference between a life led through moral reasoning and one given over to instinct. In this essay, he presents moral reasoning as the function that is thought to separate man from animals and connect him to the divine. This attitude toward and use of moral reasoning serves to harden humans’ delusional belief in a self:

From the start, in the world of the self, there is only space, but no time. There is conflict, but no relativity. The former [world of only space] is a world of dispute; the latter [world of time] is a world of harmony. The former has assertions; the latter has

32 Here one can clearly see connections with Kiyozawa’s writings on banbutsu ittai (all things in the universe are one body) and its relation to moral responsibility.
silence. In the former, the absolute must be singular and not two; in the latter, one clearly realizes the absolute in its singularity and non-duality. Essentially, in the world of the self, there is no surplus [of time] to wait for the moment. Therefore, there is no principle of the arrival of the moment. For the sake of a rationalized goal, they carry out irrational strategies through the assertion of power. They do not have the inner understanding of those who quietly await the moment which truly could appear at any time. They do not entrust in the dharma. They do not entrust in the one path of things occurring spontaneously according to the dharma. They do not entrust in the dharma that exceeds moments but simultaneously is in sympathetic resonance with all moments. In the self lies an accidental destiny. In the dharma lies necessary karma. The former meets with the arising of theories of liberty and of subjugation. For the latter is opened the truth of the necessity of taking refuge. (SRS, vol. 5: 136)

In Soga’s view, those who act according to belief in a self and in the powers of human reason are intent on pursuing their own self-conceived “rationalized goals” through whatever means necessary (dispute, irrational strategies, the assertion of power, subjugation of others). Those who have awakened to the reality of dharma realize the necessity of letting karma unfold, taking refuge in Other Power, and “quietly waiting” for the Buddha’s power to do its work. Soga explains this distinction of asserting one’s powers now versus being silent in the face of karmic process in terms of an awakening to the reality of time.\(^{33}\)

Soga’s Kaishin writings contain numerous mentions of the national crisis, but he generally sticks to theological topics. His incessant comparison of “the West” and Christianity with Japan and Buddhism certainly fits with ultra-nationalist discourse. However, there are

\(^{33}\) This emphasis on time relates to Soga’s new focus on Buddhist history, specifically the history of the unfolding of Amida’s Original Vow as discovered by Shinran. See the essay “Shinran’s View of Buddhist History” in Blum and Rhodes (2011).
instances in which he extends his critique of rationalism and idealism to various groups within Japan—“arrogant intellectuals” (SRS, vol. 5: 33); Buddhist studies scholars (ibid., 90); and nationalist intellectuals (ibid.). His call for restraint and introspection might suggest a hint of political critique, but his primary concern seems to be to identify what “gift” Japanese Buddhists can contribute to the nation (ibid., 136). The closest he gets to political critique is in a June 1939 essay. There he expresses concern about the “fanatical abnormal psychological discourse” that he observes among Japan’s leaders, and advises “common sense” at a time when patriotic feelings are liable to get over-heated (ibid., 99). What sort of common sense does he have in mind? How should introspection and restraint inform Japanese citizens’ engagement with the war? Rather than addressing such questions, Soga jumps into a technical theological discussion.

In summary, Soga’s career in the years leading up to his reinstatement can be summarized with reference to three points: 1) positive discussion of kami connecting the deities of the rising State Shinto ideology to terms found in Shin scriptures; 2) continued argument for the immanence of the Pure Land, the wartime significance of which will become clear in the section below; and 3) an emphasis on the all-determining power of past karma through the language of “instinct,” as contrasted with the West and its belief in the powers of “moral reasoning.” This latter point conveys a rather fatalist attitude toward world events and toward one’s personal life, seeming to preclude any rational critique of the war or government.
Before moving on, it is worth noting that Soga, along with Kaneko and Akegarasu, was still memorializing and writing about Kiyozawa during this period. In April 1936, Akegarasu held a celebration at his home temple in Ishikawa prefecture. He organized the event in honor of the death anniversaries of his father (50 years), his mother (13 years), Shinran (675 years), Śākyamuni Buddha (approximately 3000 years), Prince Shōtoku (approximately 1300 years), Rennyo (approximately 450 years), and Kiyozawa (approximately 33 years). Akegarasu organized seven days of events. The final two days were set aside for religious services and a banquet while the first five days were for lectures on Prince Shōtoku, Śākyamuni, Shinran, Rennyo, and Kiyozawa respectively. This placement of Kiyozawa alongside foundational Shin figures is striking. As one concrete result of the proceedings, Akegarasu planned to collect donations to sponsor publications on each of the five major figures honored (Akegarasu 1943, 2-12). The resulting publication on Kiyozawa, Floyd Shacklock and Kunji Tajima’s Selected Essays of Manshi Kiyozawa (1936) represented the first English translations of Kiyozawa’s work, other than the 1892 Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion.³⁴

³⁴ In the “Translators’ Foreword,” Shacklock states: “This volume is practically a sentence by sentence translation of “A Collection of Kiyozawa’s Essays” (清澤文集), issued as one of the Pocket Classics of the Iwanami Press of Tokyo. My attention was drawn to it several years ago by Dr. Masaharu Anesaki, and after Mr. Tajima and I had put practically the whole thing into English, we learned that some of Kiyozawa’s admirers were anxious to issue an English edition.” He goes on to thank Yamabe Shūgaku and Akegarasu Haya for the help ad encouragement” (Kiyozawa 1936, xi-xii). Thus, it seems that this volume was the joint result of Shacklock and Kunji’s own interest in the 1928 Kiyozawa bunshū—a product of memorial celebrations for Kiyozawa’s 25 year death anniversary—and the encouragement and financing of Akegarasu and other of “Kiyozawa’s admirers.”
At the event, Soga gave a talk entitled “Praise of Reverend Kiyozawa” that discussed Kiyozawa’s life, teachings, and significance, and also touched upon some of Soga’s budding thoughts on “karma” as “instinct” (Soga 1943). Two months later in June 1936, Soga published an article in Kaishin to commemorate Kiyozawa’s death, noting memorial services that had been carried out for him at Ōtani University, the construction of a memorial pillar at Kiyozawa’s temple in Ōhama city (Aichi prefecture), and publication of the first edition of Kiyozawa Manshi zenshū (Collected Works of Kiyozawa Manshi) (1934-1935). Soga’s essay goes on to emphasize Kiyozawa’s teachings of Shin Buddhism as “a path of introspection” and as fundamentally concerned with “subjective facts.”

### 4.4 Soga’s Career, 1941-1945

**Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium: Background**

On February 13-15, 1941, the Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium was held within the grounds of the Higashi Honganji temple compound in Kyoto. The chair of the meeting was Doctrinal Studies Section Head Maruyama (who had been involved in Kaneko’s reinstatement). The main organizer and discussion leader was Ōtani Eijun. Four other brothers of the Chief

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35 Besides Soga, speakers at the event included D.T. Suzuki; Kiyozawa followers like Kaneko, Andō Shūichi, Inaba Masamaru, Sekine Ninnō, and Yamabe Shūgaku (it was Soga, Andō, and Yoshida Kenryū—a colleague of Kaneko’s in Hiroshima—who gave speeches specifically about Kiyozawa); traditionalist scholars like Ōsuga Shūdō; and brother of the Chief Abbot Ōtani Eijō. Note it is Ōtani Eijō who Soga credits as being responsible for his reinstatement into the sect. Their interactions at this event may have played a role in this.
Abbot are listed as participants on the colloquium records though only two of them came and barely spoke. Head of Sect Affairs Yasuda Riki was in attendance and gave an opening address. In total, thirty participants are listed on the colloquium records, four of whom were unable to attend. In addition to Soga, Kaneko, and Akegarasu, the active participants were as follows:

Ōtani Eijun 大谷瑩潤 (1890-1973)  
11th son of former Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōei; Head of Sect Affairs from April 1941-January 1945

Saitō Yuishin 斉藤唯信 (1865-1957)  
traditionalist scholar; Jitōryō member when Kaneko and Soga were ousted; appointment to position of Ōtani University president was nullified in 1930-1931 controversy; the main obstacle to Kaneko’s reinstatement

Kōno Hōun 河野法雲 (1867-1946)  
traditionalist scholar; Jitōryō member when Kaneko and Soga were ousted; Ōtani University president from 1934-1936; resigned over controversy of a 1935 essay that declared the Emperor to be a “foolish being” (bonbu 凡夫) like everyone else36

Ōsuga Shūdō 大須賀秀道 (1876-1962)  
traditionalist scholar; appointed kōshi and Jitō member in 1936; Ōtani University president from 1938-1941

Katō Chigaku 加藤智学 (1883-unknown)  
traditionalist scholar; Jitōryō office manager (寮司主事) during Kaneko heresy affair; appointed kōshi in 1942

Kashiwahara Yūgi 柏原祐義 (1884-1974)  
traditionalist scholar; retired from Ōtani University professorship in 1941 and returned to hometown in Shiga prefecture; appointed kōshi in 1951

36 The article was entitled “Shūso shōnin no jingikan 宗祖聖人の神祇観” and appeared in the Shinshū journal in 1935.
Takenaka Shigemaru 竹中茂丸 (1870-1943): adviser (sanmu 参務) to Head of Sect Affairs Yasuda Riki

Kizu Muan 木津無庵 (1867-1943)
Shin scholar who had returned to lay life in 1925 but became a priest again and joined the Ōtani administration in 1942 to contribute to the war effort.

Over the course of the three days, four pre-determined topics were covered: 1) view of kami (honji suijaku, talismans, the Yasukuni Shrine question); 2) Pure Land teaching’s “weary [of this world] and rejoice [in nirvana] thought” (views of the kokutai); 3) “ultimate and conventional two truths” (way of the imperial subject); and 4) Shin doctrinal studies that respond to the times. I will focus my discussion on the first two topics—the relation between Buddhism and State Shinto and the relation between seeking rebirth in the Pure Land and upholding one’s duties to the nation in this world.

Ōtani Eijun introduced the conference with a short address, expressing the Ōtani organization’s desire to get its teachings in line with the principles and policies of the state and contribute to the “holy war”; noting government demands for non-superstitious religion that arises from the Japanese people; and warning that if consensus cannot be reached, the Chief Abbot will be left to make decisions unilaterally. The terms are clear: come to a consensus on new interpretations of Shin teachings that serve the war effort, or be side-lined. The question was not whether Shin Buddhism aligned with the principles and policies of the state; it was how to articulate that alignment.
Passions ran high throughout the conference with several outbursts of anger, frustration, and even tears. Participants largely fell into three main groups: traditionalists who downplayed the scope and demands of State Shinto and resisted Shin-Shinto amalgamation; modernists who glorified the Emperor and argued passionately for Shin-Shinto amalgamation; and administrators and priests who were impatient with the scholars’ disputation and sought clear and practical solutions to the problems at hand.

*Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium: Buddha and Kami*

In the first day’s discussion on the relation between Buddha and *kami*, the dynamic of dispute between traditionalists, modernists, and administrators can be seen in the an argument between traditionalist Kōno Hōun and modernist Akegarasu Haya, which eventually calls forth the ire of administrator Ōtani Eishō. Ōtani Eijun first asks senior scholar Saitō Yuishin to express his opinion regarding the traditional theory of “Buddhas as the original ground and *kami* as traces” (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹). Saitō’s answer emphasizes that one does not really find such a teaching in Shinran’s *Kyōgyōshinshō*, so it can be dispensed with. Here Saitō’s attitude is to report the contents of Shin scripture without reference to contemporary political demands (Hokurikugun Shosha 1982, 4).

Once Ōtani Eijun opens the discussion to the floor, Akegarasu pushes back against Saitō, noting Shinran’s hymns in praise of Imperial Prince Shōtoku Taishi as a “manifestation” of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and asking whether this has no relation to the theory of *kami* as
“traces.” Kōno then enters with a long explanation of his previous research on these issues. His finding is that *kami* before and after the Meiji period’s separation of *kami* and Buddhas ought to be distinguished. Previously to the Meiji period, *kami* belonged to “religious Shinto,” but now, *kami* relate only to the morality of paying reverence towards one’s ancestors (ibid., 5).

Akegarasu pushes back, asking Kōno to speak on the question of ritual prayer (*norito* 祝詞), including the great purification rituals (*Nakatomi no harae* 中臣祓). Kōno answers that purification prayers derive from Shintō prior to the Meiji period, and that “praying to *kami*” (*kami ni kitō suru* 神に祈祷する) is a “mistake of the government.” All one ought to be doing is “repaying debts” to one’s ancestors. The conversation shifts toward other participants, who discuss the point that “original ground-traces” theory has been largely gotten rid of in modern Shinto, so that topic is not the most perinent.

Eventually, Ōtani Eijun prods Soga to join the conversation. Soga responds as follows:

Everyone here is saying “religious, religious,” and saying that Japanese *kami* are not religious. But are the Buddhas of Buddhist teachings religious? Are they the same as God in Christianity? I myself think that Amida Buddha is our ancestor. The term “religious” implies [a God having] omniscience and omnipotence, so there is no causal stage of practice. Because Amida had a causal stage of practice, Amida is different from “religious” gods. Japanese *kami* and Amida are similar. I think that Amida is our ancestor. This is similar to how Amatarasu Ōmikami is our ancestor. (ibid., 8)

Akegarasu then asks Soga, “Is there a difference between ancestor Amatarasu Ōmikami and ancestor Amida?” to which Soga replies, “They cannot be compared.”

Kōno and others, following the government line that Shinto is non-religious, are attempting to differentiate the non-religious duty of paying reverence toward one’s ancestors
and religious faith in Amida Buddha. They argue that revering Japanese *kami* at shrines and fulfilling one’s obligation to “unite under the Emperor” (*tennō kiitsu* 天皇帰一) are separate from and thus not in conflict with their total faith and entrusting in Amida Buddha. In trying to maintain this position, Kōno is forced at times to point to “mistakes of the government” in promoting prayer to *kami* and the government’s “historical contradiction” of promoting Shinto altars in private homes.\(^{37}\) Soga, on the other hand, notes the similarities in *kami* and Buddhas—neither are “religious,” and both can be understood as “ancestors.” Soga’s view of Amida Buddha as not a transcendent God but a human ancestor is an expression of his immanentalist reading of Amida and his Pure Land.

After further extended discussion of the religious or non-religious nature of *kami* and an outburst of frustration by Kawasaki Kenryō at the need to move on to the practical question of how to best support the state, Ōtani Eijun asks whether an acceptable conclusion might be to say that “*kami* and Buddhas are both manifestations of the life of the universe, which is to say suchness.” Kaneko expresses his agreement. Kōno does as well, but cannot resist adding that Shinto is “empty of content” (*naiyō wa kūkyo* 内容は空虚) beyond reverence towards one’s ancestors. Kōno explains:

\(^{37}\) According to Kōno, it is contradictory for the government to promote shinto altars in private homes because the *kami* of Ise Shrine can only be properly revered within Ise’s inner shrine. The government, therefore, ought to be compelled to change its policies (ibid., 14).
The Japanese spirit is to absorb foreign thought. Therefore, it will not do to just revive an empty thing. At this point, it is fine to no longer use the theory of “origin and traces.” However, Shin teachings contained in the Sutra of Immeasurable Life’s passages on the three poisons and five evils are the moral theory of Shin Buddhism, and Japanese loyalty to leaders and love of country is found therein. This moral dimension must be strongly expressed (11).

An argument ensues (11-12):

Akegarasu: In what Professor Kōno just said, there is something that cannot be allowed to pass. I find it hard to hear you say “empty.” Why do you say “empty”?

Kōno: I am saying that Buddhism and other factors developed it [Shintō].

Akegarasu: But what do you mean by “empty”?!?

Kōno: The five cardinal virtues do not appear in the Kojiki [Shinto scripture].

Akegarasu: That it was able to be cultivated means it was endowed with the potential for growth from its beginnings. Just because electricity and radio are not spoken of in the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, can we say that Śākyamuni’s teachings were empty? My belief is that the Japanese spirit was already perfected within the imperial commands.

Ōtani Eishō: Discussion leader! Are we holding a debate here?! Please put a stop to this argument for the sake of argument.

Akegarasu: I apologize.

Ōtani Eijun: Well, let us here adjourn for a short break.

Kōno again tries to downplay the scope and significance of the necessity of having allegiance toward Shinto. At its core, according to Kōno, Shinto is “empty” of ethical content, so it is Buddhism that ought to inform the ethical behavior of Japanese people, including in their relation to the state and Emperor. Kōno states that it is fine to nominally dispense with the “origins-traces” theory, but he insists that it was Buddhism that developed and gave content to
Shinto. Akegarasu takes great offense to this, stating that Shinto developed primarily from its own seeds (rather than from Buddhism’s additions to it) and that the Emperor and his commands to the Japanese people have always been perfect.

Later on in the day, the discussion turns to the topic of Yasukuni Shrine and the spiritual prospects for those who die in battle. First, Kashiwahara Yūgi is called on to report on the findings of a panel of scholars held the previous October. The relevant passage reads:

Because the spirits prayed to at Yasukuni Shrine are those who carried out the great deed of furthering the imperial mission, we look up to them as those who have practiced the great karmic deeds of Bodhisattvas. However, the question of whether or not one attains rebirth must be entrusted to the great compassion of the Tathāgata and is not something that we can calculate. (40)

Kashiwahara notes that after the report was drafted, argument persisted as to whether it is acceptable to speak of war service as “the great karmic deeds of Bodhisattvas” since many Japanese soldiers are not Buddhist.

Katō Chigaku responds to Kashiwahara with a story of attending a doctrinal affairs meeting at which the director had asked everyone whether it was right for him to have told the parent of a son who had died in battle that he had certainly gone to the Pure Land. At that time, Katō had replied that it was not okay. Rebirth in the Pure Land hinges on whether one has faith. Moreover, assuring salvation to those who were not even Buddhist would give the Shin tradition a bad name. Tenrikyo members or Christians might go to the Plain of High Heaven or the Kingdom of Heaven, but it cannot be said across the board that they will be reborn in the Pure Land. To say so would just be deception (15).
The conversation proceeds as follows (15-16) (the parenthetical remark is found in the original document):

Kōno: Some preachers say that the war dead all go to the Pure Land, but I think that it depends on people’s faith. When I said this previously, my comments were misinterpreted. It was said that I had claimed the war dead were falling into hell. The kami of Yasukuni are kami of morality. The state recognizes the work [of the war dead] and treats them as kami. I think it would be best to remove the sentence on “the great karmic deeds of Bodhisattvas.”

Kaneko: Isn’t it more the case that priests are not indicating where the dead have gone, but rather expressing our feelings that the dead have all become Buddha?

Soga: Even if on an individual level, it is as Mr. Katō says, on a historical level, they will become kami. Isn’t it the same with Amida’s Primal Vow? Even those who commit the ten evils or the five grave offenses are saved. At the time of death, everyone becomes Buddha. People who die for the country become kami. Becoming kami, they will also become Buddha. Amida’s Primal Vow and the Emperor’s Primal Vow are in accord.

Ōsuga: Even in the Shin sect, the dead are all given the name “Shaku” [Śākyamuni], given memorial services befitting a Buddha, and revered as Buddhas. From that perspective, I suppose we can treat them as Buddhas. Ha ha!

Kaneko: Mr. Katō’s position is individualistic. (From here, the argument gets heated.)

Soga: Through the power of history, it can be accomplished. It is accomplished through the majesty of the Emperor. Mr. Katō’s explanation is arrogant. It leads toward the creation of cliques within the Japanese nation. It misunderstands the meaning of Buddhism. All the dead become Buddha.

Kashiwahara: Where is there any relationship between entrusting in the majesty of the Emperor and the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha?

Akegarasu: I believe that the Primal Vow of the Emperor and the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha are the same. It would be problematic if they were in conflict.

Kōno: What about Tenrikyō followers?
Soga: Tenrikyō followers also die through the majesty of the Emperor.

Akegarasu: Professor [Kōno] says that [Shintō] was empty until the entrance of Buddhism, but that is not the case. There is the Emperor’s “great mind” (大御心). There is the virtue of the unbroken imperial line. These can be thought of as manifestations of Buddha mind. That is why this war is a holy war. Through reverently following the Emperor, one becomes a kami. There is nothing odd about what is being said here.

Soga: That’s right. Shin Pure Land Buddhism is also this way. Even evil beings are saved. All those who single-mindedly take refuge in the Buddha are saved. No matter how evil the person, if one calls upon the kami, one becomes a kami.

Ōtani Eijun: Let us end here for the day.

Katō, Kōno, and Kashiwahara are all resistant to the idea of telling soldiers—or the grieving family members of soldiers who have died—that death in this war leads to rebirth in the Pure Land. They view loyalty to the Emperor and reverence toward kami as secular activities unrelated to Buddhist soteriology. To treat this war as a sacred endeavor that will bring its victims salvation is just deception. Ōsuga even finds the view that the war dead will all become Buddha to be laughable.

But Kaneko, Soga, and Akegarasu are not laughing. Kaneko suggests that Shin preachers, in speaking on the destination and fate of dead individuals, are really speaking about the feelings and ideals of those who are still living. Soga’s position is voiced in the statement, “Even if on an individual level, it is as Mr. Katō says, on a historical level, they will become kami. Isn’t it the same with Amida’s Primal Vow?” Similarly, he states, “Through the power of history, it can be accomplished.” For any given individual, salvation depends on the presence or absence
of faith in Amida Buddha. But in the broader context of history, all sentient beings are destined
to be saved. The critical point to understand is that Soga is not thinking about issues of
salvation on an individual level. Rather he is thinking about them on a world historical level. As
he said in his 1936 lecture “Shinran’s View of Buddhist History”: “In [Shinran’s] view, our true
self-realization of the Buddhist path lies within the history of the nenbutsu and consists in our
participation in that course of events” (Blum and Rhodes 2011, 136). And as he stated in his
1913 essay “A Savior on Earth,” “The Tathāgata becoming me saves me,” and “When the
Tathāgata becomes me, it signals the birth of Dharmākara Bodhisattva” (ibid., 107). The
attainment of faith signals a shift in identity—Dharmākara Bodhisattva is born within oneself,
and one’s own personal life history is superseded through participation in the “history of the
nenbutsu.” Attaining faith and entering into this history is a Shin Buddhist’s only concern—
“Future rebirth and Buddhahood should totally be left in the hands of the Tathāgata” (SRS, vol.
5: 126). In coming to attain faith, it is critical to realize that “all will become Buddhas”—that
Amida’s power is infinite and extends even to the evilest beings. This realization is what
enables Amida’s salvific power to take place. Thus, Shin preachers ought to proclaim loudly to
all who will listen that all will be saved, reborn into Amida’s Pure Land.

Here Soga specifically praises dying for the Emperor, and he heartily agrees with
Akegarasu’s reading of Japanese Emperors as manifestations of Buddha mind. Apparently, for
Soga, cultivation of faith in the Japanese Emperor is equivalent to or a preparatory stage
toward attaining faith in Amida Buddha. In both cases, the individual gives oneself over to an
Other Power, letting go of attachment to a self and merging with a larger self and larger history.

Soga, Kaneko, and Akegarasu’s modernist reading of “Amida” and his “Pure Land” as symbolic of immanent realities in this world led them toward the belief that the Japanese Emperor was equivalent to or somehow expressive of Amida Buddha, that giving oneself over to the national cause was equivalent to giving oneself over to the historical mission of Amida’s Primal Vow.

Traditionalists like Kōno who continued to speak of Amida and the Pure Land as other-worldly were less prone to such beliefs.

*Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium: Rebirth in the Pure Land*

The second topic of the colloquium was Pure Land teaching’s “weary [of this world] and rejoice [in Nirvana] thought.” First, Ōsuga summarizes the problem that Shin has come under particular attack as a Buddhist tradition that outspokenly teaches a desire to leave this world and be reborn in a better one, and he reviews relevant quotations from Shinran and other Shin authorities. Akegarasu then offers a long statement on the connections between Amida’s Pure Land and Amaterasu’s “divine land” (*shinkoku* 神国). Here is an excerpt:

Some people say that as long as a land has prisons and black markets, it is a defiled land. This is a means of testing [whether a land is] a divine land. To speak of the Japanese nation is to speak of an ideal (*risō* 理想). That there are black markets is because Japanese citizens are not in accord with the mind of the Emperor and have not awakened to their identity as imperial subjects. Present reality is made up of an empty world, a deluded world. The shift from this deluded world to the true world is brought
about by purification (harae 祓), by instruction (kyōka 敎化). It is instruction that causes Japanese citizens to awaken to the divine land. A world of delusion is not the true world; it is the deluded world. To awake from delusion, expressed in terms of “lands,” is to abandon this world and be born in the other world (higan 彼岸). National instruction (kokumin kyōka) brings about rebirth. National education is perfected in Amaterasu. We are reborn into that Pure Land. The Shin teaching of “right determination in the present life” has this meaning... (Hokurikugun Shōsha 1995, 17)

In this passage, Akegarasu equates a Japanese citizen’s awakening to his or her identity as an imperial subject in a (potentially) divine land with Buddhist awakening and rebirth. In making this point, he argues that Shinran’s concept of rebirth in the Pure Land is expressed best by his teaching of “right determination in the present life.” That is, even Shin teachings that seem to point to some other reality are ultimately concerned with this life and present reality. In response to Ōsuga’s bewildered question—“How are the ‘divine land’ and ‘right determination in the present life’ connected?”—Akegarasu states his point even more plainly: “When the imperial way is truly put into practice, that is the Pure Land.”

Kaneko soon enters the conversation with a long speech of his own. He begins by expressing his agreement with the statements of Soga on the previous day that Buddhas (specifically Amida) and kami (specifically Amaterasu) can be understood as mother and father figures—separate but united by a common purpose (ibid., 9). Kaneko adds that Buddhist teachings and the way of the kami both entered into history when “transnational things”

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38 “Kyōka 敎化” has two senses: it can point to the “moral suasion” campaigns of the Japanese government (see Garon 1997) or to Buddhist preaching. Akegarasu’s discussion seems to intentionally conflate the two meanings.
chōkokka-tekina mono 超国家的なもの) appeared in the world through “nori のり” (ibid., 19).

Niino Kazunobu postulates that characters for dharma/law (法), principle (則), or standard (矩) might be indicated by Kaneko’s “nori” in addition to its meaning of “pronouncement” (senkoku 宣告—the character 宣 can be pronounced “nori”) (2014, 141). In the case of Shintō, “nori” was manifested through the Emperor. It is because the source of Shintō lies in “transnational things” that one can speak of “eight corners of the world under one roof” (hakkō icchū 八紘一宇)—the political slogan employed to promote the sense of a mission of world conquest. Kaneko further argues that Amida’s Primal Vow is the same as “the kami’s Primal Vow” (kami no hongan) and “the Emperor’s vow” (tennō no negai), for the demand to “unite as one” (kiitsu 帰一) under the Emperor implies a singularity of purpose that could not co-exist with faith in Amida Buddha if the Buddha and kami were distinct. The two are like father and mother who use different words to express a common purpose. It is Buddhist followers’ narrow thinking that leads them to focus only on Buddhas.

At this point in his discussion, Kaneko abruptly raises the topic of the Pure Land:

What is the “land” of “Pure Land”? That is the fundamental thing. However, I will not speak on that now. (silent for awhile) I am afraid to touch upon this issue. The way of the kami possesses within it things transcendent of the nation. Therefore, it is certain that the country of Buddhas is the country of kami. Our ancestors’ country was the Pure Land. The Pure Land scriptures are the nation’s scriptures. The Pure Land nenbutsu, just as it is, is praise of the country of kami. There is no need now to think more about Shin Buddhism’s Japanese spirit. Misunderstandings have arisen regarding its fundamental spirit. That is because we treat it as a private possession. I am so joyful about being in the land of Japan. (crying for awhile) There is nothing else besides rebirth through the nenbutsu. There is a need to think about whether the haibutsu kishaku [persecution of Buddhism] was the sin of those who carried it out or of those to whom it was carried
out. We have been given plenty of time in these sixty years to reflect upon this. I regret that such an extremely simple issue has become this complicated. Those who call out the _nenbutsu_ and uphold their public duty are taken to be the greatest of demons.39 (Kaneko is crying. Akegarasu also bows his head down to the desk and cries.) In any case, I agree with what Mr. Akegarasu said. All this talk of “uniting as one” is not a vow that lacks a basis. It is the same as the Buddha’s Vow. Isn’t that correct? If one truly clarifies the meaning of _nenbutsu_ rebirth on this point, one will see that it is correct. (Hokurikugun Shōsha 1995, 19-20)

In addressing the issue of the relationship between a Shin Buddhist’s faith and his or her public duty, Kaneko says the fundamental question is the nature of the “land” of the Pure Land. However, he becomes silent, saying he is afraid to touch upon that point. This is, of course, because his theory of the Pure Land had been central to his banishment from the sect over a decade prior. The following day, Kaneko would apologize for having “caused trouble to everyone” ten years prior, relating that he had then taken a stand on a specific viewpoint, but had since come to realize the need “to abandon standpoints and find life in the great path of the _nenbutsu_ that has no standpoint” (ibid., 37). Kaneko is thus trying to adopt a humble and conciliatory stance, but he still sees the immanent nature of the Pure Land as fundamental to a correct reading of Shin teachings.

The remainder of Kaneko’s statement makes the point that Shin Buddhism and Shintō are in perfect harmony: the land of Japan’s ancestors (as described in the _Kojiki_) was the Pure

39 The word translated here as “demon” (_jamamon_ 邪魔者) is used in non-Buddhist contexts simply to mean “obstacle” or “nuissance.” However, given the context, I would suggest that the religious nuance of “demon” is intended here.
Land, and calling to Amida Buddha is to praise Japan and its kami. Shin Buddhism is no private possession—it properly belongs to all within the Japanese nation. Moreover, Amida Buddha and Japan’s kami are both transcendent of the Japanese nation—they properly belong to the whole world. Thus, it is a great joy to have been born within the Japanese nation, the country with a world historical mission to receive and transmit to the world the truth of salvation through Amida and Amaterasu. That Japanese Buddhists had failed to act upon this mission and spread the dharma beyond the sect and the nation was the cause of the haibutsu kishaku persecution. The need for Shin Buddhists to rally to unite under the Emperor is “an extremely simple issue” not worth arguing about. He feels that Shin followers like himself who “call the nenbutsu and uphold their public duty” are wrongly treated as “demons” or “obstacles,” and Akegarasu apparently feels the same way. Although Kaneko does not clearly spell out his thoughts, he seems to say that modernists are treated as “demons” within their own sect by traditionalists resistant to their views of Shin-Shintō amalgamation.40

After a comment by another participant who tries to steer the conversation in another direction, Kōno redirects the conversation back to his dispute with Akegarasu (and by extension, Kaneko) (20-21):

40 An alternate reading would be that Shin Buddhists in general are being wrongly treated as “obstacles” to the nationalist cause by the nation at large. However, the larger context of the passage—Kaneko’s hesitancy to bring up his modernist views of the Pure Land and his frustration that “such an extremely simple issue” has developed into a complicated dispute among Shin scholars—suggests that he is pointing to a disagreement among Shin Buddhists, not between Shin Buddhists and the nation at large.
Kōno: Mr. Akegarasu said that the divine nation of Amaterasu is the perfect Pure Land, but what is its relationship with the Western Pure Land?

Akegarasu: The Western Pure Land is spoken of in the Sutra of Immeasurable Life. It is Śākyamuni’s ideal heavenly land. It is the world unknown to ordinary beings. The Buddha country is the one world of Shin teachings. To make it easier to understand, it was called the Western Pure Land. When I finally looked into Shintō scriptures, I saw that the Japanese nation was made from wonderful ideals. I understand those all to be the manifestation of the Buddha’s Primal Vow. That is how Śākyamuni’s ideal country was expounded in Japan.

Kōno: Are Japan’s ideal country and Śākyamuni’s ideal country the same or are they different?

Akegarasu: The same.

Kōno: When Amaterasu battled with Susano’o, was that in the defiled land or the Pure Land?

Akegarasu: It was the work of building the Pure Land.

Kōno: Is that so? I would question that. (dumbfounded expression)

Soga soon enters the conversation to advance what he thinks might work as a middle ground:

The Buddha land and the divine land have different histories. The Sutra of Immeasurable Life is the history of the Buddha land. The Kojiki is the history of the divine land. They cannot be taken as the same. However, the Buddha land and divine land are originally the same. What was originally one historically divided into two. Divided as they are, they are also one. To take two things that are divided and make them into one is the work of [European] Enlightenment thought (keimō shisō 啓蒙思想), of human calculation. It is confused thought. Historically, as concrete things, the two have completely different flows. One should abstain from combining the two. It was correct for kami and Buddhas to be divided at the time of the Meiji Restoration. I believe that in the Japanese nation, there is no metaphysics. Japan is trans-nationalist (chōkokateki 超国家的), so the Japanese national body is a trans-nationalist national body. In other words, it is a nation that transcends nations. Therefore, it is different from other nations. From that perspective, I also understand the High Heavenly Plain. The Sutra of Immeasurable Life relates the thoughts of the mother. The Kojiki expounds the mind of
the father. If one follows the words of the father, then what we call this place is the
divine land. If one follows the words of the mother, then the Buddha land is in a
faraway place. This is the difference between the feelings of male and female. When the
mother says that this land is the defiled land, the message is to look upon oneself with
humility and purify the mind, so one cannot say directly that this land is the Pure Land.
That is the feelings of females. In the feelings of females, the Buddha land is said to be a
hundred thousand million lands to the West. The father says that this land is the divine
land. It is extremely rude to say, but the father expresses male feelings while the
mother expresses female feelings... (21)

Soga’s explanation elaborates on his previous statement that Amida Buddha and Amaterasu
represent mother and father figures respectively. By acknowledging that Shintō and Shin
Buddhism have separate histories with separate texts that cannot simply be combined into one
through human reasoning, he tries to speak to the concerns of traditionalists like Kōno.
However, the gist of his answer is in agreement with Akegarasu and Kaneko: Buddhas and kami
are fundamentally the same, issuing from the same source and teaching the same message
through different means. Amida Buddha’s message is of a Pure Land millions of lands to the
West, but this sense of distance is really just a means to enact certain moods and motivations
among believers. To come out and directly say that this land is the Pure Land would be at cross-
purposes to the unfolding of Amida’s compassionate vow. A realization of defilement is
necessary for people to turn towards Amida. But ultimately, this land is the Pure Land, as the
father figure Amaterasu proclaims. Here Soga has inverted standard gender roles, making the
Buddha (a traditionally male figure) into the mother and Amaterasu (a traditionally female
figure) into the father. Through the notion of Shin-Shinto amalgamation, Soga is able to make a
stronger argument for his view of an immanent Pure Land. On this point, it is Amaterasu the father who ultimately trumps Amida the mother.

After a brief interlude spent clarifying the terms “Buddha land,” “Buddha realm,” and “Pure Land,” Kōno returns to the original theme of the day’s discussion: the critique of Buddhists for their apparent world-denying stance. In doing so, he makes a surprising reference to Kiyozawa Manshi. Akegarasu, Kaneko, and Soga had all just made their cases for a vision of Pure Land teachings as fundamentally about this world. They all argue that, in one sense or another, this land is (or could be) the Pure Land, so it is wrong to presume that Shin Buddhist teachings are fundamentally at odds with the Japanese nation’s worldly mission. Kōno, whom we would expect to be a critic of Kiyozawa, calls upon Kiyozawa as an authority for the view that Pure Land teachings are about turning away from this world toward another one:

A long time ago, I heard Kiyozawa say, Buddhism is said to be weary of the world. But what is wrong with being weary of the world? he asked. From the perspective of the theory of progress, humans are finite. Humans’ wisdom and lifespan are finite, and what makes them infinite is religion. This is what he said. Even regarding the achievement of ideals, the teachings of philosophy are also the same, I think. To say that “rejoicing in the Pure Land and being weary of the defiled land” goes against the kokutai—those who say this are wrong. People who say this are in need of enlightening and instruction. Such people do not know the meaning of the “worldly gate” and the “world-leaving gate.” (22)
Kōno’s representation of Kiyozawa is not without a basis. Kiyozawa famously emphasized that the development of true religious faith required giving up all worldly concerns. Here is not the place to review Kiyozawa’s body of writings and attempt to judge Kōno’s representation of Kiyozawa. What is significant is that Kōno refers to Kiyozawa at all. By insinuating that Kiyozawa’s followers have strayed from their teacher’s views in their efforts to amalgamate Shin teachings with the nationalist cause, he further provokes and intensifies their argument.

Rather than confront this challenge directly and argue over the meaning of Kiyozawa’s statements, Kaneko responds by asking Kōno to clarify his views of the Pure Land (22-23):

Kaneko: What I want to ask about is the meaning of “land” (do 土). The substance (tai 体) of land is [ordinarily] made of stone and clay. Would you say that the substance of the Pure Land is made of gold and silver? What is the substance of that land?

Kōno: Because the most excellent things for us are the seven precious materials like gold and silver, it is said that the Pure Land is formed out of the seven precious materials.

Kaneko: In that case, since the Byōdōin Pavillion in Uji was built out of the seven precious materials, is that the Pure Land?

Kōno: Amida’s Pure Land is formed out of undefiled karma. Our world is formed out of defiled karma, so it is the defiled land.

Kaneko and Akegarasu (in unison): The substance of the land is karma?!

41 “Wealth, family, friends, parents, brothers, sisters, career, ability, education, knowledge, or nation should not matter. We can hardly expect to gain religious conviction unless we become totally independent of all such concerns. Nor can we expect to gain religious conviction without going through the difficult process of world-renunciation, leaving behind home, property, and family” (Kiyozawa 1984, 19-20).
Kōno: The substance is karma. The resulting formation is gold and silver.

Kaneko: What about gold and silver in this world? What is that?

Katō: I have looked at the “eighteen perfections of purity” 十八円浄 as described in the Shō Daisō-ron 拓大乗論 (Compendium of the Mahayana), which I believe is the work of Asanga and Vasubandhu. They are not speaking of gold and silver there. That is just a metaphor. That adjective [“gold and silver”] is also employed in the Longer Agamas and in the Hikekyō 悲華経 (Compassionate Flower Scripture). The adjective “gold and silver” is also applied to the heavenly realms. It is a symbol expressive of a beautiful world. In Chinese writings, the Pure Land is described as a world without the five impurities. Please consult that definition. A defiled land is one with the five impurities. A Pure Land is a world based on spiritually and materially beautiful, undefiled karma.

Takenaka Shigemaru: That even today, three thousand years after Śākyamuni, we are still debating the meaning of the Pure Land and the defiled land—that is just incomprehensible. What is wrong with just saying that “weariness and rejoicing” thought is progressivist thought, turning from this imperfect reality toward perfect ideals? It is wrong for preachers to speak of abandoning the defiled land. Land means realm. A good realm is a Pure Land. To wearily separate from the defiled land and joyfully seek out the Pure Land is to engage in splendid work [in this world].

Kaneko and Akegarasu push Kōno to defend his traditionalist, literalist understanding of the Pure Land as a “substantial” land “in the West” made of “gold and silver.” Kōno acknowledges to a degree that “gold and silver” is just useful language for us human beings, who view gold and silver as “the most excellent things.” Yet his answer continues to stick closely to scriptural language, stating that Amida’s undefiled karmic activity is the “substance” of the Pure Land, but the “resulting formation” is “gold and silver.” Even though he would likely agree with Katō that “gold and silver” are symbolic of some other inexpressible reality, that is not grounds for Shin scholars to abandon the scriptural language and invent new ways of speaking of the Pure Land.
Administrator Takenaka Shigemaru is flabergasted that this doctrinal dispute is getting in the way of responding to the real crisis at hand. He is eager to see doctrinal nuances set aside and to reach the conclusion that the Pure Land can be defined simply as “a good realm” and the teaching of “joyfully seeking out the Pure Land” can be understood in terms of working to perfect this world. Takenaka’s impatience is echoed by many other participants during the colloquium. Koga Seiichi 古賀制以智 would later make the following statement to the group “in a tearful voice”: “At a time when those in our sect, beginning with our honorable Chief Abbot, are risking their lives far away in the south to give guidance, I think it is wrong for our sect’s most important people to be so casual and engage in these disputes” (32). Near the very end of the colloquium Kizu Muan makes perhaps the most impassioned plea for a practical response:

One morning, a bomb is going to come! Our main temple is large, so it will definitely come. What I mean is, it is said that at the time of the Tokyo earthquake, many people were killing each other. Those couldn’t have been people who had heard [Shin] teachings. Recently, people who listened to the speech of the Prime Minister [Konoe Fumimaro] became very emotional and were crying. Even looking at photographs, Akita and [Naval Minister] Oikawa [Koshirō] were crying. The Prime Minister spoke of coming to a point of ultimate public service, and crying, he reported on recent political circumstances. Because he well understands the international situation, he is readying to face death, I think. Since then, the nation’s mood has changed. The problem is now how we can ride out these circumstances. Up until now, it was fine to deal with

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42 I have not found any information on this individual, so the romanization I give for his name may be mistaken.
43 The intention behind Kizu’s reference to the Tokyo earthquake here is unclear. In the wake of the earthquake, killings did take place toward minority groups (e.g. Koreans) and radicals (e.g. famous anarchist Ōsugi Sakae).
doctrinal issues, but now, if this [irrelevant doctrinal debate] were showed to others, they would wonder about Buddhists’ spirit. The critical thing is to make Shin teachings perfectly clear. We must clearly indicate how Shin instruction relates to this war. At the time of the Ishiyama War, Master Shōnyo stated that those who participated in the war would be reborn in the Pure Land. That is now necessary. We must provide everyone faith that prepares them for death beneath a bomb. There is no time to go on deliberating about the direction to take. At this time, we must point to something very clear. The majority within our sect are now serving as soldiers. At this point in time, the king’s law and the Buddha’s law are one… I actually hadn’t known that such strange people (kawatta hitotachi 変つた人達) would be gathered here. I have stated what I think needs to be done. Please give clear faith to the people of our sect. (36)

In Kizu’s view, a real crisis is upon the nation and the sect. It is time to provide a clear message to Shin followers and to the nation. Specifically, Kizu argues that Shin followers need to be told that rebirth in the Pure Land awaits them should they die during the war. Such was the message of Shōnyo during the 16th century Ishiyama War (fought against Oda Nobunaga’s military attempt to unify Japan under his rule), and such must be the message now. Shin followers are already fighting in the Japanese army. Shin will rise or fall along with the Japanese nation, so practically speaking, “the king’s law and the Buddha’s law are one.” To argue over the subtleties of “the ultimate and conventional two truths” or the nature of the Pure Land is to miss the point and fail to serve the desperate needs of sect members.

Following Kizu’s dramatic speech, Ōtani Eijun invites Soga to offer his opinion. Soga only says, “I have nothing more to say. I think there is nothing now but to entrust single-mindedly” (37). And later, as the final substantive statement of the day before closing formalities began, Soga states, “Everyone understands. You understand. There is no need to speak any further” (37). Soga’s comments reinforce the views of administrators like Takenaka
and Kizu, who are impatient with doctrinal argumentation and demand a clear and simple response to the crisis at hand. They also resonate with Kaneko’s lament that “such an extremely simple issue had become so complicated.” Given all that had been said at the colloquium by Soga, Kaneko, and Akegarasu, Soga’s “single-minded entrusting” implies devotion both to Amida and the Emperor, understood as in perfect harmony with one another. In Soga’s understanding, that harmony is well-established, and further doctrinal debate is unnecessary and even improper. It is conservatives like Kōno who felt uncomfortable with the idea of Shin-Shinto amalgamation and wanted to keep talking.

It is interesting to note that Ōtani Eijun, the discussion leader, calls directly upon Soga for his opinion on three occasions. Excepting Soga, Eijun never directly calls on any participant more than once for his opinion, and he never calls upon Kōno, Akegarasu, or Kaneko. In terms of the debate between Akegarasu and Kaneko on one side and Kōno, Katō, Kashiwahara, and Ōsuga on the other, Soga clearly aligns with Akegarasu and Kaneko, yet he manages to stay out of the fray. In some cases, he does this by remaining silent. In other cases, he expresses positions that appear to inhabit a sort of middle ground—“Even if on an individual level, it is as Mr. Katō says, on a historical level, they will become kami,” and “Buddha lands and the divine land have different histories... one must not treat the two as one. However, buddha lands and the divine land

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44 He does call upon Yasui Kōdō and Kashiwahara twice to report on the proceedings of previous conferences, and he calls upon Kawasaki Kenryō twice to summarize what has been said at the colloquium.
are originally one.” Here we can perceive why sect authorities like Ōtani Eijun might have been motivated to have Soga reinstated and placed in a high position in the sect. The Shin modernist position, especially as represented by Soga, would have been useful for Ōtani authorities as they tried to respond to government demands. If this colloquium was a trial to see how Soga and Kaneko’s reinstatement would unfold, Soga’s statements would have been very pleasing for Ōtani Eijun and other sect administrators. From this perspective, Soga’s sudden rise within the sect as Jitōryō board member, kōshi, and university professor in July, August, and November of that year is unsurprising.

Further Writings, Statements, and Anecdotes

So how did Soga’s career progress after being reinstated into the sect? One illuminating anecdote is found in reminiscences by Nishida Tatsumasa, a fan of Soga’s who had invited him to come and speak at his temple in 1941 (month and day unknown). In his talk, Soga apparently stated, “One cannot speak of ‘the imperial commandment of Amida Buddha,’ so I will say ‘instruction’” (Soga 1970-1972b, vol. 2: 2). This censorship of Shinran’s words apparently upset Nishida a great deal, who approached Soga after the talk and said, “Teacher, in your talk today, what was that? The Imperial Rescript on Education—what was that? If a sermon-peddling priest said that, I wouldn’t pay it any mind. But aren’t you one who has been praised as the star of the religious world ever since the days of Kōkōdō, who cultivated your own independent ground? And now, the Imperial Rescript on Education?” Soga reportedly took off his monk’s robe, and
took up a seated posture while tying his obi belt. He then placed his two hands to the floor, bowed his head, and said “thank you,” causing Nishida to cry. On one hand, here is a record of Soga assenting to the demand to censor Shinran’s words and reserve the language of “imperial command” for the Emperor. On the other hand, Soga receives criticism gracefully and humbly.

Did his bowing before Nishida signal an apology and change of views? Or was his response just a strategic use of silence, akin to his statement at the conference that “there is no need to speak any further”? In either case, Soga does not appear in the position of intellectual leader guiding Shin followers through a difficult time. Rather, he is the one receiving instruction.

In May 1941, the newly instituted Ōtani Daigaku Hōkokukai (Ōtani University Patriotic Society) began publication of a new journal, Kanren 贊練. The university newspaper had long been out of publication, so this was the only regular university publication during the WWII years. The journal only appeared periodically, with the eighth and final issue printed in April 1943. The December 1941 issue of Kanren featured statements by Ōtani University professors in regard to the question of “negotiationg religious life and national life.” This issue had begun with an expression of solidarity with Japan’s declaration of war against the United States and a motivational letter addressed to graduates who were being sent off to fight in the “holy war.” Soga’s statement was as follows:

At present, the idea of a sphere of religious life outside of national life is completely unthinkable. And it should not be thought of, I think.

However, in truly purifying nationalist sentment, in bringing it to a realm of true equality, it is necessary to return to eternal, unborn trans-nationalist sentiment. National consciousness arises in opposition to other nations. Pure national
consciousness is the truth that requires returning to that which is unborn and prior to the nation. Otherwise, it cannot be purified. (Kanren, Dec. 1941, p. 7)

Soga’s opening remarks acknowledge how all-pervading the war is, encompassing religious life. His subsequent remarks make a distinction between ordinary national consciousness, which arises out of a feeling of opposition toward other nations, and pure national consciousness, which involves emotionally connecting with sentiments that derive from a place transcendent of and prior to the nation. Whether this discussion of “pure national consciousness” represents a glorification of Japanese nationalism or a challenge to Japanese nationalism is ambiguous.

The only full article by Soga to appear in Kanren is found in the final April 1943 issue. His article is titled “Bukkyō no sekai-kan” (The Buddhist Worldview). His thesis is that Dharmākara Bodhisattva’s adornment of the Pure Land is the key to the Buddhist worldview. He glosses “adornment” (shōgon) with the term “symbolize” (shōchō), explaining this to mean something formless coming to have a form. For example, one’s formless feelings of gratitude take on a form through the symbol of a present (11). According to Soga’s analysis, all objects in this world are symbols of the “feeling of suchness” (ichinyo no kanjō) (also referred to as the “feeling of great compassion” or “the life of suchness”) (12-13). Humans are no exception, and like other plants and animals, they function in the world according to “pure instinct,” also referred to as “spontaneous non-action” (mu’ishiţen 無為自然). Yet in humans, instinct takes on a secondary form: “discriminatory consciousness” (chishiki 智識) or “reason” (richi 理知). It is through discriminatory consciousness that the distinction between subject and object
appears, and the “world of substance” (jittai no sekai) is born. Yet the “great compassionate mind of instinct” continues to call humans to return to the original world of symbols (shōchō no sekai) (14). Instinct is not at odds with reason; rather, it encompasses reason. Through instinct, we reason-dependent beings are guided toward salvation (15). The mistake is to become infatuated with reason and forget the more fundamental truth of instinct. People today think about the world according to a “substantialist theory” based on Western reason and its understanding of the self. This leads them to views of a mechanistic natural world devoid of dharmic law and compassion and to a posture of excluding others. Buddhists ought to clarify to themselves and others that their worldview is not a “substantialist” one; it is a “symbolic” one. This applies both to “this world” and to “the Pure Land,” for the two are not fundamentally different: “The Primal Vow took this world just as it is and adorned it, turning it into the Pure Land” (16). Amida’s formless compassion took on symbolic form in this world, at which point this world became the Pure Land. It is Buddhists who hold this truth, and it is through Japan that this truth can come to be known:

Looking at the history of the Japanese nation, the more Japan develops, the more that the depths of its origins are made clear. The occurrence of this unprecedented great war is not the achievement of people today. It is none other than clarification of the world of spontaneous non-action, which ultimately is [the war’s] source. Through the power of the Vow, [the war] clarifies spontaneous non-action. If we realize this, it clarifies the great virtue of the imperial ancestors. Our present august Emperor does not speak of his own virtue. All is done through the virtue of the imperial ancestors. Its origins lie in the virtue of spontaneous non-action. Therefore, the law of Buddhism and the nation of Japan are in fundamental agreement. (17)
In this short article, the main components of Soga’s wartime views are all on display: the immanence of the Pure Land, the role of “instinct” in the process of salvation, the flaws in Western “reason,” the associated mistake of viewing this world and the Pure Land as “substantial” and separate, and belief in the righteousness of Japan, its Emperor, and its war actions. Foundational to Soga’s thinking is the notion of an immanent Pure Land. The Pure Land is not in some faraway place; it is not a substantially different world. Rather, it is an aspect of this world, if we could only see it or get into a relationship with it. Attaining religious faith, and thus rebirth in this Pure Land, requires a giving in to and dependence on Other Power, an abandonment of one’s own discriminatory reason, and an acceptance of one’s karma and instinctual nature. In a time when all around him discourse circulated about Japan as a holy land of kami, about the need to give into and depend upon the Emperor, and about the abandonment of Western reason and embrace of Japanese spirituality, Soga allowed these two parallel systems to merge. If the Pure Land is a substantially different place, that relativizes the claims and importance of Japan as a holy land. If Amida is a substantially different being, then it is hard to equate Amida and Amaterasu or the Emperor. By contrast, if everything in this world is an expression of Amida’s great compassion, if this world is discovered to be the Pure Land, then it becomes hard to view the unfolding of events around one as problematic, as something to resist or change.

There are various sources one might point to to explain Soga’s war cooperation—his skepticism toward reason (how can one analyze and judge the state’s rationale and plan for war
with “instinctual perception”?), his extreme submersion in theological texts and questions rather than in newspapers and political questions, his never having traveled abroad, or his non-confrontational personality (it was Kaneko, not Soga, who resisted the demand to resign from the university). But what has been clarified by this chapter is the important role played by his views of the nature of the Pure Land. This issue ran throughout Soga’s Kaishin writings; it was at the center of the debate at the Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium; and it conspicuously appears again in Soga’s 1943 “Bukkyō no sekai-kan.” This only makes sense if we acknowledge that understandings of the nature of the Pure Land had real and significant effects on attitudes toward the war. Modernist doctrinal views, rooted in an immanentist interpretation of the Pure Land, led Soga, Kaneko, and Akegarasu to sacralize the war effort to a greater extent than traditionalist scholars like Kōno. To determine the actual effects of this difference in views on the wartime actions of these individuals or on the wartime policies of the Ōtani organization, further research is needed. However, it is significant that Soga and his modernist peers endorsed the controversial view that death in battle would lead to rebirth in the Pure Land while Kōno and his peers opposed it.

While the wartime views of Kaneko and Akegarasu have been acknowledged and critiqued, the wartime views of Soga—the very top Shin intellectual in the postwar period—have been almost totally overlooked. Robert Rhodes’ introduction to Soga’s life and works spends two paragraphs discussing Soga’s wartime activities and works without mentioning a word about his pro-war views. Rhodes’ emphasis—and he is not alone in this—is on Soga’s 1942
“Tannishō chōki” lectures and on the fact that Soga continued to lecture on Shin Buddhism even when enrollment at Ōtani University dwindled to five or six students—as if his Shin studies were purely religious and had nothing to do with politics. Mizushima’s long chapter on modern Shin doctrinal studies during the Fifteen Year War extensively covers the Kōbō Gakuen group and Soga’s 1936 “Shinran’s View of Buddhist History” lecture. However, his nationalistic writings are completely ignored, and his participation in the Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium is just mentioned in passing.⁴⁵

4.5 Conclusion

With Japan’s unconditional surrender to the Allied powers on August 15, 1945, the war ended. At that time, previous ideologies of the “national family” and complete devotion to the Emperor came to be “repainted” with new notions of democracy and pacifism. At that time, according to the later remembrances of his students, Soga apparently stated, “I have no need to repaint any billboards” (Itō 1993, 205-6). In the midst of this intellectually tumultuous period, Soga apparently felt no need to reorient his wartime views in recognition of the disastrous violence that had resulted from Japan’s war actions. In later years, when questioned about the October 1944 Ōtani publication, Shinshū no yōgi 真宗の要義 (Essentials of Shin Buddhism)—an

⁴⁵ For Mizushima’s brief comments on the Kaishin journal, see pages 426-31 (Mizushima 2010). For brief mentions of the Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium, see pages 436-39 and 447. After skipping over Soga and Kaneko’s nationalistic writings, Mizushima does provide considerable coverage of their postwar statements of repentance as models of “total responsibility” (ibid., 457-77).
extraordinarily nationalistic text authored by Kaneko with edits made by Soga—Soga stood by the text, emphasizing his intent to clarify the importance of “instinct” over “reason” in the determining of history (Soga 1970–1972b, vol 5: 11-12).

The closest Soga comes to expressing regret about and acknowledging responsibility for the war is in a March 1948 lecture series entitled “Rennyo kyōgaku no konpon mondai” (The Fundamental Issue(s) in Rennyo’s Doctrinal Studies). Within that lecture series, Soga points to the modern separation of religion from public life as causing an incapacity to judge the goodness or evilness of the war:

From the time of the Meiji Restoration, the Buddha-dharma was restricted to private life. In public life, the Buddha-dharma unfortunately disappeared... In the public realm, completely non-religious life (mushūkyō no seikatsu 無宗教の生活), materialistic life, was practiced. To state it strongly, there was Shintō, but that was an extremely superficial thing that had no deep connection to people’s spirit and was thus powerless. As for school education since the Meiji period, the Imperial Rescript on Education that was promulgated had no relation to religion, so a kind of kokutai (national body) faith came to be the educational principal. However, viewed from the high perspective of religion, that could be called a situation of basically no religion.

In this way, we Japanese lived within a non-religious world and a non-religious politics and society. We passed through 45 years of the Meiji period and 15 years of the Taishō period. Entering into the Shōwa period, we crashed into a terrifying war (osoroshii sensō 恐ろしい戦争). As for whether that war was a good war or an evil war, we had no ability to judge (hihanryoku ga nai 批判力がない). In the name of [fighting] for the country and for the vague goal of peace in the East, millions of people gave their lives. And the war then ended in miserable defeat. I think one can say we were led into this war by certain specific leaders, yet ultimately, it was each of our responsibilities. We lost our ability to see and correctly judge the war. One can say that was because of how we were educated, but ultimately, we arrived at this situation due to a lack of awakening (jikaku no fusoku 自覚の不足) on each of our parts. (Soga 1977, vol. 1: 196-97)
In this passage, Soga dismisses the argument that Japanese citizens were simply pressured into the war by the government and by the education system. Instead, he emphasizes that all Japanese citizens were also responsible for what transpired. Mizushima Ken’ichi interprets this as a praiseworthy expression of repentence and self-critique (2010, 465). However, it must be noted that Soga’s statement is indirect and impersonal, not acknowledging his own specific role in embracing and promoting imperialist ideology. More importantly, Soga argues that the incapacity to judge the goodness or evilness of the war was due to a lack of religion in public education and politics, but he himself had received a religious education and was involved in providing religious interpretation of politics. If this “terrifying war” and “miserable defeat” were caused by Japan’s lack of religion, why was one of its most devoutly religious citizens unable to produce the capacity for critical judgment? Judging by the brevity of his reflection on the war and the magnitude of his attention to doctrinal questions, Soga’s answer seems to be that he and his fellow Buddhists need to plunge more deeply into scripture and introspection—rather than reflect upon the basic assumption that religious faith is a reliable and sufficient source for social and political views.

In summary, Soga’s active support of the war, as described in this chapter, is troubling. The hastiness of his reflection on those wartime views in the postwar period, as well as the general lack of investigation of those wartime views by later Shin scholars, is even more so.

In closing, I would like to consider the work of three Buddhist studies scholars on Buddhist ethics in order to help explain why it was the case that leading Buddhist scholars like
Soga ended up being so supportive of Japanese war efforts. Ugo Dessi’s *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism* (2007) examines the ethical teachings of a range of modern and contemporary Shin Buddhist thinkers before detailing contemporary activities of Shin institutions and groups in regard to social issues like war, Yasukuni shrine, buraku discrimination, Hansen’s disease, and social welfare. Dessi’s dizzying survey of the great variety of positions among Shin intellectuals indicates “the characteristic difficulty in Shin Buddhism about speaking of ethics on the normative level” (2007, 162). This difficulty is caused by Shin Buddhism’s stress on the “universality of liberation” achieved by the working of Amida’s other-power, which is paralleled by “the denial of good acts as a medium for religious liberation, since they would obstruct the working of other-power”: “This view, which opened the way to the development of a tradition without precepts, has at the same time drastically limited the use of prescriptive language which could link the contents of religious experience to everyday life in the secular realm” (ibid., 38). In a Shin Buddhist context, the compassionate act of saving other beings can only be carried out by Amida. As Shinran states in the *Tannishō*:

> However much love and pity we may feel in our present lives, it is hard to save others as we wish; hence, such compassion remains unfulfilled. Only the saying of the nenbutsu, then, is the mind of great compassion that is thoroughgoing. (CWS, vol. 1: 663)

This attitude seems to limit how far Shin teachings can develop in regard to humans helping other humans. Many Shin thinkers, especially in the postwar period, have tried to articulate a distinctively Shin ethic of pacifism, egalitarianism, environmentalism, anti-capitalism, and
social welfare. Yet the stronger historical tendency, evident in Soga’s prewar and wartime writings, has been to focus on the human-Amida relationship rather than human-human relationships. That is, the notion of Other-Power salvation in Shin Buddhism has led Soga and others like him to immerse themselves in the task of “contemplating the Buddha” and ignore the task of “saving others.”

Christopher Ives’s Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen’s Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics (2009) presents the views of Zen Buddhist scholar Ichikawa Hakugen on the historical and doctrinal reasons for Zen Buddhists’ cooperation with Japanese imperialism and war. Although he focuses on Zen, there are many conclusions that might be applied to Soga and the case of Shin Buddhists. At the most basic level, Ichikawa notes that Buddhists confronting social and political chaos faced three options: 1) avoid conflict and seek physical safety; 2) fight back against oppressive conditions that threaten one’s safety; and 3) seek “peace of mind” (anjin 安心). The third option involved learning to face and accept any situation with total peace of mind, not discriminating between good and bad, desirable and undesirable (Ives 2009, 59). In a Shin context, “peace of mind” is more or less synonymous with “faith” (shinjin 信心) in Amida Buddha, and it is clear why the determination to attain “peace of mind” regardless of one’s present situation would be non-conducive to actively resisting or changing one’s present situation. This obstacle to social ethics is clearly present in a Shin context just as it is in a Zen context.
An additional problem is identified in Ichikawa’s discussion of “peace of mind” as an “attitude” rather than as “content”:

Insofar as “peace of mind” derives from “becoming one” with and accepting whatever one encounters, it is dogged by other ethics problems. First, “becoming one” with things concerns how one experiences, not what one experiences, and in principle one can “become one” with anything. As Ichikawa puts it, “Zen is not necessarily something that prescribes and produces the concrete content of our thought or daily lives. Rather, it is a daily-life attitude.” (ibid., 67)

Soga’s analysis of “instinct” and “instinctual perception” can be understood in the same way. He is writing about a different attitude toward approaching the world and oneself that avoids discriminatory thinking and the notion of a self, resulting in an awareness of one’s own evil and powerlessness and one’s necessary relationship to Amida. But what about the content of evil? And what about the content of Amida and Amida’s compassion? Soga speaks of evil in abstract and absolutist terms—everything about oneself is totally and thoroughly evil, unknowing, and powerless. There is no specific content to evil. Likewise with Amida. Soga’s demythologization of Amida and Dharmākara Bodhisattva would seem to strip away any specific content from Amida and the Pure Land. Just as “one can ‘become one’ with anything” in Zen, one can “be saved” by anyone and “be reborn” anywhere if “Amida” and the “Pure Land” are discussed too abstractly. Traditionalist opponents of Soga, like Kōno, insist on emphasizing that the Pure Land is located “in the West” and is “made of gold and silver” even if they agree that those phrases must be “symbolic” or “expedient” in some sense. Traditionally, Pure Land Buddhism, compared to Zen, seems to have more specific content that frames one’s beliefs and practices.
In his attempt to situate Shin in relation to other Buddhist traditions and to modern science, Soga contributed to the production of modernist interpretations of Shin teachings that may have undermined that specific content, enabling an easier alliance between Shin, Shintō, and Japanese nationalism.

On a related note, Ichikawa notes the systemic lack of awareness of society-level realities on the part of Buddhists, who are more attentive to personal facts and experiences:

Zen philosopher Nishida Kitarō wrote, “To experience is to know facts just as they are, to know in accordance with facts by completely relinquishing one’s own fabrications,” but Ichikawa problematizes these “facts”: “What are these ‘facts’? They are not large-scale situations like the 1931 Manchurian Incident or the Vietnam War. Rather, they are things experienced directly through the body, like the drinking of tea, the green of willows, the red of flowers, the act of putting on robes.” (Ives 2009, 69)

In the case of Soga and the Shin modernists, the situation seems even worse. Rather than examining outward “facts” like “the drinking of tea” or “the act of putting on robes,” they speak overwhelmingly of “introspection” and the “facts” of one’s inner, subjective experience. Needless to say, this process of introspection could not, by itself, be expected to produce any judgment about the holiness or unholiness of Japan’s invasion of China or attack on the US. It could also not produce any critical perspective on how their own lives and subjectivities were being shaped by the state and broader social realities. In Ives’s words, “For all of Zen’s talk about freedom and not being confused by cause and effect, its actions were entangled thoroughly in causes and effects in the modern political realm” (ibid., 73). Kaneko and Soga’s shift in wartime views and rhetoric—most evident in Kaneko’s writings on Prince Shōtoku and
Soga’s writings on the meaning of *kami* in Shin scriptures—appear heavily entangled with
political demands of the time. But preoccupied with the task of introspection and having
dispensed with any notion of separation between the religious and political domains, Kaneko
and Soga saw no problem in this entanglement.

Finally, Robert Sharf has written important essays on D. T. Suzuki and the issue of “Zen
nationalism.” Sharf states:

But impatience with plurality and uncertainty in the intellectual realm can lead all too
readily to impatience with plurality and uncertainty in the realm of politics. It may not
be mere coincidence that a surprising number of those who saw Zen as a solution to
spatial anxiety were drawn to authoritarian or totalitarian solutions to social and
political unrest. In a similar vein, Hannah Arendt has commented on the “exasperation”
we sometimes feel when confronted with the fact that Plato and Heidegger were drawn
to “tyrants and Führers.” Arendt suggests that this may be more than happenstance; it
might in fact attest to a *déformation professionelle*: “For the attraction to the tyrannical
can be demonstrated theoretically in many of the great thinkers (Kant is the great
exception). And if this tendency is not demonstratable in what they did, that is only
because very few of them were prepared to go beyond ‘the faculty of wondering at the
simple’ and to ‘accept this wondering as their abode.’” It may well be that the apostles
of “pure Zen,” accepting wondering as their abode, fell prey to this *déformation
professionelle*: they yearned to realize in the world of human affairs the “perfection”
they found in their Zen. (Sharf 1995b, 50).

In a similar fashion, Soga had discovered in his personal experiences and intellectual reframing
of Shin Buddhist teachings a solution to the “plurality and uncertainty” of the modern
intellectual world, defined by a variety of Buddhist and religious traditions all competing in the
face of a new paradigm of scientific knowledge and practice. The perfection that he found in
“the birth of Dharmākara Bodhisattva” within his own subjectivity and in his discovery of the
Pure Land here and now was all too easily transferred into the realm of politics.
Sharf depicts the Zen modernists he looks at as “outsiders” who “lacked formal institutional sanction themselves” but attempted “to appropriate the authority of the tradition” (ibid., 43). He contrasts them with “those with a monastery to run” who could not “afford to shroud themselves in the cloak of ‘absolute nothingness,’” but rather “had to maintain, at least in public, certain standards of moral conduct and ritual propriety” (ibid., 43, 51). In the case of modern Shin, Ōtani authorities met the “moral conduct and ritual propriety” demanded by the Japanese state precisely by turning to Buddhist modernists whose thought shared much in common with that of Suzuki and the “apostles of ‘pure Zen.’” Future research on Buddhism and war ought to look beyond the pro-war or anti-war views of individual Buddhist thinkers toward the complicated interplay between individuals and institutions and the historical impact of this on Buddhist communities.

46 The alleged “outsider” status of Suzuki and others that Sharf looks at is open to question. Recent research on Suzuki has drawn attention to Suzuki’s long koan practice under his Zen masters at Enryakuji temple (Suzuki 2014-2015, vol. 1: xxiii-xxv).
“Today, a new Japan is trying to be born. Confusion of thought is stubbornly trying to prevent that birth. The establishment of correct thought is desperately longed for by all those worried about Japan and the world. And what is most gravely demanded—that which must precede and provide a foundation for all else—is the truth of religion...

“Needless to say, to the extent that we fail to see the true nature of Shin Buddhism and instead seek out solace through an escape back into convention and inertia, we will not be able to resolve this problem. To the extent that we do not bravely throw off this garb of [institutional] form that distorts the true life of the people’s religious organization of fellow companions, the path of self-destruction is a historical certainty. Right now, we face an urgent duty to stand up to severe self-critique and dedicate ourselves to the task of revealing true practice and faith to ourselves and others.” –Shinjin Society Declaration, May 1948 (Shinjin 1, 3)

Previous chapters have demonstrated how Kiyozawa Manshi’s followers generated authority for Shin modernist ideas by developing the academic discipline of Shin Buddhist studies, how their rising authority triggered a multi-layered political conflict, and how that conflict was overcome in the context of wartime mobilization when the development of Shin modernist thought along nationalist lines proved attractive to sect authorities. Soga and Kaneko’s attainment of kōshi status and appointment to the Jitōryō board meant they now shared the power to steer doctrinal interpretation within the Ōtani organization.
As kōshi, they were now qualified to give the main lecture at the prestigious summer retreat (ango). Soga did so in 1942, 1948, 1960, and 1968; Kaneko did so in 1945, 1952, 1961, and 1970. As Jitōryō members, they were in a position to defend modernist interpretations of Shin teachings against accusations of heresy. In 1965—when Kiyozawa’s thought was being spread nationwide through the Dōbōkai movement—complaints were raised by traditionalist priests in regard to the rising power of reformers and their advocacy of “Kiyozawa doctrinal studies,” which was “trampling upon the teachings of our founder” (Tahara 2004, 55). In response, the Jitōryō assembled and—with Soga and Kaneko on the board—predictably determined that Kiyozawa’s teachings were in line with Shinran’s (ibid., 56). In 1976, Kiyozawa’s thought was again subjected to public criticism, including by the Chief Abbot himself. In a reversal of protocol, the Shin Doctrinal Studies Research Institute (rather than the Chief Abbot) called for the Jitōryō members’ judgment of Kiyozawa’s thought. Soga had died five years earlier, but Kaneko was still on the board. He and seven other members replied with judgments favorable to Kiyozawa (SRS, vol. 1: 593-603).

Yet as previous chapters have shown, doctrinal authority did not merely come down from on high. In fact, it was in the postwar period that the “principle of doctrinal authority,” which held that total doctrinal authority was invested in the Chief Abbot and his representatives, finally toppled. Soga and Kaneko’s status as kōshi and Jitōryō members was a helpful but not sufficient cause for the coming reversal of orthodoxy within the Ōtani denomination. Doctrinal change was inextricably linked to institutional change and broader
social change. It was through the connection of Soga and Kaneko’s doctrinal authority with a movement for democratic institutional reform that Ōtani orthodoxy shifted in a dramatic way. This chapter will examine how that connection was forged.

In the first section, I review the situation of the Ōtani institution in the early postwar years in regard to finances, legal changes, and public perception. While the boom of Buddhist reform movements—and “new religions” (shin shūkyō 新宗教)—is often explained with reference to the state of decline of established religions, I argue that a perception of decline, magnified through the critical discourses of journalists and religious reformers, was equally important. In the second section, I situate the Shinjin Society (Shinjinsha 真人社) (True Person Society) reform movement within the broader social context of democracy building, focusing on the growing interest among intellectuals in cultivating democratic “subjectivity” (shutaisei 主体性) among the people. In the third section, I survey the cacophony of voices contained within the Shinjin Society’s journal Shinjin 真人 during its first year and a half, including Soga’s call to emulate Shinran and take up Buddhism’s world historical mission, D. T. Suzuki’s portraits of myōkōnin 妙好人 (model Shin believers), laypeople’s personal stories of attaining faith, and Shinjin Society organizers’ calls for institutional reform of the Ōtani “religious organization” (kyōdan 教団). In the fourth section, I trace the development of the Shinjin Society and its connections to the 1956 “Sect White Paper” (“Shūmon hakusho 宗門白書”) that brought about official endorsement of Kiyozawa by the Ōtani administration. In the conclusion,
I discuss the significance of the Shinjin Society in relation to “new religions,” democracy building, and the history of the Ōtani organization.

### 5.1 Decline and Reform

The Fifteen Year War brought devastation to all quarters of Japan. Many starved to death during the early years of the Allied Occupation as the nation and its new government struggled to get the economy working again. The challenges facing Buddhist organizations were numerous. To begin with, many temples and much property, especially in urban areas, had been destroyed during the war. A 1948 report indicates that 4,609 temples had been destroyed by bombs nationwide, about 6 percent of the national total (Kashiwahara 1990, 258). Shin temples tended to be located in rural areas, so it likely suffered less physical damages than other sects.

Next, land reform policies implemented by the Occupation authorities intended to put an end to landlordism caused Buddhist organizations to lose much of their temple lands. Temple lands had historically been rented out as a source of income. The 1946 “Disposition of State-owned Land Used by Religious Institutions” basically stripped temples of all lands “not necessary for their religious functions” (see Woodard 1972, 119-127, 300-301). However, this also impacted the Shin sect less than other sects due to its tendency to rely for income on sect member donations rather than land rent (Kashiwahara 1990, 259).
In addition to these financial challenges, Buddhist organizations faced new challenges in retaining members and temples. The 1945 Religious Corporations Ordinance and 1951 Religious Organizations Law established a simple notification system whereby any group that met basic requirements could become a religious corporation, without the need for government recognition (Dorman 2012, 101-2). This made it easier for temples to withdraw from an organization and establish a new one, leading to a dramatic splintering of Buddhist organizations. During the war, the fifty-six Buddhist denominations had combined into twenty-eight due to government pressures for unification. In the postwar period, the number of Buddhist denominations grew to as many as 260 (Kasahara 2001, 587). Major schisms occurred in the late 1940s in the Jōdo, Shingon, Nichiren, and Tendai sects. In contrast, the Shin sect was largely free of schism during this period.

Two other interrelated challenges to Buddhist organizations can be noted here. First, the Occupation period witnessed a blossoming of new religious movements—“almost six hundred” by 1952 (McFarland 1967, 65). Some of these so-called “new religions” were indeed “new” in the postwar period, but most had origins in the prewar or even early modern periods. Inevitably, they drew many of their members from major Buddhist sects. Second, the economic recovery initiated by the Korean War in the early 1950s led to a process of urbanization that deprived many rural Buddhist temples—including many Shin temples—of their members. Moreover, many of these migrants to the city broke with their previous religious affiliations, sometimes joining one of the growing new religious movements (Shimazono 2006, 225).
Thus, in the early Occupation period, major Buddhist organizations undoubtedly faced economic challenges as well as problems of retaining members and temples. Shin Buddhist organizations faced relatively less severe problems, but their coffers were still low and their memberships declining.

In addition, Buddhist organizations faced an even greater crisis: one of public perception. Religious reformers, journalists, and scholars all heightened the sense of established Buddhism’s state of decline through persistent critical discourse. Along with the government and big business, major Buddhist institutions provided an obvious point of attack for journalists, new religious movement leaders, Buddhist reformers, and scholars. Buddhist institutions were critiqued for their cooperation with the wartime government, non-democratic traditions, and promotion of superstitious beliefs. The causes of secularization (whether defined in terms of eradicating religion or simply separating religion from public life) and of religious reform were both served by the rhetoric of Buddhist decline.

In his study of media and the “new religions” in early postwar Japan, Benjamin Dorman presents numerous examples of journalists critiquing the Buddhist establishment. For example, in February 1947, the religious weekly Nippon shinbun summarized the state of the religious world as follows:

If the expressions of the various religions in this country immediately following the surrender are classified according to color, Shinto may be said to have turned black with perplexity, Buddhism grey with impotence and Christianity rosy with hope amid the sorrows of defeat. (Dorman 2012, 106)
In September of the same year, the popular journal Shinsei did a special feature on the “seamy underbelly of contemporary religion” that attacked the Buddhist establishment along with other established and new religions (ibid., 218). In November 1949, Baba Tsunego, President of the Japan Press Association and editor of the major newspaper Yomiuri shinbun, released a statement arguing, “the chanting of Buddhist sutras and Shinto prayers had no meaning for the new democracy of Japan.” This prompted defensive responses from editors of the Buddhist newspaper Chūgai nippō (ibid., 216). The following year, prominent journalist Ōya Sōichi published a book on the “new religions,” Shinshūkyō 新興宗教 (Newly Arisen Religions), that begins with a critique of established religions. Ōya argued that established religions are both irrelevant and irrational in the context of postwar democratization, and he explained the rise of “new religions” from the 1930s with reference to the inefficacy of established religions (ibid., 220).

It goes without saying that followers of the “new religions” produced discourse critical of the Buddhist establishment. Their very embrace of the label “new religions” implied a contrast with the “old religions” of Buddhism and Shintō (Thomas 2014b, 282). In some cases, critical views of established religion harbored by followers of “new religions” made their way into scholarship. For example, one critical source documenting the state of religion during the postwar period, Sengo shūkyō kaisō roku (Records of Reflections on Postwar Religion) (1963), was produced by the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan and published by the press of the “new religion” PL Kyōdan. This source is notably critical of religious establishment
leaders for allegedly being stuck in a pattern of obsequiousness toward government officials (Dorman 2012, 98).

Buddhist reformers also contributed greatly to this accumulation of discourse critical of the Buddhist establishment. One notable example is the case of Tomomatsu Entai 友松円諦 (1895-1973), who in 1947 and 1948 renounced his priestly status with the Jōdo sect, established a non-sectarian temple (Kanda-dera), and devoted himself to bringing Buddhism into the everyday lives of laypeople. Tomomatsu was persistently critical of the Buddhist establishment from at least the time of his 1934 popular radio broadcasts on the Dhammapada and founding of the non-sectarian Shinri (Truth) Movement, but it was specifically in the early postwar years that he cut ties with the Jōdo sect and founded a non-sectarian, lay-based temple (Kashiwahara 1990, 234-238; Kasahara 2001, 590).

The Shinjin Society was another postwar Buddhist reform movement that developed in opposition to the Buddhist establishment, though its organizers neither renounced their priestly statuses nor cut ties with their sectarian institution. The primary impetus for the creation of the society came from Kurube Shin’yū. During the war, Kurube had been appointed dean of Ōtani University in 1943. With the loss of the war, Kurube resigned his post and returned to his home temple. In February 1947, he was invited back by Head of Sect Affairs Incidentally, Tomomatsu also contributed to the 1954 establishment of the Zen Nihon Bukkyōkai 全日本仏教会 and served as its first director. Thus, he worked for Buddhist reform through his own lay-based organization and through cooperation with major Buddhist organizations.
Nagatani Gan’yū 瓔含雄 (1896-1964) to serve as Head of Doctrinal Affairs. Other members of Nagatani’s cabinet included modernist colleagues of Kurube like Takeda Junshō 竹田淳昭 (1914-1998), Takeuchi Ryōe 竹内良恵, Fujiwara Shōen 藤原正遠, and Kishi Yūshō 岸証. During his short tenure, Kurube appointed doctrinal modernists to important posts, established a new training center for sect members at Okazaki Betsuin in Kyoto (the Honbyō Hōshi Dōjō 本廟奉仕道場), and devised plans for a “faith movement.” According to Tahara, when Kurube was informed by Nagatani that it was too soon for such a movement, he and the other four department heads resigned in December and began organizing the Shinjin Society (Tahara and Hashikawa 1999, 35-37). According to journalist David Suzuki, however, Kurube and his associates were forced to resign over a controversy arising from the unorthodox tactics employed at the newly established training center:

Intensive day and night indoctrination and discussion groups were held allowing participants little rest. The instructors did not confine themselves merely to intellectual beatings. And when Suzuki [Osamu] broke the eardrum of a participant, tremendous outrage arose among church conservatives. This became a serious issue raised in the church Religious Council [Ōtani Diet] and conservatives claimed the only purpose of the seminars was to instill Communism. (Suzuki 1985, 44)

Mizushima notes opposition to Kurube in regard to his connections to the Kiyozawa school of Shin modernism, but he does not mention any controversial incidents or accusations of

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2 While serving as Head of Doctrinal Affairs, Kurube simultaneously served as the denomination’s Head of Public Welfare (kōseibuchō 厚生部長) (Mizushima 2010, 483) and as dean of Ōtani University, holding the latter post until 1954 (Suzuki 1985, 44).
Communism (2010, 481-486). David Suzuki’s account of modern Ōtani history exhibits a strong anti-reform bias, providing a valuable alternative view to Mizushima and Tahara’s pro-reform accounts. However, it is unfortunately marred by a pattern of factual errors that compromises its reliability.\(^3\)

Regardless of the precise circumstances of Kurube and his associates’ exit from the Ōtani administration, it is certain that the founding of the Shinjin Society was tied up with a group of priests’ dreams of reforming the Ōtani organization. After a series of planning sessions, the first official meeting of the Shinjin Society was held on January 31, 1948. Kurube was elected director, and Matsubara Yūzen was elected assistant director. The Shinjin Society was

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\(^3\) Suzuki’s *Crisis in Japanese Buddhism: Case of the Ōtani organization* (1985) focuses on the story of the 1960s and 1970s battle between reformers led by Kurube and traditionalists loyal to the Chief Abbot. It is written with a clear bias in favor of the Chief Abbot and his supporters. As for factual unreliability, Suzuki occasionally mixes up dates (e.g. “1926” instead of “1925” on p. 39 and “1953” instead of “1963” on p. 49) or names (“Sasaki Osamu” instead of “Suzuki Osamu” on p. 44). His entire account also hinges upon a portrayal of the Shinjin Society and Kurube as Marxist, beginning with the claim that “in 1931, [Kurube] joined a socialist religious group in Tokyo known as the Butsugen Kyokai (Eyes of the Buddha Society).” This society (仏眼教会) was actually an organization founded by the Ōtani organization to provide assistance to the blind (Tahara and Hashikawa 1999, 35). Their journal *Butsugan* (1921-1932) printed writings on Buddhism—including those by Kiyozawa Manshi, Sasaki Gesshō, Kurata Hyakuzō, and Akegarasu Haya—entirely in braille. I have found no evidence that this society had any socialist connection—or does David Suzuki provide any evidence or reference to corroborate his claim. On the other hand, Tahara and Mizushima both provide evidence of Kurube and the Shinjin Society’s critical stance toward Marxism (Tahara and Hashikawa 1999, 30-35; Mizushima 2010, 581-589). Another patently false claim of Suzuki’s is that Soga and Yasuda “later found the Shinjin to be too politically motivated and resigned” (42). Soga’s leading contributions to *Shinjin* persisted throughout its period of publication. Yasuda’s contributions were not as regular as Soga’s, but he did continue to publish in *Shinjin* right up until its end in 1962. These many typographical and factual errors combined with a strong bias suggest that Suzuki’s work was put together hastily, relying heavily on the hearsay testimony of his traditionalist informants.
established as an independent body that relied on membership dues for funding (20 yen per member per month). The name originally proposed for the society was Shinshūjinsha (True Sect Person Society), but when organizers consulted with Soga, he advised removing the character “shū” (sect), stating, “This ought to be a movement that takes up a broader standpoint, removed from sectarian limitations” (quoted in Tahara 2004, 41). Among the 29 initial members who signed on at the founding of the group, one stands out as coming from outside the Ōtani denomination: Mori Ryūkichi 森龍吉 (1916-1980), a Honganji denomination priest who later became a professor at the Honganji-affiliated Ryūkoku University (Shinjin no. 1, 25-26). In addition, D. T. Suzuki, also not a Shin sect member, is noted as one of four scholars (along with Soga, Akegarasu, and Kaneko) who had agreed to contribute to the journal (Shinjin no. 1, 31).

In explaining the society’s mission, the Shinjin journal’s editors and contributors persistently spoke of the ills of the “religious organization” (kyōdan 教団) to which they still belonged. For example, the society’s mission statement contrasts the Ōtani organization’s “convention and inertia” and its distorting “[institutional] form” with the society’s goal of bringing life to Shinran’s ideal of a “people’s religious organization of fellow companions” (minshū no dōbō kyōdan 民衆の同朋教団). The editors of the journal recount the origins of the society with reference to “the tendency for the established sect to deviate from the wishes of Saint Shinran, to run counter to historical reality, and to be blind to the proper form of the
religious organization” (Shinjin no. 1, 25). Finally, the journal’s editor directly addresses the
question of the society’s relationship with the sect in the following passage:

There are many who inquire about the relationship between the Shinjin Society
movement and the established religious organization. The Shinjin Society movement
does not set out to be an oppositional, factional movement. However, it is certain that it
will have absolutely no relationship with a sectarian administration that is faraway
from the original aims of Saint Shinran, nor is it worried about or will it comprise with
[such a sectarian administration]. (Shinjin no. 1, 31)

From its outset, the Shinjin Society thus established itself separate from and critical of the
Buddhist establishment in general and the Ōtani organization in particular. Vague references to
the degenerate state of the Buddhist establishment became a common refrain throughout the
pages of the Shinjin journal, providing the society its raison d’etre.⁴ Some sought to tackle the
problem of institutional reform head on while others advocated side-stepping the problem by
focusing on purification of individual faith, on the one hand, or promotion of true Shin
Buddhism on a national or global scale. Yet all unanimously advanced the view that the Shin
establishment was in a hopeless state of decline.

In a time of hardship and rebuilding, it was natural to point to the Buddhist
establishment as part of the old order that needed to be reformed or swept aside. However, this
accumulation of critical discourse depicting the Buddhist establishment as impotent,
undemocratic, irrational, irrelevant, obsequious, inert, and unorthodox threatens to blind us to

⁴ Examples of such references can be found in the sections below.
the power and dynamism that continued to exist within it. Scholars of postwar Buddhism have sometimes been content to reproduce this depiction of Buddhism as moribund and unresponsive to the needs of the times. One typical example is Kazuo Kasahara’s _A History of Japanese Religion_, which highlights the growth of “new religions” as the most important feature of religion in postwar Japan while insinuating that Buddhism was “not able to respond to the spiritual needs of people seeking to cope with the problems of a new age” (Kasahara 2001, 24).

After discussing the “new religions” at great length, Kasahara treats postwar Buddhism with only a few pages, and he gives the impression that sect reform movements only began in the 1960s in response to the “new religions” (ibid., 590-593). Careful attention to the historical facts, however, reveals a rather different picture.

For example, an impressive series of democratic administrative reforms was carried out within the Honganji denomination during the early Occupation period, some of them voluntary and others pressured by the government. In May 1946, the Honganji denominational journal _Honganji shinpō_ published the results of a survey of sect members, demonstrating overwhelming support for the idea of laypeople participating in sectarian administration. In early 1947, employees of the sect administration office held a meeting, drafting demands toward the head office for structural reorganization. Later that year, the Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōshō was partly purged from office on account of his active wartime connections with the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (he would have been completely purged were it not for the hereditary nature of his position). Various of his administrative powers were transferred to the...
denomination’s legislative assembly and Head of Sect Affairs, and he was stripped of his ex-officio positions in the denomination’s educational system (Woodard 1972, 203-204). In 1948, Occupation officials allegedly “tipped the balance” in favor of a faction of democratic reformers within the sect administration—though the officials concerned deny doing anything more than offering advice voluntarily sought by sect officials (ibid., 204). As a result, in April of 1949, the sōjo 僧序 system of assigning hierarchical ranks to priests, which determined priestly garb as well as seating position at religious ceremonies, was abolished. In addition, the privileged status of members of the Chief Abbot’s family and their temples (known as renshi 連枝 and renshi-dera 連枝寺 respectively) was abolished. In 1950, lay members were for the first time allowed to serve in the Ōtani Diet (Shūgikai 宗議会) with the same powers as priests.

The Honganji denomination’s rapid democratization—produced through internal agitation for reform coupled with government pressure—was exceptional. Similar reform agendas arose within the Ōtani denomination, but they did not produce the same effects. For example, an assembly of Ōtani-affiliated laypeople was established in 1947, but this group never gained anything more than consultative powers. The traditional system of priestly ranking and of privileged status for members of the Chief Abbot’s family also came under fire, but the push for democratic reform was ultimately superseded by concerns over addresssing the sect’s

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5 The sōjo system was itself a result of the 1947 revision of the former dōhan 堂班 system, in which ranks had been attached to temples rather than individual priests.
financial crisis. Thus, the Ōtani reformers who established the Shinjin Society did have more cause for complaint than those within the Honganji denomination.

Even so, the larger point is that the Shinjin Society reformers’ critical portrayals of their sectarian organization ought not be accepted as historical fact. From the Meiji period forward, Buddhist priests generated a strong perception of the Tokugawa period as one of decline (darakuron) for the Buddhist world. This perception was instrumental in the enactment of all varieties of reforms. It also, unfortunately, crept into scholarly analyses of Japanese Buddhist history. Only recently have scholars come to recognize the great advances in scholarship, as well as the vitality of popular religious life, that characterized Tokugawa Buddhism. A similar pattern appears to be at work in regard to postwar Buddhism. Recognizing this, scholars ought to appreciate postwar critiques of the Buddhist establishment not as accurate representations of reality but rather as strategic discourse helpful for motivating reform and innovation.

### 5.2 Democratic Subjectivity

According to its bylaws, the Shinjin Society’s purpose was “to clarify Shin Buddhist teachings and to raise forth the true life of the religious organization of fellow companions based on that tradition.” Thus, it clearly had intellectual goals as well as organizational goals. Yet

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*See Klautau (2012).*
in adopting the name Shinjin for the movement and its journal, the Ōtani reformers indicated their primary concern of facilitating the establishment of certain kinds of persons. The “religious organization of fellow companions” could only be brought forth through the production of “true persons,” and these “true persons” could only arise through correct understanding of Shin Buddhist teachings. According to the society’s history of its formation, the “establishment of true persons” (shinko no hito no kakuritsu 真個の人の確立) was the very purpose of Shinran’s teachings. Rather than “rushing into empty, objective, idealistic discussion,” the Shinjin Society is one that “brings life to people in the present, and has as its basis faith that lives within those people” (Shinjin no. 1, 26).

In the next section, I examine the various notions of the “true person” on offer within the pages of the Shinjin journal. However, it is first important to note the wider intellectual context in which the Shinjin discussions took place. At the same time that Shin Buddhist reformers were critiquing the Buddhist establishment and debating how to bring about an “organization of fellow companions,” people throughout Japan were critiquing the old social-political order and debating how to bring about a democratic society. Contributors to Shinjin were aware of the broader discussions and frequently presented their notions of the “true person” or “organization of fellow companions” in relation to democracy or Communism. A brief examination of wider debates about democracy building will help clarify both how these Shin reformers’ notions of individuals, community, and social reform reflected broader social values of the period and how they were distinctive.
When the Allied powers took control of the governing of Japan in September 1945, they immediately took up the task of re-engineering Japanese society and politics according to principles of democracy. The 1947 Constitution, drafted by Occupation officials and then presented to the people as the Japanese government’s recommendation, established freedoms of speech, assembly and religion; the right to organize unions; equality and suffrage for women; and a commitment to “forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation.” Insofar as this represented a suddenly imposed “democracy from above,” many were skeptical that democracy would truly take shape. In order to educate the people about democracy and encourage them to participate, Occupation officials oversaw educational reforms that replaced imperialist ideology with teachings of peace and democracy; actively encouraged and advised labor unions; and carried out a multi-media campaign to encourage women to vote.\textsuperscript{7} Andrew Gordon notes, “A fever of ‘democratization’ swept Japan. The projects of democracy and equality were understood in extremely expansive terms by their advocates; they meant far more than voting and land reform. They implied to many—and this was both promise and threat—a remaking of the human soul” (Gordon 2003, 232).

One of the major intellectual debates that took place in Occupation-period Japan concerned this issue of remaking human subjectivity. With Japan’s devastating loss in the war

\textsuperscript{7} On the expansive democratic ideals of the early postwar labor movement, see Chapter 2 of Gordon (1998). On the successful campaign to encourage women to vote, see Pharr (1981, 15-41).
and the Japanese government’s corresponding loss of political and moral authority, the people’s previous emperor-centered subjectivity was largely shattered. On one hand, intellectuals turned to the past, debating the causes of the war and the flaws in emperor-centered subjectivity; on the other hand, they looked to the future, debating how a new democratic subjectivity ought to be brought about among the people.

Marxist thinkers figured prominently in these discussions. During the first year and a half of the Occupation, a political truce was established between the Communist Party and Occupation officials. Communists who had been jailed during the war were set free, and the Japan Communist Party was allowed for the first time to function openly and legally, becoming active in the labor union movement. In addition, the Japan Socialist Party became popular, winning 29 percent of the vote in the 1947 general election. That year, Occupation officials then adopted a so-called “reverse course,” shifting toward anti-Communist policies as the Cold War took shape. Yet according to J. Victor Koschmann, the short-lived accommodation between Occupation officials and the Communist Party “made possible the sustained public exchanges between Marxists and non-Marxists typified in the debate on subjectivity” and also “intensified the impression that the defeat of militarism and the advent of democratization under the Occupation signified the real beginning of Japan’s bourgeois democratic revolution and

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8 For a classic discussion of Emperor-centered subjectivity, see Chapters 1 and 2 of Maruyama (1963). For a discussion of Emperor-centered subjectivity as it relates to the shutaisei debates, see Sakuta (1978).
therefore validated the Marxist historical agenda” (Koschmann 1998, 249). Marxist intellectuals thus enjoyed great authority and popularity during the early Occupation years. Moreover, Marxist thought had held a dominant place in Japanese philosophy and social sciences since the 1920s. For these reasons, the Occupation-period debate on democratic subjectivity was largely a dispute over the correct interpretation of Marxism.

In January 1946, a group of Marxist writers began publishing a journal Kindai bungaku that emphasized the need for a “new human subject” to go along with the building of a democratic society and literature. These writers’ valorization of the autonomous human subject can be understood as a counter-reaction to the selfless devotion to the nation that had been demanded during the war period, as well as an attempt “to provide intellectual coherence and legitimacy to the self-centered attitudes they recognized to be widespread throughout Japanese society” at that time (Koschmann 1998, 254-255). In response, a debate arose whose buzzword was shutaisei 主体性. Shutaisei can be translated as “subjectiveness,” “subjectivity,” or “autonomy.” Sakuta Keiichi defines the term in relation to this debate as the “tendency toward awareness, affirmation, and liberation of self” (Sakuta 1978: 224). Rikki Kersten describes it as “a complex concept which connoted ‘a sense of self’, and which presumed that man directed his historical destiny” (Kersten 1996, 78).

In arguing for the importance of human subjectivity, this group opposed the orthodox school of Marxism, which held that individual subjectivity was part of the “superstructure” that was determined by economic forces. This group could point to Marx’s statement in The
Marxism was strictly “objective” and “scientific,” according to this school, so there was no place for concerns with consciousness or motivations (Kersten 1996, 88-92). The non-orthodox school, on the other hand, picked up on a humanist, idealist strand of Marxist thought that had existed previously in Japan and in Europe, which frequently emphasized Marx’s earlier writings (Kersten 1996, 79-90).

The view that human subjectivity contributed to the process of revolution was advanced most conspicuously by Umemoto Katsumi (1912-1974). In order to resolve the question of why an individual should ever sacrifice his life for the sake of his class, Umemoto declared that Marxism was not a “science” but rather a “worldview” (sekaikan 世界観) oriented toward a specific goal. That goal is the emancipation of humankind, achieved by way of the emancipation of the working class. It is only faith in that ideal that can compel revolutionaries to transcend their short-term, selfish desires and instantiate a true revolution. Interestingly, Umemoto anchors his theory to Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime’s philosophy of “nothingness” (mu 無), according to which Buddhist “nothingness” mediates between objective determinism and subjective freedom (Kersten 1996, 93-96; Koschmann 1998, 256-258). Relying on Nishida’s philosophy, Umemoto sought to convince Marxists that human values and will-power play an important role in shaping history together with impersonal economic forces.

Maruyama Masao was another central figure in the 1947-1948 debates on subjectivity. Ordinarily categorized as a “liberal,” “modernist, or “individualist,” Maruyama was also deeply
influenced by his study of Marx. In later periods, he denied being a Marxist, but in the context
of the subjectivity debates, Maruyama’s liberal individualism took the form of an argument for
a certain interpretation of Marxism. Hoping to rally Marxists, Christians, and others into a
democratic front, Maruyama argued that the Marxist project of bringing about a classless
society must be driven by aspiration for ideals. In the context of a roundtable debate on the
topic of “Historical Materialism and Subjectivity” (published in Sekai, Feb. 1948), Maruyama
attacked orthodox Marxists for their refusal to recognize the historical impact of human
subjectivity and value-consciousness (Kersten 1996, 100-101).

As a result of their concern with the role of subjectivity in the construction of a
democratic society, many intellectuals during the Occupation Period became interested in
interacting with and better understanding “the masses” (taishū 大衆), “the folk” (minzoku 民族),
or “the people” (hitobito 人々) (Avenell 2010, 23). Exemplifying this trend was Tsurumi
Shunsuke 鶴見俊輔 (1922-), whose interest in making philosophy useful to the people was
closely connected to his own remorse about the failure of intellectuals to oppose the war. In
“Reflections on Philosophy,” an essay written during the last months of the war, Tsurumi
sought to transform philosophy from an abstract intellectual discourse into a tool helpful for
ordinary people in regard to three tasks: criticism (hihan 批判), guidance (shishin 指針), and
empathy (dōjō 同情) (ibid., 28). Philosophy as a source of critical thought and of guidelines for
living was essential to avoid being manipulated by government propaganda and the like;
philosophy as a source of empathy and solidarity would serve to prevent international conflict.
and to facilitate the construction of a democratic society. In seeking a way to bring philosophy
down from the clouds, Tsurumi advocated studying the prewar tradition of “life composition”
(seikatsu tsuzurikata or seikatsu kiroku), in which schoolchildren had written down their
everyday experiences in essays or poetic form. According to Tsurumi, philosophers ought to
adopt the “language of rudimentary experience” (genshi keiken go 原始経験語) and engage with
the “actualities” of daily life (ibid., 29-30).

Tsurumi’s agenda of connecting with the people lay behind the 1946 founding of the
Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai (Institute for the Science of Thought) and its journal Shisō no kagaku
in early 1946. Tsurumi and Maruyama Masao were two of the group’s seven founding members.

The group’s founding statement reads in part:

We are extremely ashamed of the fact that the ideas and language of Japanese
intellectuals have to date been out of the reach of the Japanese masses. Thus, little by
little, we want to shed the intellectualism in our ideas and adopt a mode of thought as
one of the masses... Yet our direction will not be the erstwhile one of treating the
masses as a mass; rather we will be interested in each and every one of the masses
(taishū no hitorihitori). Through this interest we want to learn from the masses and
improve our own sensibility and contemplative activity. (quoted in Avenell 2010, 36)

Besides the Shisō no Kagaku Kenkyūkai, various other research groups and educational
enterprises (including the Twentieth Century Research Institute, the People’s University, the
Kamakura Academia, and the Movement for a People’s History) focused their efforts on
learning about or from “the people” (ibid., 36-37). In summary, in the postwar, democracy
building context, many intellectuals perceived a lack of autonomous subjectivity among the
Japanese people as a factor enabling the disastrous war. In response, they reinterpreted Marxist
thought and redefined the social role of philosophy, emphasizing the need to engage with ordinary people. On one hand, this could mean instilling in the people a particular worldview and faith; on the other, it could mean valuing and listening to the voice of the people. In either case, intellectuals had become increasingly interested in the experiences and values of ordinary people, now recognized to be an important historical actor.9

Many of the same trends can be seen within the Shinjin Society Buddhist reform movement. As discussed below, Shinjin Society leaders also sought to reach out to and engage ordinary people, grappling for ways of inspiring a new sense of self among their members. In addition, they provided a channel for ordinary people to express their own views and experiences. And like Umemoto, Maruyama, and Tsurumi, Shinjin Society leaders hoped to contribute to the democratic rebirth of Japan (and of the Ōtani organization). However, the specific principles upon which a Buddhist “organization of fellow companions” was to be built differed markedly from those of the secular intellectuals discussed above.

5.3 Defining the “True Person”

The Shinjin Society’s main office was located in the Fushimi ward of Kyoto, but within the first year of the society’s creation, local Shinjin groups were established in Mie, Fukui, 

9 It is important to note that such a perspective was by no means entirely new in the postwar period. Yanagita Kunio was among those who had been studying “the folk” throughout the Taishō and early Shōwa periods. It is the extension of a people-centered approach into various intellectual disciplines, including history, the social sciences, political theory, literature, and religious studies, that is new in the postwar period.
Ishikawa, Kumamoto, Toyama, Nagano, Shiga, Gifu, Hiroshima, Tottori, Shimane, Fukuoka, Saga, Nara, and Ehime prefectures, as well as in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hokkaido. In many of these prefectures (including Mie, Fukui, Ishikawa, and Gifu), multiple groups were established. Such groups typically hosted lectures by Soga or other leading members, held weekly dharma talks or seminar discussions (zadankai 座談会), and published newsletters. As for size, we know that 1500 copies of the first issue of Shinjin were distributed and that the society grew to comprise approximately 2000 members (Tahara and Hashikawa 1999, 41; Mizushima 2010, 510).

The Shinjin journal was one of four official undertakings of the Shinjin Society, along with lectures, research, and “other activities that serve the society’s goals.” The journal was published monthly (with a few exceptions) from May 1947 through April 1962 for a total of 155 issues. As noted above, the society’s beginnings are connected to the failure of Kurube and his associates to enact their plans for institutional reform and a national faith movement. Thus, it is not surprising that the society ultimately disbanded once Kurube was appointed Head of Sect Affairs in June 1961 and prepared for the announcement of the national Dōbōkai faith movement in June 1962.

The Shinjin Society’s official purpose was “to clarify Shin Buddhist teachings and to raise forth the true life of the religious organization of fellow companions based on that

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10 Details about these group’s formation and activities are found in the “Kakuchi no ugoki 各地のうごき” sections near the end of the issues. In the case of Niigata, Toyama, Nagano, Hokkaido, Hiroshima, Shimane, and Nara, I have not yet confirmed that plans to establish Shinjin groups were actually carried out (due to current lack of access to documents).
tradition.” In regard to the first task—“clarifying Shin Buddhist teachings”—the editors of Shinjin recruited prominent scholars to contribute theological articles. The first issue names Soga, Akegarasu, Kaneko, and D. T. Suzuki as scholars who had agreed to contribute, but ultimately, it was Soga and his student Yasuda Rijin who became the regular leading contributors to the journal throughout its 15-year span.

In regard to the society’s second task—“raising forth the true life of the religious organization of fellow companions”—many articles within Shinjin address the issues of religious community and institutional organization. Such articles offer historical analyses of the “original” religious organization that existed in Shinran’s day, critique the present religious organization, and discuss the ideal religious organization to be established in the future. In the first few years of Shinjin, such topics are notably addressed by Matsubara Yūzen, Fujishima Tatsurō 藤島達朗 (1907-1985), and Hino Kenkei 日野賢憬. All three were among the original 29 members who signed on at the Shinjin Society’s founding. Fujishima went on to become a

12 Of these three, only Hino was among the 13 who attended the initial planning meeting. The original 13 were: Okayama Shō (romanization?) 岡山正, Takahara Kakushō 高原覚正, Takeda Junshō 竹田淳昭, Tazawa Seiki (? ) 瀧澤静希, Tsuge Senei 拓植闡英, Nakano Ryōshun 仲野良俊, Kikuchi Yūkyō 菊地祐恭, Kin Yūshō 岸融證, Hino Kenkei 日野賢憬, Sasaki Yū 佐々木悠, Takeuchi Ryōe 竹内良恵, Kurube Shinya 藤野豊雄, and Fujiwara Shōen 藤原正遠.

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influential scholar of Shin Buddhist history, appointed to kōshi status. Matsubara went on to be president of Ōtani University in 1974, and he, too, was appointed to kōshi status. Matsubara in particular was central to the Ōtani reform movement; in one scholar’s assessment, he can be called the “academic leader of the Dōbōkai movement” (Conway 2006, 82).

A third voice that appears in the pages of Shinjin, especially in its early years, is that of lay Shin followers who held no position in the Ōtani organization or university. For example, the journal’s first issue began with three articles by scholar-priests Soga, Akegarasu, and Matsubara, but the remaining six articles were by two farmers, a printer, a potter, a book store owner, and a professor at a trade school. During the journal’s first year, a special section called “Ground of Buddha’s Children” (Busshi chi 仏子地) also regularly featured stories by laypeople about their discoveries of faith in everyday life.

In this section, I first discuss the conception of the “true person” set forth in Shinjin by Soga. I then discuss a competing conception presented in a Shinjin article by D. T. Suzuki on the myōkonin Saichi and echoed in the myōkonin-style faith stories submitted by lay Shin followers. Finally, I discuss articles concerning organizational reform by Matsubara Yūzen and Yasuda Rijin. The following section then tracks how the tensions between these competing conceptions

13 Details about the authors appear in an “Authors’ Introductions” section on page 14. The journal editor clearly wanted to highlight the backgrounds of these authors in order to project a non-elite, populist image.
of the “true man” were resolved, leading toward the proclamation of a new Kiyozawa orthodoxy.

Soga Ryōjin and World History

In the postwar period, Soga took on a more proselytizing role, shifting his agenda from reinterpreting Shin teachings for himself and his colleagues to clarifying those teachings to a broader audience. This shift parallels the broader trend among Japanese intellectuals in the postwar period to engage with “the people.” Soga’s article in the first issue of Shinjín, “Behold the man” (“Kono hito o miyo この人を見よ”), demonstrates this shift. In this short, two-page article, Soga exemplifies the Shinjin Society’s stated mission of leaving behind abstract intellectual discussion and turning to the practical task of inspiring faith among the people.14

Soga’s article is the first in the journal, immediately following the Shinjin Society’s mission statement and a prefatory quote from the Tannishō. The same Tannishō quote (discussed in detail below) forms the main subject matter of Soga’s article, so it can be supposed that the journal editors selected this quote in response to Soga’s article. The mission statement is notable for claiming for Shinran’s teachings “world and societal significance” in putting Japan and the world back in order; for its implicit critique of the Ōtani organization (discussed above); and for its promise to engage in “severe self-critique” in the effort to reveal true practice and

14 I assume this article derives from a lecture given by Soga—in light of the common claim that after Kaishin, Soga stopped writing—but I have not found any direct evidence of this.
faith for self and others. Soga’s article begins with a paragraph echoing the sentiment that Shinran’s teachings have a “world significance” waiting to be realized:

Japanese Buddhism has some significance for the world at this present moment, and many think that its core is expressed by Shinran’s teaching of absolute Other Power. Where in the world is the foundational site of practice from which those teachings of Shinran can be spread? A truly lonesome feeling arises. Actually, the present intellectual world of defeated Japan is in a state of complete confusion. One must say it is a time of the five defilements, an age without Buddha. Here we deeply and painfully feel the weakness of our own powers, but there is no room for leisurely reflection upon our own powers. We must rise up and cast ourselves forward. We cannot deliberate upon our own powers. We must not look on as spectators. This is a time to cast our lives into the muddy flow of the age, without deliberating upon what the result will be.

In light of the context, one might have expected Buddhist reformers’ feelings of “confusion,” “loneliness,” or “weakness” to derive from regret over their wartime actions or those of their nation or sect, and one might have expected “severe self-critique” to be directed toward the same. In this passage, however, Soga’s feelings of loneliness and pain relate to the apparent lack of prospects for Shinran’s teachings to spread and take on world significance. Defeat in war is a cause for reflecting on the limited power of Japan and its Buddhists—not on the correctness of their beliefs or justness of their actions.

The second paragraph turns to the main content of the article where Soga presents Shinran as a flesh-and-blood person whose deeds advanced a historic mission rather than as the mere author of religious doctrine.

For me, what is brought to mind in regard to Saint Shinran is his expression of his innermost thoughts in the 19th chapter of the Tannishō: “When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida, which arose from five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of me, Shinran, alone! Then how I am filled with gratitude for the
Primal Vow, in which Amida resolved to save me, though I am burdened with such heavy karma! These are words that Shinran was living through his real physical body. These words cannot be seen in Shinran’s writings. Such unadorned words of lofty tone are found nowhere within his Kyōgōshinshō or his Goshōsoku. These are not just empty words; they are a historical expression. Truly, they are saying, “Behold the man!” There can be no doubt that “this man” has truly practiced and realized within his own self the Primal Vow of the Buddha. He has cast forth his own self, dying in the vow and finding life in the vow, bringing death to the vow and bringing life to the vow. A man who could say this had not existed before. Ultimately, the Tannishō is composed with the speaker of these words as its fulcrum. The ten chapters of Tannishō describe the dharma, but these words present the man. They grasp the man himself. “This man” is none other than the traveler of Shandao’s parable of the two rivers. From the Western shore, the Buddha summoned, “You, come straight ahead, single-mindedly and with fixed purpose. I can protect you.” This person called to as “you” by the Buddha—this person selected as “you” by the Buddha, this person referred to as “you,” not “all of you”—this “you,” it must be said, is none other than the man of Shinran. “This man” is one who stands forth, having truly cast the entirety of his life to the Buddha, cutting down the Buddha and giving life to the Buddha. He shoulders the Primal Vow of the Tathāgata all by himself, taking on the burdens of all sentient beings through the Tathāgata. The Buddha’s Primal Vow takes form through a relationship of historical necessity: the individual Shinran appears and himself shoulders the Buddha, taking up the ultimate standpoint of accepting the Buddha’s living or dying as his own responsibility.

According to Soga’s analysis, Shinran’s statement that Amida’s Primal Vow was “for the sake of me, Shinran, alone,” recorded by Yuien in the Tannishō, is of a completely different nature than

15 See CWS (vol. 1, 679). For an alternate translation, see Ryūkoku University Translation Center (1990, 79).
16 The standard version of the Tannishō is composed of eighteen chapters (as well as a foreword, an additional preface, an epilogue, an appendix, and a colophon). However, the first ten chapters purport to be Shinran’s words whereas the following eight chapters are the words of the Tannishō’s author, thought to be a disciple of Shinran’s named Yuien.
17 Shandao is one of the seven patriarchs of Shin Buddhism identified by Shinran. His parable of the “white path between two rivers” (niga byakudō 二河白道) became a popular theme in Buddhist art as well as a popular object of Shin sermons. An English translation can be found in Theodore De Bary (2008, vol. 1: 268-270).
those found in Shinran’s own writings. These words reveal the truth of Shin teachings to be living in Shinran’s “real physical body” (genjitsu no nikutai 現実の肉体). In these words, Shin teachings did not remain “empty words” but took on a “historical expression.” Soga concludes that this passage of the Tannishō conveys the message, “Behold the man!” Placing this phrase in quotation marks, Soga clearly intends to reference the famous words “Ecce homo” of Pontius Pilate upon his showing the mutilated and bound body of Jesus to an angry mob (hence my translation of hito 人 as “man” here). Soga’s phrase may also point to Friedrich Nietzsche’s Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is (written in 1888, published in 1908), a work that became the object of philosophical discussion in Japan from the late 1910s (e.g., in Watsuji Tetsurō’s 1919 Niche kenkyū). Probably owing to such writings on Nietzsche’s work, the phrase “Behold the man!” was popularized, appearing as a chapter title in many wartime works.† Although different nuances attended the phrase in these different contexts, the basic sentiment conveyed is one of heroic suffering and self-sacrifice. Soga uses the phrase to draw attention to the heroic self-sacrifice of Shinran (“He has cast forth his own self, dying in the vow and finding life in the vow...”). Soga’s main point is that Shin followers ought to focus on Shinran’s

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† A search of “kono hito o miyo” in the National Diet Library database reveals wartime titles like Collection of Tales of the Feats of Wounded Soldiers (Shōi gunjin seikō bidan shū 傷痍軍人性向美談集) (1934); Shining Upon the Imperial Majesty’s Eight Corners of the World (Kōi hakkō ni kagayaku 皇威八紘に輝く) (1938); Simply to War! (Kanso de sen e 簡素で戦へ) (1940), and Biography of War Hero General Katō (Gunshin Katō shōshō seiden 軍神加藤少将正伝) (1943).
person rather than the doctrines he expounded. Shin teachings are not disembodied ideas found in books that one contemplates at a distance. They require acceptance and embodiment in history among people. And for that embodiment to take place, a Shin believer must realize that the Buddha did not set out to save all sentient beings in the abstract; he set out to save each and every individual. This realization is a momentous one in which one’s individual self dies and a new subjectivity of Buddhahood—of taking on the Buddha’s historic task of saving all sentient beings—is born.

In the third and final paragraph of the article, Soga begins by underlining that action on the part of individuals is required for salvation to take place.

When Amida gave rise to his vow after five kalpas’ contemplation, a promise was made between the Buddha and individuals. The Buddha’s vow was not given rise to willfully; it was a promise made with individuals. In order for that promise to be actualized, [the Buddha] was now born as Shinran. As such, Shinran called himself Shinran before the Tathāgata.

For Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow to have effect, individuals like Shinran need to give their lives over to the Buddha completely. Although the power of salvation lies with the Buddha, the Buddha’s vow to save all beings is not made and completed through the Buddha’s will alone.

19 On a second level, “Behold the man!” can also be interpreted as representing Shinran’s words to Amida. Shinran fully recognizes his identity as a foolish, evil “man” in need of Amida’s salvation. This enables him to address Amida directly, understanding that Amida’s Primal Vow is “for the sake of me, Shinran, alone.”
The will for salvation must come also from the individuals to be saved. There is a resonance here with the broader contemporary debates on economic determinism and the role of human subjectivity. Like Umemoto and Maruyama, Soga claimed that liberation of humanity (albeit in a religious rather than political-economic register) was not already determined; it required a transformation of human subjectivity.

In the remainder of the paragraph, Soga elaborates upon why these words “for the sake of me, Shinran, alone” have the power to inspire faith in everyone who reads them. According to Soga, these words exceed the bounds of ordinary “subjective” words, revealing an “objective fact” that can surmount skepticism and provide a means to understanding.

Shandao used pronouns like “oneself” and “myself.” Although these are pronouns, one clearly understands that they refer not just to anyone but to his own individual self. Because there is self, there is responsiveness (kannō 感応) to others. Because there is self, there is clearly a separation from others. However, because there is self, one is disconnected from others, and in overcoming that disconnection, there is responsiveness. When he used the Japanese expression “Shinran” to refer to himself, the Tathāgata stood opposite the self, and “myself” was clearly made the object of the Tathāgata’s Primal Vow summons. The “Shinran” of “for the sake of me, Shinran, alone” is a single person. By referring to himself as “Shinran,” it came forth that [the Original Vow] was for one person. When he said “me, Shinran, alone,” [the Original Vow] became an objective fact. [Shinran’s] self-realization of personally shouldering the binding karma of all sentient beings through the ages was also the inspiration (kangeki 感激) that the Buddha was shouldering everything for him. This is something that goes

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Soga’s article does not use the term “will.” The term I translate here as “willfully” is “katte ni 勝手に.” I introduce the term “will” in my commentary to try to clarify Soga’s discussion of the “promise” (yakusoku 約束) (also implying “pact” or “arrangement”) between Amida Buddha and individuals. In order for that promise to be actualized, Shinran’s active, voluntary participation (“cast forth his own self... appears and himself shoulders the Buddha... called himself Shinran before the Tathāgata”) is necessary.
beyond Shinran’s consciousness; one can clearly sense [Shinran’s] awakening of salvation here. One can clearly see in those words the shouldering of sins of all sentient beings, the floating together with all sentient beings. Shinran will forever be our companion. Dharmākara Bodhisattva is of a different nature from us, and in things of a different nature, there is something one cannot understand. However, I believe that one can perceive here something the same [nature as us], which went beyond Shinran’s consciousness. No one can confront Shinran’s words and not be inspired. There is no inspiration in words one could also say oneself. These are Shinran’s unique words that one could not say oneself, but because they come down from [a source] beyond the self, anyone in the world must feel the same and have the same realization. One must not begin by thinking about the issue of the sameness of faith, but hearing those words and then coming to a place of same feeling and same realization, the fact of sameness of faith is established, is it not? Through all the deeds (jissen 実践) of Shinran’s person, an understanding of Shin doctrine becomes possible. Mere theory and research is peripheral. Ultimately, it is through the person of Shinran that the Buddha’s forty-eight vows and Dharmākara Bodhisattva can be understood.

Compared to Shinran’s “for the sake of me, Shinran, alone,” Soga judges Shandao’s use of the pronouns “oneself” (jishin 自身) and “myself” (wa ga shin 我が身) to retain a sense of abstraction. “For the sake of me, Shinran, alone” is emphatic about the concrete singularity of the person involved. Claiming to be the singular object of Amida’s vow to save all sentient beings appears quite radical and hubristic. Ordinary people would never think to utter such words. Yet according to Soga, there is a key truth contained within those words, as well as a power to inspire. To establish a relationship with the Buddha, one must first clearly recognize

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21 The “sameness of faith” (shinjin doitsu 信心同一) refers to the Shin doctrine that no distinction exists between the faith of Hōnen, Shinran, or any other true Shin follower since that faith is granted by Amida’s Other Power. This doctrinal point was established when Shinran proclaimed his faith to be equal to that of Hōnen’s. Hōnen’s other followers disputed this, but Hōnen answered in agreement with Shinran. Account of this dispute are found in the Tannishō postscript (CWS, vol. 1: 678) and in the Gedenshō, Kakunyo’s biography of Shinran (JSS, 1050-1051).
oneself as an individual disconnected from the Buddha (“...because there is self, one is disconnected from others, and in overcoming that disconnection, there is responsiveness”). Shinran’s words communicate this process of establishing a responsive relationship with the Buddha, which causes the Buddha to shoulder all of one’s karma and causes oneself in turn to shoulder the karma of all sentient beings.

According to Soga, because Shinran’s words are utterly unthinkable for ordinary people, they belie their origins in a transcendent realm. Shinran would also have not thought to speak such words had he not experienced an encounter with the Buddha. For this reason, Shinran’s words are not records of his own subjective consciousness; they are records of an “objective fact.” Encountering such words that derive from a source “beyond the self” (i.e. beyond subjectivity), no one will fail to be convinced of their truth and inspired to attain the same realization (“the sameness of faith”). This encounter with Shinran’s person through his spoken words provides the route to doctrinal understanding for anyone and everyone. Soga specifically contrasts the promise of this route to faith through Shinran’s person with the difficulties involved in achieving faith through understanding Dharmākara Bodhisattva. Previously, Soga had described Dharmākara as the critical mediating figure enabling humans to establish a relationship with the Buddha. Dharmākara, understood by Soga to signify an aspect of the depths of one’s consciousness, is here said to be of “a different nature from us” while Shinran is presented as the critical mediating figure. Soga seems to have perceived limitations in his previous attempts to promote Shin teachings through his abstract theory of Dharmākara
Bodhisattva. Without disavowing that theory, Soga shifts approaches as he tries to inspire a broader audience. His concern to indicate an “objective,” empirical basis for faith, however, remains consistent with his earlier writings.

In 1949, Soga produced a series of articles that addressed broader social and institutional questions. Two occurrences may have triggered this brief shift in Soga’s writings. First, in March 1949, immediately prior to the April implementation of Ōtani University’s new university curriculum and regulations, Soga, Kaneko, and two other faculty members were purged from their university posts by the government. In Soga’s case, this ruling was based on investigation of his wartime writings, especially articles in Kaishin and the essay collection Gyōshin no michi 行信の道, as well as interviews of him, especially regarding his notion of “instinct” (honnō 本能). Second, in April, celebrations were held at Higashi Honganji temple to honor the 450th anniversary of Rennyo’s death. In the eyes of Soga and the Shinjin reformers, this was a disappointing event that underlined the state of decline of the Ōtani organization.

Confronted with these political and institutional realities, Soga turned to address such topics as the Shinjin Society’s purpose, institutional reform of the Ōtani organization, and the global

22 The other two purged faculty members were Fukushima Masao 福島政雄 (1889–1976) and Yasui Kōdo 安井広度 (1883–1968). Fukushima was an educational studies professor who taught at Manchuria National Foundation University from 1941-1945, during which time he authored works including Kōdō no jikaku to Bukkyō (Buddhism and the Awakening to Filial Piety) (1941) and Kōkoku kyōka no hongi (The Fundamental Principles of Imperial Instruction) (1941). Yasui taught at Ōtani University from 1929, becoming emeritus in 1951. His scholarship focused on the Āgamas, as well as the Vimalakirti Sutra and various Shin scriptures. He gave ango lectures in 1938, 1946, 1953, and 1963 (SJJ, 331).
23 For a discussion of these events, see Mizushima (2010, 486-490).
significance of Shin teachings in relation to Christianity, the “new religions,” Communism, and democracy.

The first of these articles is “The Path of the True Man: Approaching One Year Since the Formation of the Shinjin Society” ("Shinjin no michi: Shinjin kessei ichinen ni yosete") (Shinjin no. 10, 16-18). The article begins with a discussion of Ōtani denomination history that presents Kiyozawa Manshi as the latest in a line of individuals stretching back to Kyōnyo who have struggled to clarify the spirit of Rennyo and Shinran. Contrasting the religious fervor of Kiyozawa’s day with the desolation of the recent Rennyo celebrations, Soga sets out his vision for how Shin reformers ought to go about injecting life back into Shin Buddhism:

Today, looking to the world as a whole, one sees the two great world religions of Buddhism and Christianity in confrontation. And looking to society, one sees a confrontation between democracy, according to which people are good, and Communism, according to which people are evil, and one searches for a final solution.

In response, what is it ultimately that Buddhists should do? I think that at this time, we must truly exert ourselves, raise up the correct dharma, and truly proceed on the path of “attaining faith oneself and guiding others to faith” (jishin kyōninshin 自信教人信)24... I do think that a faith movement also must ultimately have political significance of the highest sense, but “true persons” ought not focus on the sect. Setting aside the issue of the sect, they will contribute to the further awakening of the sect as a whole. Rather than critiquing from the outside, they should put themselves in a position to receive critique. Targeting the whole of society, they should incessantly strive to refine themselves.

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24 In modern Ōtani history, this phrase came to be associated with Kiyozawa Manshi’s 1901 opening ceremony address at Shinshū University. It appears originally in Shandao’s Wangsheng lizan jie 往生礼讃偈, which Shinran quotes in his Kyōgyōshinshō (CWS, vol. 1: 120; JSS, 261). The same phrase is discussed in Eshinni’s letters, Rennyo’s Ofumi, and various other Shin scriptures (e.g. JSS, 816, 893, 1151, 1171).
At a time when the world was locked in battles between Christianity and Buddhism and between democracy and Communism, Shin Buddhist reformers must not worry over sectarian politics, according to Soga. Rather, through self-critique, they ought to cultivate a purer faith that is able to take on the greater task of representing Buddhism on the world stage. The remainder of Soga’s article reiterates this point:

I hope that everyone here can cultivate a faith that goes beyond sectarian matters and presents itself as one of the world’s two great religions... Looking at the state of our sect today, one cannot be silent... but I think contributors to this journal need to refrain from speaking of such matters and instead stand apart, taking up an extremely sacred, deep position of pure Buddha-dharma of world significance.

In explaining this standpoint of transcending sectarian concerns and representing Buddhism for Japan and the world, Soga goes on to explicitly point to the model of Seishinkai, the journal published by Kiyozawa and his followers.

In a July 1949 lecture (published in the October issue of Shinjin), Soga further expanded upon these themes in an article titled “Transcend the Individual! A Fulfilling Future For Japan is Unthinkable Without Buddhism” (“Kojin o koeyo: bukkyō o nozoite nihon no manzokuna shōrai wa kangaerarenai”). Soga begins by stating that Shin Buddhist teachings undoubtedly have great significance in regard to individuals’ salvation from suffering, but in this postwar age, it is time to clarify their social significance. Soga then situates Buddhism in relation to Christianity, the “new religions” (specifically Tenrikyō), and Communism. His most extended remarks relate to the Communist movement, which he approaches sympathetically as inspired by the ideal of mutual aid. Its flaw, according to Soga, is its failure to recognize the reality of “a great power
beyond humans” (*ningen ijō no ōkina chikara* 人間以上の大きな力). Shinjin Society members ought not oppose Communists but rather treat them as “fellow companions” ripe for an encounter with Shin teachings.

Having presented a picture of Shin Buddhism competing on the world stage with Christianity, the “new religions,” and Communism, Soga then discusses the “rising to action” (*funki* 奮起) that will be required to carry out this task:

> We have little power, so we must rise to action. It is necessary for us to rise to action. To say this in terms of awakening (*jikaku* 自覚), to say one cannot rise to action is an unawakened kind of thinking. True awakening is found in a place where because it is impossible, one rises to action all the more. One cannot but rise to action to the very end... All in all, when there is fulfillment, there arises gratitude and courage, and the deep mysteries [of Buddha dharma] appear as a matter of course. To say that one has fulfillment and gratitude without rising to action, that is nothing more than a mere ideal. I believe it is through rising to action that fulfillment becomes true fulfillment and gratitude becomes true gratitude.

Soga’s emphasis on the need for great effort even in the face of an impossible task recalls the four Bodhisattva vows: “Sentient beings are innumerable; I vow to save them all. Mental afflictions are inexhaustible; I vow to extinguish them all. Dharma gates are countless; I vow to study them all. Buddha’s path is supreme; I vow to accomplish it.” To some, Soga’s emphasis on “rising to action” might seem out of place in the Pure Land tradition in which salvation is said to be accomplished wholly through the Other Power of Amida Buddha. But according to Soga, fulfillment achieved through a relationship with Amida will naturally lead to courageous action,

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25 He also refers to this trans-human reality with D. T. Suzuki’s term “spirit” (*rei sei* 靈性).
which will lead to greater fulfillment, leading to more courageous action, and so on and so forth.

Soga’s article ends with another discussion of Kiyozawa:

...Reverend Kiyozawa’s Kōkōdō and Seishinshugi movement arose in the Meiji period. I think that its spirit did not die but rather appeared again in a new form as today’s Shinjin Society movement. If the Shinjin Society is unable to completely achieve its goals, I am sure yet another organization will certainly soon raise its head. Even if the Shinjin Society does not completely achieve its goal as the Shinjin Society, I think it has great significance just in preparing the way for the next [organization] to arise. That is why we must not become impatient or focus on trying to achieve big results immediately. Rather, let us take up the work that has been given to us and, placing our feet firmly on the great earth, ceaselessly strive to advance step by step.

Describing the earlier Seishinshugi movement as having been reborn as the Shinjin Society movement and predicting that the Shinjin Society will be succeeded by yet another organization, Soga implies the ongoing need for an organization separate from the Ōtani organization. Earlier in this article, Soga spoke of the Ōtani organization by saying, “This Shinjin Society has an existence of little power within the Shin sect’s religious organization, but without this Shinjin Society, the ever anxious Shin sect religious organization would be unable to do anything.” As critical as he is of the Ōtani organization, Soga does not think that reforming the Ōtani organization is the best way forward. Rather the Shinjin Society should focus on “step by step” advances in the cultivation of true faith among themselves and the propagation of that faith nationally and internationally.
D. T. Suzuki and Myōkōnin Faith

The fourth issue of Shinjin leads with an article by D. T. Suzuki titled “Myōkōnin Saichi.” At the end of the article, Suzuki is labeled a “Tokyo member.” However, there are no indications that Suzuki was involved in the Shinjin Society movement beyond his occasional submission of an article (his next contribution was in the November 1951 issue). There is indication, however, that the Shinjin Society was very interested in Suzuki and his Pure Land writings. For example, at the third Shinjin Society meeting, it was decided that the Shinjin Society would eventually publish books of its own, but in the meantime, it would provide its readers a service of accepting orders and mailing out copies of worthwhile books. To begin, it was offering Suzuki’s Myōkōnin (1948) and Soga’s Tannishō chōki (1947). In the eighth issue of Shinjín, it was reported that the first edition of Suzuki’s Myōkōnin had sold out, so those who placed orders would have to wait for the second printing, which was in process. This section’s discussion of Suzuki is thus by no means intended as a thorough examination of Suzuki’s thought in connection with myōkōnin; rather, it merely sets out to clarify the role played by Suzuki’s writings in the evolving Shinjin Society movement.

“Myōkōnin 妙好人” (literally “wondrous, good person”) is a term derived from Shandao’s Kankū sanzengi, where it is used to refer to those who recite the nenbutsu. Shinran also used the term to refer to those of strong Pure Land faith. In the late Tokugawa period, however, the term took on more specific meaning in an expansive collection of myōkōnin biographies (myōkōnin den 妙好人伝) produced by three Honganji denomination priests from
The majority of **myōkōnin** depicted are not priests or those of elite classes, but rather commoners. They tend to be hard-working and extremely loyal to their parents and to the government, many of them receiving official accolades from the Shogunate. All are presented as exemplifying pious faith and devotion to nenbutsu recitation, and their faith tends to be directed toward salvation in the afterlife—the other-worldly reality of Amida and his Pure Land being amply demonstrated with records of miraculous occurrences.²⁶ This ideal of Shin followers who are hard-working, loyal subjects content with their lot in life and desiring salvation only in the life to come was promoted in an effort to assuage the concerns of government authorities, for this was a time when peasant uprisings were becoming more common, “new religions” were on the rise, and disturbances were being caused by widespread pilgrimages to Ise Shrine (e.g. in 1830) (Akamatsu and Kasahara 1963, 413-416; Kasahara 2001, 408-411).

D. T. Suzuki was instrumental in popularizing the image of **myōkōnin** in the modern period, beginning with the chapter on them in his widely read *Japanese Spirituality* (Nihon-teki reisei 日本的靈性) (1944). That chapter focused its analysis on two individuals, Dōshū (d. 1516), the personal attendant of Rennyo, and Saichi (1850-1932), a relatively unknown craftsman

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²⁶ Such is the assessment of Kashiwahara Yūsen in Akamatsu and Kasahara (1963, 414). Michael Bathgate, however, emphasizes the **Myōkōnin den**’s “relative dearth of stories describing protagonists’ final moments” as compared to the earlier tradition of **Ōjō den**, and its presentation of nenbutsu practice as the result of present salvation rather than the cause of future salvation (2007, 283-284).
(shipbuilder and maker of *geta* wooden clogs). Suzuki’s article in *Shinjin* presents further analysis of Saichi’s poems.

Suzuki’s interest in *myōkōnin* was quite different from that of the Tokugawa-period priests who used accounts of *myōkōnin* to promote an ethic of hard work, filial piety, and loyalty to the government. Instead, Suzuki presented the *myōkōnin* as exemplars of a nondualistic understanding of the world that arises from everyday life rather than from learning or rational discourse (Suzuki 2014-2015, vol. 2: 147). In doing so, he frequently compared the *myōkōnin* to Zen masters to demonstrate the differences in approach between Shin and Zen (e.g. Zen is intellectual while Shin is emotional) but the sameness of their final product of *satori* (awakening). Thus, in a passage from *Japanese Spirituality*, Suzuki juxtaposes Saichi’s constant refrain of “Namu-Amida-Butsu” with Linji’s statement on “the true person of no rank” (*ichi mu’i no shinjin* 一無位の真人) and Shinran’s “for the sake of me, alone” (*onore ichinin no tame nari keri* おのれ一人のためなりけり),

explaining them all in terms of a common experience of “the supra-individual person” (*chō-kojin no hito* 超個人の人) breaking through into one’s consciousness (Suzuki 2014-2015, vol. 2: 158; Suzuki 2010, 253).

Suzuki’s discussion in *Shinjin* of Saichi and the *myōkōnin* ideal bears some resemblance to Soga’s *Shinjin* writings. After a brief introduction of Saichi, Suzuki turns to Shinran,

27 It is curious that Suzuki misquotes Shinran here, replacing Shinran’s own name with the pronoun *onore* 己.
emphasizing the usefulness of his down-to-earth statements in the Tannishō as compared to the more academic Kyōgyōshinshō:

Looking at the fact that the teachings of the Other Power sects have produced elder Saichi and many other myōkōnin with no academic learning or intellectual preparation, it becomes clear that a type of satori can be found here. Saint Shinran wrote the Kyōgyōshinshō, but at the same time, he also fortunately left us works like the Tannishō, leaving room for the appearance of myōkōnin. Saint [Shinran] had academic training from an early age, so he could not feel satisfied unless he expressed his discoveries using difficult words and concepts. However, in daily conversation with his followers, he avoided that and instead spoke in a familiar way of his experiences just as they were (taiken no mama 体験のまま), without any literary artifice. (Shinjin no. 4, 1-2)

In Suzuki’s explanation, such conversations, reported in the Tannishō, point the way to faith for ordinary, ungifted people. At this point in time, Suzuki and Soga thus shared a common interest in the plain, spoken words of Shinran as opposed to his more complex doctrinal writings, and they both approached Shinran as a model of faith that could be emulated even by ordinary, ungifted people.28 Similar to Soga’s emphasis on the “sameness of faith,” Suzuki dwells on the sameness of Saichi and Shinran’s faith. For example, in Japanese Spirituality, Suzuki discusses at length Saichi’s statement, “the sect founder’s death anniversary / Is the death anniversary of Saichi”—a statement suggesting he is on par with Shinran (Suzuki 2014-2015, vol. 2: 176-78).

However, further examination reveals considerable differences between Suzuki’s portrayal of myōkōnin and Soga’s notion of Shin faith. Soga describes Shinran’s attainment of

28 It should be noted here that Suzuki did take on the task of studying and translating Shinran’s Kyōgyōshinshō in later years. See Shinran and Suzuki (2012).
faith as requiring personal acceptance of the responsibility for all of Buddhism. Soga also emphasizes the need for “rising to action” both in furthering the Buddhist cause on the world stage and in purifying one’s own faith. Suzuki, by contrast, describes faith as a mysterious gift that enables one to enjoy a life of effortlessness. In *Japanese Spirituality*, he describes Saichi’s salvation in the following terms:

...the salvation of living beings was for Saichi not something to be planned and carried out through various acts of benevolence. For him, to continuously examine the constancy of his believing heart while fashioning *geta*, and to do so amid a Sportive Samadhi (*yūge zanmai* 遊戯三昧), was surely well suited to the circumstances of his life...

...The salvation of sentient beings is our everyday life itself. There is no need to insist on having it signify any other activities. The “capital funds” (*motode* 元手) for a life devoted to the salvation of living beings is granted upon attainment of faith, upon receipt of the believing heart. Life without *Namū-amida-butsu* is a life of empty promises (*karategata* 空手形). It is extremely unstable and insecure. Most of us are creatures of just such lives, our actions never attaining the level of effortlessness and purposelessness, our lives never freed from conscious strivings. The salvation of living beings is none other than this kind of purposeless life (*mukuyūtei* 無功用底; S. *anābhogacaryā*).²⁹ (Suzuki 2014-2015, vol. 2: 169; Suzuki 2010, 275-76; Japanese readings added)

Suzuki’s *Shinjin* essay does not explicitly discuss Saichi’s faith in terms of “purposelessness.” However, it does portray Saichi faith’s as enabling him to be supremely happy with his life and self just as it is:

²⁹ “*Mukuyūtei* 無功用底” refers to the eighth of the ten Bodhisattva grounds or stages, also known as the “immovable stage” (*fudōchi* 不動地), in which practice occurs spontaneously without specific goals of intentions. See the *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* entry for 無功用.
On one hand, myōkōnin make exclamations about being wretched evil beings, but they find in that fact a cause for supreme happiness. Thus, old Saichi repeatedly comments that he is nothing other than an evil being, a complete lie, and a counterfeit. (Shinjin no. 4, 3)

Here the mystery of suddenly finding Buddhahood despite one’s ignorance and evilness is a cause for even deeper gratitude and joy. Within a Shin context, there is nothing unorthodox or unusual here. What is notable is how different Suzuki and Soga’s points of emphasis are.

Whereas Soga drums into his readers the great responsibility and effort that accompany true faith, Suzuki presents a picture of a common craftsman reveling in the bliss of Buddhahood in the midst of everyday life.

Suzuki’s concluding paragraph makes a small gesture toward the cause of reform:

Whether in Zen or in Shin, once one has completed the directing of virtue for going forth [to the Pure Land] (ōsō ekō 往相回向), it is necessary for one to enter directly into a life of the directing of virtue for returning [to this world] (gensō ekō 還相回向). Because the intellect is operating in communal life, one must not neglect it. Buddhists have become accustomed to pursuing an escapist, arhat-like existence, so although they speak of “Bodhisattva practice,” they are slow to put it into practice. One can say this is because the political environment has yet to mature. History certainly does not remain fixed in one position, so there is no need now to remain steeped only in the past. (ibid., 5)

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30 Jpn. それで妙好人は一方ではあさましき悪人と絶叫しておいて、そのままにまたそれを無上のうれしさに転化させる。それで才市老は自分の悪人ぶり、自分の『うそのかわ』であること、虚仮不実に外ならぬことを繰り返し陳べたてる。

31 For a more thorough comparison of Soga and Suzuki’s thought in regard to Shin teachings, see Blum (2008).
Elsewhere, Suzuki depicts Saichi’s efforts to save all sentient beings as nothing besides the continuance of his ordinary life—crafting *geta* and writing poems. Only in this afterthought of a passage does he gesture to more active practice involving the intellect, communal life, and politics. Suzuki’s article thus betrays a certain disconnect between the *myōkōnin* ideal and the cause of social or institutional reform.

*Shinjin Readers and Myōkōnin-like faith*

The notion that the Shinjin Society has its strength and promise in the faith of ordinary Buddhist laypeople is found throughout the *Shinjin* journal. One Shinjin member wrote in to *Chūgai nippos* to express his hopes for the Shinjin movement, noting, “The continual increase in participants in the Shinjin Society Movement is coming especially from ordinary lay people from the provinces. In this, one can see how much true religion is sought after, and how deep is the lack of faith toward the established religious organizations.” (quoted in *Shinjin* no. 1, 28). In introducing a local Shinjin group in Ishikawa prefecture, the *Shinjin* editor first raises the story of the *Lotus Sutra*’s “Bodhisattvas of the earth” (*chiyū no bosatsu* 地湧の菩薩), the countless Bodhisattvas revealed to be already dedicated to promulgating his teachings. The *Shinjin* editor comments, “It seems that the people who transmit the true Buddha-dharma are not people of fame and rank, nor are they people of the city. It seems that the Buddha dharma lives among the countryside people of no fame or rank, who are stained with dirt as if having emerged from the great earth” (*Shinjin* no. 8, 9).
During the first year of its publication, *Shinjin* had a regular section titled “Ground of Buddha’s Children” featuring the faith stories of Buddhist laypeople. In an explanation of this section, these stories are explicitly likened to *myōkōnin* tales:

The words and deeds of so-called *myōkōnin*, who were raised on Shin faith, are coming to be rediscovered as shining forth a unique light in the history of world religions. In this journal, we will be presenting records of your faith experiences and images of *myōkōnin* from every place (kakuchi 各地) in Japan, hoping that these can serve as food for the soul (*kokoro no kate* 心の糧). (*Shinjin* no. 3, 17)

The term “place” or “ground” (*chi* 地) in this passage and in the section title has at least two connotations. On one level, it is suggestive of Japan’s rural “provinces” (*chihō* 地方) in contrast to its cities. On another level, it suggests one of the “stages” (S. *bhūmi*) of a Bodhisattva’s course of practice.32

One typical faith story appears in the second issue by a woman from Mie Prefecture named Kimura Midori 木村美登利 (*Shinjin* no. 2, 13-14). The account begins with an expression of the joy that has come to her through faith:

> Spring has come again this year to the fields, the mountains, and the village. Together with this spring, the true spring I have been waiting and waiting for has visited my heart for the first time. The plum blossoms and rapeseed blossoms in my garden will eventually scatter. Regardless of how reluctant we may be to part with it, this year’s spring will be gone in a flash. But the spring that has visited my heart will forever remain. Its beautiful blossoms will never scatter.

32 The first of the traditional “ten stages” (jūchi 十地) is sometimes referred to as the “*isshi chi* 一子地” (“only child ground”), a phrase that resonates with “busshi chi.” In his *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran quotes a passage from the *Nehankyō* that discusses this stage of practice, in which one recognizes Buddha nature in all sentient beings and consequently treats all beings as one would one’s only child (see *CWS*, vol. 1: 99).
Kimura goes on to explain how she learned to set aside the question of the afterlife and instead find joy in the everyday activities of cooking, cleaning, and mending:

I used to treat the afterlife of future eternity as more important than this mere impermanent world, but the afterlife was never my business. This world was the business given to me living today. Now that I have been made to realize this, each day, I am extremely busy. I cook meals, do the cleaning, and do the mending. For me, just this and nothing else is my challenge. That is good enough. If a garment is ripped, mend it. That is the Buddha dharma. Even that is not done through my own power. Sad times are sad. Happy times are happy. Painful times are painful. Desperate situations are what they are. The dharma is what it is. This is a world where I am saved just as things are. What a joyful thing!

Her account concludes with further expressions of the contentment she has found in her present reality and wonder at the mystery of her transformation:

This blasphemous self, who was utterly incapable of finding peace of mind, now has no desire for anything more than this. I was given a body that is content with just living today in the midst of the blessings of heaven and earth.

That which awakened me was only mystery. Nothing I could have done.

That which was given to me was none other than Namu Amida Butsu.

In Kimura’s account, true faith brings complete contentment with things “just as they are” and a lack of desire for anything more than her everyday life of mending clothes and enjoying the natural scenery.

Several of the faith stories printed in Shinjin describe wartime experiences, enabling a glimpse of the politics and social ethics of lay Shinjin members. One of these is by a man from Fukuoka prefecture named Ōnaka Hisatoshi 大中久利. I here translate Ōnaka’s account in full.
In 1943, at the absolute height of the Pacific War when the key to victory or defeat was at hand, I aspired [to enlist] but I was still not of age. With my young blood burning, the chance I had been hoping for finally arrived, and I joined the naval flying corps. I was overjoyed. However, when I came to realize that it was nothing like I had hoped for or imagined, I was totally disillusioned and grief-struck. Each and every day, military training involving brutal blows by savage metal rods and cruel methods of all sorts continued without stop, tormenting our bodies and minds into submission and pliancy. The incessant pain, suffering, sadness, and fear brought about in me a painful yearning for escape that has no comparison. How much I resented the heavens and cursed man! I passed each day feeling like every word and action of the squad leaders was a needle driven into my heart. Then one day, while I was on duty, an individual in my squad committed a blunder. Naturally (?), I was made to stand punishment. I mustered all my strength and tried to endure it, but the brutality of those punishments was unbearable to mind and body, so I ended up fainting. However, after being given water and allowed to get my breath back, I was ordered to “summon your energy and finish out” the remaining (?) punishments. At that time, I just said forget it, and with no energy or willpower left, I gave up. Then, mysteriously, everything before my eyes suddenly became bright, and I felt like everything was breathing with life. One after another violent slap in the face was just the dance of perpetual life. I stopped hoping for the end to the punishment, and just enjoyed each bit. I was surprised when suddenly I heard a voice say, “all done.” Without thinking, a smiling “thank you” came from my mouth, causing the squad leader to make a bewildered face. I felt like I had finally come to know myself (jiko 自己). Myself is none other than myself. I realized that this was myself here and now. There is no myself in any other world. Sometimes in pain, sometimes in pleasure, in sadness, in fear… myself exists within this. It is within this and in no other place. Coming to know this inescapable turning of the world (sekai no unkō 世界の運行), I simultaneously tasted a soaring joy and a depressing loneliness. It was an indescribably refreshing state. Awakening to the realization that the entirety of myself is found in joy just as it is, pain just as it is, fear just as it is, and sadness just as it is, I was able to soar into a vast world of ease and clarity.

The grave reality of war defeat was demanded by historical necessity. It was [brought about by] an irresistible power (fukakōryoku 不可抗力). Viewing the suffering and confusion of this world as productive “skillful means,” I resolve to walk a path of independence (jizai no michi 自在の道).

Member, Fukuoka Prefecture, Mitsui District, Hara Village (Shinjin no. 3, 17)
First, it is worth noting the parallels in religious viewpoint between Ōnaka and Kimura. Kimura had concluded, “Sad times are sad. Happy times are happy. Painful times are painful. Desperate situations are what they are. The dharma is what it is. This is a world where I am saved just as things are. What a joyful thing!” Similarly, Ōnaka concludes, “Awakening to the realization that the entirety of myself is found in joy just as it is, pain just as it is, fear just as it is, and sadness just as it is, I was able to soar into a vast world of ease and clarity.” Both find joy in accepting this world “just as it is” and dispensing with any notions of afterlives or other worlds.33

Ōnaka portrays the war from the perspective of a victim rather than an aggressor. Enclosed within a setting of military training, Ōnaka’s account does not address the larger context of the war and makes no mention of combat. Instead, it focuses on his own personal confrontation with the brutality of his squad leaders. His punishment even comes as a result of someone else’s blunder. Psychologically, he overcomes the suffering he is forced to endure through a mystical religious experience, which enables him to know and accept “the inescapable turning of the world.” The concluding lines extend these realizations to Japan as a whole, claiming there to have been a “historical necessity” and “irresistible power” that determined Japan’s defeat. Ōnaka and Japan both are at the mercy of larger forces. “Ease” and “independence” are attained by giving into and accepting this state of affairs.

33 On a doctrinal level, Ōnaka seems to describe a personal discovery of the Buddhist teaching of “no self” (muga 無我)—that within him is no stable entity that could be described as a “self” separate from the flow of his present experiences.
A second war story is related by a man from Mie Prefecture name Uchida Tetsuo 内田哲雄.

At the time when the dream of war still glistened, I was in the military as one star. One evening, I forgot to do the cleaning of the troop veterans’ military boots, so I passed through the battalion with muddy boots hanging from my neck. At that time, a certain veteran, whom I will call A, gave me a thorough scolding. I was really angered. That night I wept all night. Even after I was promoted and after I was demobilized, I always remembered that occurrence and hated A, thinking how I would someday seek revenge.

Last fall, I encountered the conditions to hear the Buddha’s teachings, and I joyfully attained peaceful abode in the world of mystery, the world of Buddha. Everything appeared glistening, as if tinged with the same great light, and I felt that everything was just right. A grateful joy sprang up within me. Some time later, it came about that I encountered A again, enabling me an opportunity to reflect upon my past animosity. I was startled to find that the form of A, whom I reviled as a demon, was my own form. Having hung muddy boots around my neck and been laughed at, my good-natured self (kekkōna watashi 結構な私) had gotten angry and even cried. How strange of me.

Viewing the world in the shining light of the Tathāgata, I wonder why is it that children should call me “teacher”? It is not that I teach but that I am being taught. Realizing this, I have learned to live joyfully with the children. Everything around me gives me life. The children at the school and A are all manifestations of the Tathāgata. My way of looking upon the children has changed. Sometimes I feel like I want to pray to them. Each day is a good day. All that I do comes naturally. I have learned to embrace the idea that it is best to just go on breathing serenely. If I find myself fussing over something, I just laugh it off. My former self, who walked about with muddy boots hanging [from my neck], got angry and cried, so those were more than just muddy boots. I could have just let them be muddy boots, but instead I held the conceit that they were boots of silk. Such am I with my unclean, muddy boots.

Mie Prefecture, Mie District, Sakura Village (Shinjin no. 5, 6-7)

In the first paragraph, Uchida describes an incident in which he was scolded by a military veteran for forgetting to clean the mud off the veterans’ boots. Like Ōnaka, Uchida writes from the perspective of a victim, not addressing the larger picture of the war and its many victims outside Japan.
In the second paragraph, Uchida describes encountering Buddhist teachings and having an experience of seeing everything around him “glistening” and feeling that “everything was just right.” This transformation enabled him to overcome his feelings of animosity toward the military veteran who had scolded him. Uchida relates that upon seeing him again years later, he saw himself in the military veteran’s form. It is not clear how literally one should interpret this sentence, but the general message seems to be one of interconnection—that he and the military veteran are ultimately the same in some sense. In the following paragraph, he describes the military veteran as a manifestation of the Buddha just like his students and everyone else. It is this realization of interconnection that prompts Uchida to become less defensive and more humble, eschewing the title of “teacher” and accepting his identity of wearing “unclean, muddy boots.” Ultimately, Uchida’s religious experience leads him to accept and appreciate life as it is, just going on breathing and not fussing over things.

In terms of the modernist-traditionalist doctrinal divide in modern Shin history, the faith stories of Kimura, Ônaka, and Uchida are all modernist in that they discover religious transformation in the present rather than yearn for salvation after death in an other-worldly Pure Land. Also, they are modernist in being self-initiated and not involving the mediation of priests or the Honganji institution.\(^\text{34}\) What influences may have been at work in prompting

\(^{34}\) I would like to reiterate that I use the term “modernist” to distinguish one group of people (and their modes of thought and practice) from another. I am not suggesting that a focus on salvation in the
modernist approaches to Buddhism among Shin laypeople? One typical myōkōnin-like faith story published in Shinjin concludes with mention of two texts that inspired the author:

“Teacher Kiyozawa’s ‘Salvation of Other Power’” and “Saichi’s Poems.” References to Kiyozawa and his Seishinshugi movement can be found scattered throughout the Shinjin journal, overlapping with quotations from Saichi and references to the myōkōnin ideal. While Soga Ryōjin was working to adapt the modernist Shin thought he had found through Kiyozawa into a call for “rising to action” in promoting Buddhism on a world stage, others were apparently interpreting Kiyozawa’s message to be one of finding joy through acceptance of the world just as it is.

Shinjin Organizers and Kyōdan Faith

The tension between Soga’s vision and the myōkōnin ideal was further complicated by a third voice: that of Shinjin Society organizers advocating institutional reform. As discussed above, the initial impetus for the founding of the Shinjin Society came from the failure of an initial attempt to promote reforms within the Ōtani organization. According to journalist David Suzuki, the Shinjin Society set out its plans for sect reform in a secret document entitled “Declaration Draft of the Campaign for a New Church” (no Japanese reading given), which supposedly was later made public by “disillusioned former Shinjin members” (Suzuki 1985, 45–

present or on individuals removed from institutions were nonexistent in premodern periods. See the discussion at the end of the dissertation’s introduction.
6. I have not been able to locate this document or otherwise corroborate Suzuki’s claims.

According to Suzuki, this document set forth three goals: terminating the Chief Abbot system, bringing Higashi Honganji Temple under the control of the Ōtani organization (rather than the Chief Abbot), and eliminating the ranking system of temples and priests. While the Shinjin editors declared at the outset that their society “does not set out to be an oppositional, factional movement,” the Shinjin Society organizers’ clear desire to reform the Ōtani organization occasionally bubbled to the surface in the pages of Shinjin.

Notable among such articles is “Shinshū kyōdan no rinen” (The Ideal of the Shin Religious Organization) (December 1948) by Matsubara Yūzen, the Shinjin Society’s assistant director. Matsubara’s article begins with a discussion of his being inspired by Soga Ryōjin’s 1936 lecture “Shinran’s View of Buddhist History.” He relates that upon graduating Ōtani University in 1930, he returned to the countryside to preach a path of “experientialism” (taiken-shugi 体験主義). At that time, he considered the tradition of doctrinal studies to be actually a hindrance to individual liberation. However, he soon found his faith degenerating into self-centeredness, introversion, and subjectivity to the point of meaninglessness. This led him back to an interest in doctrinal studies. Around this time, he happened to travel to Kyoto to attend Soga’s lecture. Soga’s explanation of the attainment of faith as “a deep historical awakening” aroused in Matsubara a profound realization and feeling of peace. Matsubara’s realization concerned “the
history of the source that brings about faith,” which he also calls “the historical fact of eternal light.” Faith, Matsubara realized, is not about joy and salvation for the individual; it is about recognizing and joining a historical progression—that of true Buddhist teachings progressively discovered by the seven Shin patriarchs, synthesized and given clearest expression by Shinran, and inherited by the Shin religious organization (Shinjin no. 7, 11-12).

In this way, Matsubara joins Soga in presenting Buddhist faith as involving a deep responsibility to “transcend the individual” and take on Buddhism’s historical mission. However, whereas Soga remained skeptical about the potential for reform of the Ōtani organization and cautioned Shinjin members against becoming a narrow, sectarian group, Matsubara’s eyes are squarely focused on the critical importance of the Ōtani organization itself:

The Shin religious organization was revealed by Saint Shinran, who took True Pure Land teachings to be the essence of Buddhism and who steadfastly called for a Buddhism for laypeople and commoners (zaike shomin no Bukkō在家庶民の仏教). This is a religious organization in which no distinction is made regarding gender or class, in which priests and laypeople are united as one body, and in which all within the four oceans are brothers sharing the same faith and the same practice (dōshin dōgyō同信同行). The background to this Buddhist religious organization was the history of the old Buddhist sangha, which was inherited and created completely anew in Japan. However, in this [new religious organization], no precepts were required, nor were there any special articles of faith other than the nenbutsu. The reason is that this was a thoroughly liberatory religious organization that resolutely found its life in undefiled, pure Other Power faith... (ibid., 12-13)

35 Jpn. 信仰をして信仰たらしむる根源の歴史 and 久遠の光の歴史的事実.
Matsubara claims that Shinran recreated the “old Buddhist sangha” in a new, purer form. In Matsubara’s explanation, the Buddhist community of ancient India had required obedience to precepts and acceptance of certain articles of faith, and it was built upon clear-cut distinctions between men and women and between priests and laypeople. Shinran did away with those distinctions, enabling a “thoroughly liberatory” religious community that extended the possibility for salvation to “laypeople and commoners.” Matsubara goes on to discuss the historical reverberations of Shinran’s creation of a new kind of Buddhist community:

Shinran’s Buddhism truly manifested the true nature of human liberation, blowing an enlivening breath of spirit into the people of the age. Truly, human freedom and liberation to the light is none other than a revolution (kakumei 革命) in people’s souls through religious teachings. This was a revolution in the world. One can even call it a turning of history (rekishi no tenpen 歴史の転変). At times enduring oppression from the authorities, who spilled blood through religious persecutions, Buddhism was able to achieve a beautiful development in Japan as a religion of the common people. The formation of the Shin religious organization enabled the transmission of this historical life. From Saint Hōnen’s religious organization in Yoshimizu to the original [Shin] religious organization centered on the Hitachi province of the Kantō region, steps were taken toward the final systematization of the religious organization centered on [Shinran’s] mausoleum [in Kyoto]. (ibid., 13)

Describing the inner liberation experienced by Shin Buddhist followers with the term “revolution,” Matsubara then points to the outward, historical changes that ensued, involving

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36 The claim that membership in the ancient sangha required acceptance of certain articles of faith is off the mark. As Rupert Gethin explains, “Since the Vinaya [code of monastic rules] left monks and nuns largely free to develop the Buddha’s teaching doctrinally as they saw fit, there would be little incentive to provoke a schism on purely doctrinal grounds. What was of public concern was living by the monastic rules, not doctrinal conformity. We are dealing here with orthopraxy, not orthodoxy” (1998, 50-51).
violent persecution. Matsubara’s point is that religious faith does not stop with transformation of individual souls; it leads toward transformation of the world and its history. And it is the Shin religious organization that transmits this “historical life,” enabling the ongoing unfolding of historical revolution.

Matsubara’s article ends with an assessment of the current state of the Ōtani organization and a call for reform:

Needless to say, these days a great reversal (kaiten 回転) is demanded. A plentiful overflowing of religious life is needed, through return to the Buddhist teachings of Hönen and Shinran, restoration of the original health of the religious organization centered on the transmission of the teachings, and construction of a true religious organization of companions in which all within the four seas are brothers. In the passing of 450 years from Rennyo’s time to today, there was a lack of serious critical reflection in regard to the history of the religious organization. As a result, the life of faith decayed, and the religious organization transformed into a sect promoting the authority, fame, and fortune of a certain entrenched group of priests, just like an exclusive society closed in on itself. One gets a deep feeling that only the skeletal forms of temple buildings remain. One must say that the sin of turning away from Saint [Shinran’s] intentions and using Saint [Shinran’s] Buddhist teachings for personal benefit is deep indeed. Shouldering the suffering of this age, the religious organization must be brought back to life again from the bottom up. While there can be no question that the task of awakening the life of the original religious organization requires the awakening of faith in each individual, at the same time, and precisely toward that end, I think that a doctrinal studies movement full of strength must develop. (ibid.)

There are three components of Buddhism Matsubara juggles here: faith, teachings, and the religious organization (which map onto the “three jewels”: the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha). In this passage, Matsubara locates the source of the supposed decline of Buddhist faith in the decline of the religious organization. Thus, Matsubara’s primary concern lies with the task of reforming the religious organization. Yet rather than call for a “religious organization
movement,” Matsubara calls for a “doctrinal studies movement.” Although he does not specify the connection between reform of doctrinal studies and reform of the religious organization, one implication may be that the ideal form of the religious organization cannot be restored until more people are clear about the nature of “pure Other Power faith” and the extreme egalitarianism it implies.

In the October 1949 issue of Shinjin, Yasuda Rijin published an article entitled “Kyōdan to kyōgaku no mondai” (The Problems of Religious Organization and Doctrinal Studies) that seems to respond to the organization-focused writings of Matsubara and others. Yasuda’s article represents the beginning of his many writings about the “sangha,” which played an important role in inspiring the later course of the Shinjin and Dōbōkai movements. Yasuda’s article begins by commenting that the Shinjin Society had been born out of a struggle to create a new religious organization separate from the traditional religious organization, but compared to the cohesion and vitality of Christianity, the “new religion” Tenrikyō, and the Communist Party, it has thus far failed to generate a real “sangha.” The difference between a mere organization and a true sangha, according to Yasuda, has to do with the strength of the connection between the organization and its teachings. As evidence of Christianity’s vitality,

37 This was the same issue that Soga published his “Transcend the Individual!”, which called upon Shinjin members to advance the cause of Buddhism on the world stage, rather than attend to “short-term objectives” [i.e. reform of the religious organization].

38 On Yasuda’s theory of the “sangha” and its influence on the reform movement, see Mizushima (2010, 562-580); Tahara and Hashikawa (1999, 51-56); and Conway (2006).
Yasuda points to the organized opposition of European Catholics toward Marxism during World War II. As evidence of Communism’s vitality, he points to the way in which Marxist philosophy, understood as a revolutionary weapon, supposedly undergirds the Communist Movement. In Yasuda’s view, this intimate connection between teachings and organization is lacking within academic Buddhist studies (for which he gives the examples of D. T. Suzuki’s writings on myōkōnin and Tanabe Hajime’s philosophical writings on the Kyōgyōshinshō). It is also lacking in the “official doctrinal studies” (goyō kyōgaku 御用教学) that is carried out within the Shin organizations. According to Yasuda, neither of these sets of scholars ground their study of Buddhist teachings in agape (unconditional love), namu 南無 (worship), and a sense of responsibility toward all of humanity. A community of scholars doing that would constitute a true sangha.

Yasuda then turns to the topic of institutional reform, critiquing previous attempts for their basis in politics rather than scholarship:

For some time, there have been movements by sectarian reform groups, but these have tried to solve the problems of the sect merely through politics. The so-called “church” is made up of scholars. The religious organization, it seems, can be made up of politicians. Such matters [of political reform] pertain only to the religious organization; they do not pertain to the problem of the sangha. The sangha is not a political issue. Democracy cannot be a principle of the sangha. Economic and political organizations

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39 Yasuda’s comments here seem to imply an anti-Marxist position: that the lack of unified opposition from Japanese Buddhists toward Marxism is evidence of the disconnectedness of Buddhist teachings from Buddhist organizations.

40 In the course of frequent comparisons to Christianity and references to Roland Barthes, Yasuda also comes to speak of the “sangha” as a “living church” or a “pure church.”
can base themselves on democratic thought. That is because they are just types of associations (kumiai 組合). The sangha is not that sort of thing. Whether the Chief Abbot leaves his post or does not leave his post, it will not make a sangha. However much effort religious reform groups expend in writing about democratic ideals, it will not make a sangha in the least. Here is a fundamental source of the weakening of the religious organization.

Yasuda insists on a clear distinction between political thought and religious thought. A true religious community ought to be founded on the study of religious teachings, not on the implementation of political ideals adopted from non-religious sources. As noted above, a drive for democratic reform was found throughout the Buddhist world during the Occupation years, including within the two main Shin denominations. Far from approving of those aspirations, Yasuda accuses attempts at democratic reform of “weakening” the religious organization. Yasuda is not necessarily anti-democratic; rather, he is worried that focus on democracy is distracting from the ultimate task of studying the teachings. As for what organizational form might emerge within a true sangha from the proper study of Shin teachings, Yasuda does not say.

Matsubara represents a certain strand within the Shinjin Society movement focused on the Ōtani organization and its reform. Opposing the myōkōnin-like tendency to treat faith as an individual endeavor, Matsubara embraces Soga’s call to “transcend the individual” and contribute to a larger historical movement. However, unlike Soga, he is particularly concerned with the Ōtani organization itself as the historical repository and transmittor of Shinran’s egalitarian teaching of salvation for all. Matsubara seeks a restoration of the Ōtani organization
as a community in which everyone, regardless of rank, class, or gender, comes together as equal companions. Yasuda interjects with a different vision of the Shinjin Society as an organization meant to be separate from the Ōtani organization and having nothing to do with democratization. In this regard, Yasuda’s position seems in line with Soga, who had presented Shin Buddhism as something apart from either democracy or Communism. Although the ideal of an organization “in which no distinction is made regarding gender or class, in which priests and laypeople are united as one body, and in which all within the four oceans are brothers sharing the same faith and the same practice” seems to share something in common with both democracy and socialism, Soga and Yasuda are eager to assert difference. In Soga’s view, the critical difference is that democracy remains a form of humanism, valorizing the rights and worth of individual humans, while Shin Buddhism emphasizes self-critique and devotion to a power beyond humans.

Such were the primary voices in the first year and a half of Shinjin’s publication: Soga’s call to take up Buddhism’s world historical mission; Suzuki’s portrait of the “purposeless life” of myōkōnin Saichi; laypeople’s myōkōnin-like accounts of joyfully accepting the world “just as it is”; and Matsubara and others’ visions of institutional reform. In addition, some contributors to Shinjin focused on social outreach and economic reform. For example, one article in the first issue analyzed recent economic policies and their impacts on the agricultural sector. In the third and fourth issues, the editor and readers discuss an earthquake in northern Japan and the organization of relief efforts. Also in the third issue, a short article appears by Takeuchi Ryōon
竹内了温 (1891-1968), an Ōtani priest who since the 1920s had led a charge from within the Ōtani administration to combat discrimination against outcast communities (burakumin 部落民) (though his Shinjin article does not directly address that issue). While discussion of social-political issues like economic justice, war, and nuclear weapons remained one feature of Shinjin throughout its period of publication, a constant refrain that the Shinjin Society should stay focused on matters of religious faith served to restrain such topics from becoming more central.

Another cause represented in the pages of Shinjin is that of socialism, though not in a sympathetic way. In the journal’s fifth issue, a brief announcement was made to combat rumors that the Shinjin Society is a Communist organization. According to journalist David Suzuki, “the Marxist influence [on the Shinjin Society] was so strong that later Ōtani Eijun, an uncle of the Chief Abbot, member of the National Security Council and former member of the House of Peers, made a complaint to American Occupation forces that the group was Communist” (1985: 42). While such a complaint may very well have been made, it is hard to find evidence within the Shinjin journal of any support for socialism, per se. The journal’s promotion of Shinran’s ideal of an egalitarian religious organization of “fellow companions” and the occasional

41 Regarding Takeuchi Ryōon, see Main (2010).
42 The notice reads: “The state of the world today is one in which everything seems to be caught up in a whirlpool of fierce confrontation with Communist thought. While that may be true, the spread of unthinkable, false rumors like the Shinjin Society being Communist is an extreme nuisance. We must not respond to such misdirected gossip point by point. Rather we must just ceaselessly proceed on the final path of bringing the world into the sea of [Amida’s] light by facing up to historical reality, adopting a solemn and upright posture, and establishing ourselves [as faithful individuals].”
allusion to a future when perhaps “the Chief Abbot leaves his post” must have felt threatening
to Ōtani authorities. Yet rather than an accurate assessment of the Shinjin Society’s actual
position, the charge of “socialism” seems to have been a convenient way of arousing suspicion
toward the group. “Socialist” and “Communist” were dangerous labels that Shinjin contributors
frequently raised in order to deny any association with.43

5.4 Kiyozawa and the Second Restoration

By the end of 1949, the Shinjin journal’s chaotic mixture of voices had become
streamlined. The “Ground of Buddha’s Children” section with faith stories of laypeople ended
after the journal’s seventh issue. References to Suzuki and myōkōnin also dissipated. What
remained most prominently were Soga’s leading articles and further doctrinal articles by
Yasuda Rijin and others. In addition, the journal published writings on the Ōtani organization,
discussions of social issues, and reports on the development and activities of Shinjin Society
groups. It is not hard to imagine why discussion of myōkōnin and publication of myōkōnin-like
faith stories stopped. The ideal of finding salvation in the world “just as it is” and in spreading
that salvation to others merely by continuing on with one’s humble work did not match Soga or
Yasuda’s understanding of true faith, nor did it fit well with the cause of institutional reform.
The Shinjin Society began with idealistic hopes of generating a broad-based movement of

43 For primary documents on the Shinjin Society’s stance toward the Communist movement and socialist
thought, see Shinjin articles by Sasaki Yū, beginning with “Kaikyū tōsō to Shinshū” (Class Struggle and
Shin Buddhism) in Shinjin no. 14, 1.
priests and laypeople, Shin followers and non-Shin followers, all aspiring to reform the Buddhist world and global society at large. If the “Ground of Buddha’s Children” faith stories are any indication, such aspirations failed to take hold among most laypeople, who were more interested in finding peace of mind in their own lives. With the dropping off of laypeople’s voices, the Shinjin Society movement took shape as a fully priest-centered movement, promoting modernist Shin Buddhism “from above.”

Kurube stayed on as director of the Shinjin Society for less than a year. By the fall of 1949, he and other Shinjin members had created the Ōtani Reform League. In the fall of 1950, he, Sasaki Konoe 佐々木近衛, and Minowa Eishō 被輪英章 (1913-1976) were elected to the Ōtani Diet (Suzuki 1985, 46). Three further assembly members joined the reform group, adding up to a total of six (out of the Ōtani Diet’s 65 members). When factionalism within the Ōtani Diet led to a deadlock over the appointment of the next Head of Doctrinal Affairs, the small reform group managed to have its nominee—Akegarasu Haya—appointed in January 1951. Akegarasu remained in power for less than a year, but the reform group continued to gain ground. In 1956, a coalition cabinet was created with reputedly traditionalist Miyatani Hōgan 宮谷包含 (1882-1962) appointed Head of Sect Affairs, reformer Kurube as Head of Doctrinal Affairs, and reformer Minowa as Head of Internal Affairs (Mizushima 2010, 492-511; Tahara 2004, 44-46).

There are also numerous instances of Shinjin readers complaining that Soga’s doctrinal writings are too difficult to understand.
On April 3, 1956, Head of Sect Affairs Miyatani issued a “Sect White Paper” (April 1956 issue of Shinshū). This remarkable document begins with a blistering critique of the sect for losing its way and “inheriting the benefits of Saint Shinran’s virtue only to indulge in idleness.” In addition to “repentence” and “self-critique,” Miyatani proclaims the need for a new direction in doctrinal studies:

That a person like Reverend Kiyozawa Manshi appeared within our sect in the Meiji Period is a source of incomparable happiness. In addition to his great accomplishments in the field of Japanese intellectual history, it is solely due to teacher’s zealous self-sacrifice that the fetters of the Ōtani denomination’s Tokugawa period feudal doctrinal studies were shed and that a new Shin doctrinal studies from a global perspective was able to develop. A great many capable people have been produced under teacher’s tutelage, and to this day, the light of an unwavering tradition has been shining forth. This is a magnificent sight in the Japanese Buddhist world rightfully worthy of our sect’s pride. (Kyōka kenkyū no. 151, 174)

The “Sect White Paper” goes on to reference Kiyozawa’s notion of “absolute Other Power” and to quote his opening address at Shinshū University. Miyatani is generally viewed as a member of the conservative group in Ōtani politics, and his appointment of Kurube and Minowa is interpreted as part of a political compromise (Tahara 2004, 45). Miyatani later commented upon the personal influence of Kiyozawa’s teachings on him, deriving from his schooldays at Shinshū University (Tahara and Hashikawa 1999, 44-45; Mizushima 2010, 698). However, it is also

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45 “Sect White Paper” is how Miyatani’s statement came to be referred to. Its actual title was “Shūmon kakui ni tsugu 宗門各位に告ぐ” (An Announcement to Each Within the Sect).
46 Miyatani graduated from Shinshū University in 1906, so he would have been a preparatory or first-year university student at the time of Kiyozawa’s resignation in 1902 (SJJ, 320-21). Miyatani reportedly
reasonable to assume that newly appointed Head of Doctrinal Affairs, Kurube, had considerable influence on the sect’s sudden doctrinal shift. In a 2011 lecture on the “Sect White Paper,” Yasutomi Shin’ya reports he had been told the author was actually Takeda Junshō, a Shinjin Society member and colleague of Kurube’s (Yasutomi 2012, 20-21).

The 1956 “Sect White Paper” represents the first concrete step made by Kurube and his associates toward establishing a new Kiyozawa-inspired orthodoxy within the Ōtani organization. Although the reformers’ election to the Sect Assembly indicates a certain amount of popular support, overall, it is fair to say that Kurube and his reform-minded associates enacted change “from above” after maneuvering their way into administrative power.

While Kurube and company were pursuing administrative power, the Shinjin Society directed its attention more and more toward Kiyozawa. The initial cause for this was the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Kiyozawa’s death in June 1952. On that occasion, memorial services were held at Kiyozawa’s home temple of Saihōji in Aichi Prefecture. In addition, Soga delivered a memorial lecture at Ōtani University that focused on Kiyozawa’s discovery of faith through Epictetus. In his lecture, Soga states that Kiyozawa’s “The Great Path commented, “Meeting Reverend Kiyozawa at that time had decisive significance for me” (Yasutomi 2012, 17).

47 Yasutomi then relates that through conversations with those who knew Miyatani at the time, he became personally convinced that the “Sect White Paper” was Miyatani’s own personal “manifesto.” Even if this is the case, I do not think one can discount the importance of Kurube and other Shinjin Society members’ achievement of administrative power. It was, after all, Kurube’s subsequent appointment as Head of Sect Affairs that enabled dissemination of the new modernist orthodoxy through the Dōbōkai movement.

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of Absolute Other Power” (“Zettai tariki no daidō 絶対他力の大道”) can rightfully be called “scripture” (seiten 聖典), and that the blessings (goon 御恩) he received from Kiyozawa equal those he received from Shinran and far exceed those he received from Rennyo. Following Soga’s lecture, a panel discussion was held, involving Soga, Kaneko, Tokyo University professor Miyamoto Shōson 宮本正尊, Nishitani Keiji, Suzuki Hiromu 鈴木弘, Nishimura Kengyō, and many university students. The discussion covered a broad range of topics related to Kiyozawa’s life and teachings. One surprising point of the discussion is Soga’s critical comments toward Kiyozawa’s iconic “My Faith” essay. Soga summarizes the essence of Kiyozawa’s Seishinshugi in terms of the “completion of wisdom” (chie enman 智慧円満) through the destruction of one’s former relative wisdom and its replacement with the gift of the Buddha’s wisdom. He comments, “This [notion of ‘completion of wisdom’] is not written about in ‘My Faith.’ At that time, when Reverend was already totally exhausted, he did not speak of that. Supplemented with the Tathāgata’s wisdom, [a reader] can understand, but [reading] just that will invite misunderstandings” (Shinjin no. 45, 4). Further on, Soga responds to Suzuki Hiromu’s quotation from Kiyozawa’s “The Great Path of Absolute Other Power” with exuberant praise: “There is nothing like that famous composition. Just the highest quality. ‘My Faith’ is a far step down.

48 Such topics included Kiyozawa’s Kōkōdō lectures; the influence of Tendai Buddhism on Kiyozawa; Kiyozawa’s engagement with Hegel and other Western philosophers; comparison with German philosopher Emil Lask; Kiyozawa’s use of sources; reception of Kiyozawa in America; comparison with Uchimura Kanzō; Kiyozawa’s relations with Kōkōdō member Tokiwa Daijō 常磐大定 (1870-1945), who went on to become an important scholar of Chinese Buddhist history; a rumor (denied by Soga and Nishitani) that Kiyozawa visited Ise Shrine and was brought to tears; and a comparison with nihilism.
“The Great Path of Absolute Other Power’ is scripture. It will remain until the end of the ages.”

From the time of Kiyozawa’s death through the present, “My Faith” has routinely been presented as the pinnacle of his faith and understanding, so it is startling to see such comments coming from one of Kiyozawa’s leading followers. It is also noteworthy how Soga describes Kiyozawa’s writings as “scripture” that will “remain until the end of the ages.” Here is a hint of the institutionalization that was soon to come. Incidentally, the seminar discussion ended with a student commenting, “We would like to study Reverend Kiyozawa, but do not know a method to do so,” to which Soga recommends the creation of a “Reverend Kiyozawa Research Group.”

The next occasion for Kiyozawa to return to the spotlight was the memorialization that took place following the death of Akegarasu Haya in August 1954. Shinjin issued a special memorial issue for Akegarasu that November, beginning with Soga’s article, “Rōsendō ni mōdete arata ni Kiyozawa sensei o omou” (Visiting Rōsendō and Recalling Reverend Kiyozawa Anew). Akegarasu remained fiercely devoted to Kiyozawa throughout his life. As noted in the previous chapter, he organized a week-long event in 1936 to honor his parents and Buddhist teachers, with abundant attention paid to Kiyozawa. In the postwar period, he advised Nishimura Kengyō’s research on Kiyozawa, culminating in the first full-length biography of Kiyozawa in 1951, Kiyozawa Manshi sensei. The two also co-edited a new edition of Kiyozawa 49

49 Jpn. あんな名文はない。最高調。「我が信念」はずつと段の落ちたものである。「絶對他力の大道」は聖典である。末代まで残るもの。
Manshi zenshū, published by Hōzōkan press from 1953-1957. Most spectacularly, Akegarasu carried out the construction of a new hall at his home temple of Myōtatsuji (明達寺) in Shirayama city in Ishikawa Prefecture. He named it Rōsendō (臘扇堂) after one of Kiyozawa’s pen names, Rōsen (December fan). Construction was completed seven days prior to Akegarasu’s death. The hall is a small hexagonal pavilion. Upon its main altar is a statue of Kiyozawa in priestly robes seated with his hands folded together in meditation posture. In front of the altar diagonally to one side is a statue of Akegarasu seated, looking up at Kiyozawa, his hands pressed together in a gesture of veneration.

In his article, rather than memorializing Akegarasu directly, Soga discusses the deep impression he got upon visiting this hall and the need for Shin followers today to take Akegarasu’s lead and turn to Kiyozawa as a guide. His article contrasts the arduous and unconventional path that Kiyozawa took to arrive at faith with the lack of any account of Rennyo’s path to faith. Soga comments that Rennyo must have arrived at faith through strenous efforts, perhaps through reading the Kyōgyōshinshō or the Tannishō, but that no account of this can be found in his writings. According to Soga, later scholars who valorized his Ofumi (Letters) and developed a long tradition of “Rennyo doctrinal studies” lost sight of this. Soga concludes that Kiyozawa is “the only good and wise teacher (yuiitsu no zenchishiki) who has clarified for us Shin followers today the path of attaining faith” (Shinjin no. 73, 2).

Finally, Soga drew more attention to Kiyozawa following his return from a trip to the United States from November 1955 to January 1956. Soga’s visit was prompted by an invitation
from Itō Hōryū 伊東抱龍 of the Higashi Honganji Los Angeles Betsuin. His two-part “Shinshū daini no saikō 真宗第二の再興” (The Second Restoration of the Shin Sect) describes how during this trip, a liver illness that he had previously suffered from returned. This made him unable to keep any food down. In early January, he was hospitalized, and believed he was on the verge of death. However, he soon “mysteriously” recovered:

Mysteriously, my stomach began receiving food. Until then, I had been eating worriedly, and my stomach had refused everything. But then it changed and began receiving food, and this is how I realized the importance of eating well without worrying... This seems like something unrelated to the problem of faith, but actually, it is very related to the question of faith and to the question of awakening, I have come to realize this at present. These days, Shin studies is extremely troubled. Sectarian studies is completely off the mark. Listerners are only confused. Somehow, Shin teachings must be made simpler and purer. Reverend Kiyozawa’s “My Faith” did this. What he had been calling the “Absolute Infinite” up until then, he began to call “Tathāgata” in “My Faith.” Why did he do that? This point has presently become clear to me. (Shinjin no. 89, 1-2)

Soga’s essay goes on to analyze “My Faith” and Kiyozawa’s shift from the abstract philosophical language of “Absolute Infinite” to the more familiar “Tathāgata” in terms of a shift from the “world of reason” to the “world of instinct”—concepts that Soga had developed in his wartime writings. Soga declares Kiyozawa to be the leader of a coming “second restoration of Shin” comparable to Rennyo’s restoration of the Shin sect in the medieval period. Although Soga’s call for a “second restoration” seems to imply institutional reform, in fact, Soga’s discussion focuses entirely on doctrinal issues. His discovery of deep significance in “My Faith” stands in stark contrast to his recent estimation of that essay as “a far step down.” This new evaluation demonstrates his continuous engagement with Kiyozawa’s thought and writings, as well as an
ongoing interest in the postwar period to discover more effective strategies for spreading modernist Shin faith.

The first installment of Soga’s “The Second Restoration of the Shin Sect” was published two days prior to the issuing of Miyatani’s “Sect White Paper.” This convergence of attention upon Kiyozawa is highly coincidental. The Shinjin community, including Kurube, had embraced an identity of connection with Kiyozawa from the beginning, but the placement of Kiyozawa front and center by Soga and by the Ōtani administration was a new development. Perhaps Soga and the Shinjin Society’s increasing attention to Kiyozawa influenced the formation of Miyatani and Kurube’s “Sect White Paper.” Or perhaps the rise to administrative power of Kurube and the reformers prompted Soga’s reflections upon a “second restoration of the Shin Sect.” The lines of influence are difficult to draw, but it is clear that the Soga-led Shinjin faith movement and the Kurube-led institutional reform movement played off one another. In 1961, when Kurube became Head of Sect Affairs, he saw to it that Soga was made president of Ōtani University—a position Soga held for the duration of the first 5-year Dōbōkai campaign (1962-1967). Meanwhile, Kurube and his reformist colleagues in the Ōtani administration depended heavily on the doctrinal authority of Soga, Yasuda, and Matsubara—though the extent to which they actually followed their advice is, of course, another question. 

50 In one telling instance, a conversation was arranged in 1971 by the editors of the popular journal Chūō kōron between Yasuda and Kurube. However, Kurube felt compelled to adopt the role of “dharma listener”
5.5 Conclusion

The significance of the Shinjin Society can be understood on a number of levels. First, it was one manifestation of a religious boom that took place in the Occupation period with the granting of unprecedented forms of religious freedom. The growth of “new religions” is undoubtedly the most conspicuous aspect of this boom, but Buddhist reform movements—both within and outside the bounds of sectarian institutions—also took part in this trend. The rise of “new religions” has often been explained with reference to the state of decline of Japan’s established religions. While established religions were admittedly hit hard by the war and by reforms enacted by the Occupation forces, I argued that the image of that decline was magnified by critical discourses from religious reformers and secular critics of religion alike. This may have been especially true in regard to the major Shin institutions, which did not suffer quite the same losses as other Buddhist sects and which were animated by active drives toward democratization. Capitalizing upon the perception of the decline of established religions, the Shinjin Society movement provided a source of hope and spiritual community for those who were suffering in the aftermath of a devastating war. In such a context, there was an

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(monpōsha 開法者), apparently sitting quietly for nearly two hours listening to Yasuda’s lengthy critiques of him and the Dōbōkai movement. The published article presents Yasuda’s monologue with Kurube’s name listed as the “questioner” (kikite 開き手). (Chūō kōron, July 1971 special issue: 181-191; discussed in Tahara and Hashikawa 1999, 55-56)

51 For a recent study of the concept and history of “religious freedom” in modern Japan, see Thomas (2014a).
important social function to be performed by religious groups. The Shinjin Society responded to this context in a rather different fashion than most “new religions,” which tended to emphasize “worldly benefits” (genze riyaku 現世利益) in the form of physical health and material prosperity. By contrast, Shinjin Society members tended to discover an introspective sort of joy within this world “just as it is.” And according to the argument advanced by H. Neil McFarland in his classic *The Rush Hour of the Gods* (1967), the charismatic founders of the “new religions,” sometimes viewed as “living gods” (ikigami 生き神), might be understood as filling a void left in the hearts and minds of many Japanese after the Japanese empire toppled and the Emperor renounced his divinity. By contrast, the Shinjin Society promoted the ideal of a leaderless, egalitarian community of “fellow companions.” This set the stage for the Dōbōkai movement and the eventual demotion of the Ōtani organization’s Chief Abbot to a symbolic position, similar to that of the Emperor with respect to the nation.

The Shinjin Society’s significance can also be considered in relation to the process of democracy building. In addition to the adoption of a democratic constitution and democratic

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52 I acknowledge that this social functionalist explanation of the postwar boom in “new religions” has its limits. For one thing, most of the major “new religions” that prospered during the Occupation period have continued to exist to the present day, adapting themselves to new conditions of economic prosperity and relative social stability. As Helen Hardacre has forcefully argued, explanation of “new religions” as responses to social crises is insufficient for explaining either their origins or their persistence (1984, 10-34). Despite this important corrective, Hardacre and others still concede that social crisis was an important factor in the formation and growth of “new religions” at particular points in time. In addition to poverty and sickness, the collapse of imperial ideology was one critical aspect of the postwar crisis that may have led Japanese citizens to turn to religion. For an overview of scholarship on Japanese “new religions,” see Astley (2006).
policies, democracy building in Japan required a reorientation of perceptions and values among the populace. In contrast to orthodox Marxist intellectuals who felt that revolutionary consciousness would arise naturally in accord with changes in economic conditions, many “humanist” Marxists and liberal intellectuals believed that active outreach to the people was required to push this process forward. Umemoto Katsumi, Maruyama Masao, Tsurumi Shunsuke, and others grappled with the question of how a sense of autonomy and self-determination could be cultivated among the people, sometimes turning to the religious language of “faith,” “worldview,” or even “nothingness” to frame their projects. Parallel to this, the Shinjin Society sought to foster “true persons” who were awakened to their identities as “Buddha’s children” and their historical mission of expanding Shinran’s ideal community of “fellow companions” throughout the nation and the world. The ideology promoted by the Shinjin Society differed from that of Marxist and liberal intellectuals in important ways. The Shinjin Society’s “true person” could arise only through the death of one’s individual self and rebirth as a child of the Buddha, and this death of self could come only through a consistent practice of self-critique. The principles of self-critique and of connection with a trans-human power provide a very different foundation for an egalitarian community than does that of individuals’ rights to life, liberty, and property.

Finally, the Shinjin Society’s significance can be viewed in relation to the history of the Ōtani organization. During the early 1940s, Soga, Kaneko, Kurube, and other Kiyozawa-inspired reformers had achieved positions of authority within the Ōtani organization. As kōshi and
Jitōryō members, Soga and Kaneko were in a powerful position to promote and defend modernist interpretations of Shin teachings. However, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, orthodoxy is not something that can be dictated. The authority to interpret doctrine was, in practice if not in legal terms, dispersed across many individuals and groups: the Chief Abbot, the Chief Abbot’s family, the sect administration, kōshi scholars, lay donors, university scholars, students, journalists, and more. In the early Occupation years, Kurube and his associates planned to cultivate modernist doctrinal understandings throughout the sect by establishing a new training center and enacting other institutional reforms. When such plans were stymied, they adopted a new tact, forming the Shinjin Society as a non-sectarian group instructed by the likes of Soga and Yasuda but founded upon the faith of the “common people.” A chaotic cacophany of voices—including Soga’s call for world historical change, Suzuki’s myōkōnin writings, laypeoples’ myōkōnin-like faith accounts, and calls for reform of the Ōtani organization—eventually streamlined into a priest-centered, mostly doctrinal journal. Kurube and other institution-minded Shinjin members took the first opportunity to return to the task of reforming the Ōtani organization from within. In 1956, as the Ōtani organization’s Head of Doctrinal Studies, Kurube saw the issuance of a “Sect White Paper” that officially proclaimed a new era of doctrinal orthodoxy rooted to the life and thought of Kiyozawa. It might seem that the Shinjin Society was inconsequential to this development. Yet Kurube and his associates within the Ōtani administration unquestionably drew their inspiration and doctrinal viewpoints from scholars Soga, Yasuda, and Matsubara. Moreover, it was arguably the collision
of diverse voices and interests within Shinjin that led Soga to develop his position on Buddhism’s world historical mission, pushed Yasuda to develop his theory of the sangha, and caused Soga to keep revisiting and reinterpreting Kiyozawa. In other words, the Shinjin Society provided a space where doctrinal scholars like Soga were pressured both to develop new strategies for making Shin modernism accessible to laypeople and to articulate a position on institutional reform; likewise, it provided a space where institutional reformers were pressured to cultivate their doctrinal understanding and to purify their institutional reform agendas. This dynamic tension led the way toward the establishment of a new orthodoxy.
Conclusion: The Significance of a New Orthodoxy

The Path to Orthodoxy

This dissertation began with the observation that at the time of his death in 1903, Kiyozawa remained a marginal figure in the Ōtani organization. It is true that Ōtani authorities had sponsored his extensive education, placed him in leadership positions in the Ōtani educational system, appointed him to the Office of Elders, and even selected him as tutor of the future Chief Abbot. And as a prominent scholar of philosophy, leader of a national reform movement, president of Shinshū University, and foremost representative of the popular Seishinshugi movement, he surely was looked upon as an authority on Shin Buddhist teachings by many within and outside the Ōtani organization. By “marginal,” I mean that his unconventional thought and radical plans for reform were held in check, not permitted to reorient the basic orthodoxy and hierarchical structure of the organization. One might say that Kiyozawa was used by the Ōtani authorities in an experiment to try to modernize Shin education, but when that experiment proved too dangerous, his initiatives were undermined or crushed altogether.1 As for his doctrinal views, they may have influenced the views of the

1 Here I specifically have in mind Head of Sect Affairs Atsumi Kaien’s handling of a student strike in 1894 (in which he undermined Kiyozawa’s strict educational policies by treating student protesters leniently
future Chief Abbot, but they were never officially recognized by sect authorities. His Seishinshugi thought was disseminated through an *independent* organization and journal.

In 1956, this situation was reversed, and Kiyozawa’s life and teachings were dramatically placed at the heart of Ōtani doctrinal studies. This turn of events can be attributed to three basic factors.

First, Kiyozawa’s lifestory and writings had intrinsic value as potent religious symbols that contained the power to influence and inspire. This point has long been emphasized and discussed by Kiyozawa’s followers and by scholars, as laid out in this dissertation’s introduction. The many struggles that Kiyozawa underwent in living a harshly ascetic life, contracting an agonizing illness, failing to reform the Ōtani organization, mourning the deaths of his wife and children, and suffering an early death have captured the interest and reverence of many. As for his writings, the recentering of Shin religious life on the personal inner faith of individuals was appealing because it sheltered Buddhism from scientific critiques, broke apart centuries-old dogmatism, and animated the tradition with a spirit of truth-seeking. In addition, his modern, philosophical language seemed to initiate the process of universalizing Buddhist teachings, and

and teachers harshly), as well as the 1897 punishment of “name removal” given to Kiyozawa and others on account of their reform movement.

2 For example, Kiyozawa was never awarded the status of kōshi (lecturer) or shikō (secondary lecturer) while alive. He was awarded sōkōshi (honorary lecture master) status in 1967. The fact that Kiyozawa was invited to lecture at Shinran’s hōonkō memorial services might be seen as evidence to the contrary, but it remains the case that other scholars outranked him. Kiyozawa’s lack of seniority played a part in this, but so, too, did the radical nature of his thought.
his enigmatic statements (especially “we do not have faith in gods and buddhas because they exist; gods and buddhas exist for us because we have faith in them”) cried out for interpretation.

Chapter One clarified one important aspect of the potency of Kiyozawa’s writings, namely his rhetoric of “religious experience.” I emphasize that this was a rhetorical development rather than a conceptual one. Influenced by his study of Schleiermacher and Spencer, Kiyozawa held that religion was fundamentally a matter of one’s inner mental state from the time of his early philosophical writings; by contrast, he only used the language of “experience” to describe this understanding of religion in his later writings. This finding has a number of implications. First, in regards to understanding Kiyozawa, it adds evidence to the larger argument that has emerged in recent scholarship that Kiyozawa’s early philosophical thought and later Seishinshugi thought are basically consistent. This challenges the long-held assumption that a transformative conversion experience marked off Kiyozawa’s later views from his earlier views, making his earlier period less worthy of attention. Second, in regard to the history of Kiyozawa’s becoming Ōtani orthodoxy, it demonstrates the critical importance of rhetorical strategy alongside religious experience or philosophical insight. In other words, Kiyozawa’s ideas did not become widely accepted merely on account of their content. Rhetorical strategy is one of many mundane factors that also played a critical role.

Second, the transformation of Ōtani orthodoxy was brought about by the actions of Kiyozawa’s followers. As discussed in the introduction and in Chapter Two, Kiyozawa’s
followers remained extremely devoted to him after his death, holding regular memorial services, documenting and commenting upon his life and teachings, and overseeing the production of portraits, statues, and other material objects memorializing his life. However, from early on, Kiyozawa’s followers disagreed in their views of how his legacy ought to be carried forward. One group emphasized Kiyozawa’s path of scholarship and practice while another emphasized the expressions of faith produced at the end of that path. This dissertation focused on members of the former group, Sasaki Gesshō, Soga Ryōjin, and Kaneko Daiei, who went on to careers as scholars. Further research might consider how members of the latter group, who went on to careers as preachers, also contributed to the process of orthodoxy transformation. One of the essential goals of both groups was to draw a stronger connection between Kiyozawa and the Shin tradition, both through interpretation of Kiyozawa’s life and writings and through application of Kiyozawa’s thought in the interpretation of Shin teachings.

Chapters Two and Three revealed the path to authority traveled by Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko. Drawing upon Kiyozawa’s language of “experience” and “facts,” they developed a new “empirical” approach to studying Shin teachings that came to outshine traditional sectarian studies, as Ōtani University came to supersede the denomination’s traditional seminary. Whether their research was truly “empirical” depends on one’s definition of empiricism.

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3 Initial research on the influence of these preachers, including Akegarasu Haya, Takamitsu Daisen, and Fujiwara Tetsujō, has been conducted by Fukushima Kazuto (SRS, vol. 1) and Mizushima (2010) (especially pp. 247-95).
However, evidence was provided that their research was well-esteemed not only among Shin Buddhists but also within the broader academic world. The eruption of institutional conflict surrounding heresy accusations brought against Kaneko and Soga indicates their rising authority within the Ōtani organization. Although they were both ousted from their positions at Ōtani University, their scholarly careers continued to prosper, and it was only a matter of time before they were reinstated. The modern development of Ōtani University and the scholarly accomplishments of Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko were critical factors in the transformation of Ōtani orthodoxy.

Third, the transformation of Ōtani orthodoxy depended upon broader historical developments far outside the control of Kiyozawa’s followers or Ōtani leaders. On a large scale, the modern history of the Ōtani organization and its members was set in motion by the Meiji Restoration and the end of an era of relative “national isolation” (sakoku). Kiyozawa’s career depended upon the government’s establishment of a modern university and its hiring of foreign scholars like Ernest Fenollosa to assist in Japan’s modernization. Sasaki Gesshō’s presidency of Ōtani University was shaped by the Japanese Ministry of Education’s sponsorship of his study tour of universities in Europe and America. Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko’s influence as university administrators and professors was heightened by the 1918 University Ordinance and the resulting growth and rising status of Ōtani University.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five continued to trace the lives and thought of Kaneko and Soga, but increased emphasis was placed on the decisive impact of broader historical
developments on their fortunes. Chapter Three drew attention to the importance of the historical coincidence of Kaneko’s heresy affair with the Japanese government’s persecution of Communists. Journalists, administrators, and students viewed these two sets of events as a pair of related issues. This influenced how and by whom Kaneko was critiqued, as well as how and by whom he was defended. Chapter Four examined the impact of the Fifteen Year War and war mobilization policies on Soga’s thinking and on the decisions of Ōtani administrators. Soga was led to confront the question of imperial ideology’s relation to Shin teachings, arriving at a view of their essential harmony. This position was convenient for Ōtani administrators, who saw to it that Soga (and Kaneko) were reinstated and promoted to positions of authority. Chapter Five discussed the impact of the postwar context of democracy building on Soga and other Ōtani reformers who joined together in the Shinjin Society reform movement. These reformers’ sense of national mission, critique of the religious establishment, goal of building a broad-based movement, and attention to individual autonomy and egalitarian community were all shaped by democratic values of the period. In spite of Soga and Yasuda’s reluctance to support the cause of institutional reform, the Shinjin movement’s union of scholars and administrators enabled the achievement of a new modernist orthodoxy within the Ōtani organization.
Significance for Scholarship

This dissertation’s findings have different significance for different fields of study. Here I will focus on Shin sectarian studies and on Buddhist studies. Shin sectarian scholars who have examined Ōtani doctrinal history from Kiyozawa forward through Kaneko, Soga, and Yasuda have tended to speak of a single continuous “stream” (nagare 流れ). In his analysis of this stream, Honda Hiroyuki concludes, “[Yasuda] came to a self-realization that his own thinking all came from Reverend Soga. And Reverend Soga came to a self-realization that all [of his thinking] was contained within Reverend Kiyozawa’s question. As for Shinran, all was contained within the teachings of Hōnen” (Honda 1998, 47-48). Similarly, Yasutomi writes, “It is deeply interesting how a tradition of revering [Shinran as a model] ‘person’ in this way has been handed down to the present Shin Ōtani faith movement by an underground flow of water, so to speak,” pointing to the Shinjin Society and Soga’s “Behold the Man” essay as part of this flow (Yasutomi 2010, 221). Finally, Mizushima Ken’ichi explains the foundational assumption of his research method as follows:

Shinran professed his own religious faith by saying, “When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida, which arose from five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of me, Shinran, alone!” In the modern period, this experience (jikken) of listening and reflecting on the “Original Vow” had Kiyozawa Manshi’s “Kōkōdō” as its starting point and then brought forth a “sangha” lineage from”Ōtani University of the Sasaki Gesshō period” to “Kōbō Gakuen” to the “Shinjin Society” to

\[\text{[I believe this dissertation’s findings are also relevant to our understanding of Japanese history more broadly, but making that argument will require further research. See below for further discussion.]}\]
the “Dōbōkai” that has been transmitted up to the present. The “sangha” is a “field” (ば 場) for “individuals” (ichinin 一人) to listen to and reflect upon the “Original Vow,” a “field” for the establishment of religious faith for “individuals.” And these “individuals” are people who live by shouldering the problems of their age...

Kiyozawa Manshi proclaimed, “Religion is a subjective fact.” By listening to and reflecting upon the “Original Vow” that ceaselessly flows at the base of our subjectivity, individuality is transcended. The “Original Vow” becomes the subject of the “individual.” The “sangha” exists in society as an instrument of the “Original Vow.” Researching the “individuals” who live in the “Original Vow” and the “sangha” that is an instrument of the “Original Vow”—herein lies the perspective of my research on the “history of doctrinal study.” (Mizushima 2013, 61)

Mizushima’s research rests upon the religious conviction that Shinran, Kiyozawa, and Kiyozawa’s followers all experienced a personal encounter with the “Original Vow,” leading their individual subjectivity to be replaced by the transcendental subjectivity of the “Original Vow.” The transcendental “Original Vow” is thus treated as the historical subject that generates the doctrinal views and social actions (“shouldering the problems of their age”) of faithful individuals. From this perspective—which is very much in line with Soga’s “Shinran’s View of Buddhist History”—there is little room for the views and actions of faithful individuals to be historically conditioned.

Whether or not Kiyozawa or Soga really experienced some transcendental reality called the “Original Vow” is a question of religious belief. However, whether or not (and if so, how) their views and actions were historically conditioned is a question of historical evidence. The

5 The term translated here as “individual” (ichinin) refers back to Shinran’s phrase “me, Shinran, alone” (hitoe ni Shinran ichinin ga tame ひとへに親鸞一人がため).
distinction between experience on the one hand and views and actions on the other brings us back to scholarly debates by Sharf and others over the nature of “religious experience.” Even if one accepts the controversial notion of an unmediated experience of religious phenomena, it would be exceedingly difficult to argue that the expressions of those experiences in language or action are not mediated by historical context. The same critique that Buddhist studies scholar Kimura Taiken leveled against Kaneko Daiei in 1929 can be put toward Mizushima: whatever formless reality may (or may not) lie at the root of Buddhist faith, the study of Buddhist history must take up the historically conditioned forms of the tradition.  

The most startling instance of historical conditioning uncovered in this dissertation is the wartime views of Soga. The events of the Fifteen Year War and the pressures of war mobilization influenced Soga to grapple with imperialist ideology, leading him to all but equate the Kojiki with the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, Emperor Hirohito with Amida Buddha, and death on the battlefield with immediate birth in the Pure Land. Mizushima’s massive tome on Ōtani doctrinal history from Kiyozawa through the launching of the Dōbōkai movement barely touches upon the wartime period. A long chapter titled “Development of Reform Movements during the ‘Fifteen Year War’” extensively covers the Kōbō Gakuen (1930-1933) academy organized by Soga and Kaneko’s followers, as well as Soga’s 1936 “Shinran’s View of Buddhist

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6 See section 2.1 above.
7 See Section 2.5 above.
8 Other works on Soga like Honda (1998), ODH (vol. 1), and Yasutomi (2010) also largely skip over his wartime career. Fukushima (1995) and Murayama (2011) are two important exceptions.
History” lecture. However, Soga and Kaneko’s various nationalistic writings and participation in the 1941 Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium are either completely ignored or just mentioned in passing. This problematic period in Soga and Kaneko’s career does not fit into the narrative Mizushima is trying to tell about the historical unfolding of the “Original Vow” through Soga, Kaneko, and the “sanghas” of which they were apart. The wartime context’s effect on Soga and Kaneko’s thinking is just one particularly dramatic example of a broader pattern of history shaping the thought, language, and actions of Kiyozawa’s followers.

In doctrinal terms, this acknowledgement of Soga and Kaneko’s historical conditioning and fallibility, regardless of the depth of their religious faith, can be related to the issue of whether or not doubts can continue to arise even after attainment of faith. One of Shinran’s fundamental teachings is the achievability of the “stage of assurance of awakening” (shōjūjūzō 定聚) in the present life (Shinran et al. 2007, 211-15). This teaching can be subject to many interpretations. Kiyozawa follower Andō Shūichi was accused of heresy in 1913 for his view that defilement and doubts persist even after the attainment of faith. Andō pointed to Kiyozawa as an example of someone who occasionally doubted the reality of the Buddha (Ward 2004, 146-47). If doubts and defilement persist, then so, too, could mistaken interpretation and application of Shin teachings. Acknowledgement of the historically contingent nature of the Ōtani organization’s modern development need not undermine the belief that Kiyozawa and his followers had authentic religious experiences or that they succeeded in reconnecting the Ōtani organization with Shinran’s ideals.
As for modern Buddhist studies scholarship, perhaps this dissertation's most significant contribution is its demonstration of the dynamism and influence of sectarian institutions. In recent English-language scholarship on modern Japanese Buddhism, most scholars have examined a theme extending across sect and religious boundaries. Such themes have included clerical marriage (Jaffe 2001); war participation (Victoria 2003, 2006); the World's Parliament of Religion (Snodgrass 2003; Harding 2008); “personal cultivation” (Sawada 2004); intra-Asia travel (Jaffe 2004, 2006); the category of religion (Josephson 2012); pet memorials (Ambros 2012); colonialism (Kim 2012); and leftist thought (Shields 2012 and forthcoming). Several scholars have looked at the challenges facing Buddhist sectarian institutions in the contemporary period (Covell 2005; Rowe 2011; Nelson 2013), but there are relatively few historical studies of these institutions. Japanese-language scholarship contains more studies of modern Buddhist institutional history (including Hayashi 2013, 2014), but the leading scholars have tended to cast their eyes on trans-sectarian topics, including independent movements (Ōtani 2001, 2012); Buddhist thought (Sueki 2004-2010); and Buddhist studies itself (Klautau 2012).

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9 If Buddhist-based “new religions” are included, McLaughlin’s 2009 dissertation on Soka Gakkai would be an exception to this trend. Other partial exceptions include Paula Arai’s 2012 study of a Sôtô Zen nunnery; Ama Michihiro’s 2011 study of Shin missionary work in the United States; Jessica Main’s 2012 dissertation on Takeuchi Ryô’on and the struggle against discrimination within the Ōtani organization; and Jessica Starling’s 2012 dissertation on priests’ wives (bomori 坊守) in contemporary Shin.
There are, of course, many good reasons to take a trans-sectarian approach. For non-sectarian scholars, the majority of topics of interest will naturally span across sectarian lines, and comparison between sects can yield new insights. Moreover, members of different Buddhist sects are not isolated from one another, so exclusive focus within the bounds of one sectarian environment can be distorting. However, a trans-sectarian approach also brings with it the danger of overlooking the significance of sectarian institutions. In his review of scholarship on modern Japanese religion, Hayashi Makoto emphasized that the pioneering scholars on modern Buddhism, motivated by an interest in Buddhism’s “modernization,” all focused on reform movements, leaving a lacuna in our understanding of more conservative Buddhist institutions (Hayashi 2006, 205-6). Almost ten years later, the situation has changed somewhat, but there is still a lot to learn about how sectarian institutions have shaped the lives of Buddhist individuals and communities, and in doing so, shaped Japanese history more broadly.

When sectarian institutions are considered by Buddhist studies scholars, it is often in regard to issues of political relations with the state, social welfare activities, proselytization, financial issues, and the like. This dissertation, by contrast, looked at the relation between Buddhist institutions and Buddhist thought. For the most part, the focus was on how particular forms of Buddhist thought came to enter into and transform an institution—bringing about the growth of new models of Buddhist studies, instigating a divisive institutional conflict, and leading toward the wholesale democratization of the sect administration. However, there were
also clear cases in which those forms of Buddhist thought were transformed in the process—in
the connection of Kiyozawa’s thought to Shinran’s and Soga’s, in the special significance
 accorded to the language of “facts” and “experience,” and in the adaptation of Shin modernist
thought to the wartime and postwar contexts. I hope this research pushes scholars and
students of modern Buddhism to pay more attention to the ways in which sectarian institutions
continue to grow and evolve, shaping all aspects of Buddhist thought and practice.

**Future Research**

There are various directions in which this research could be expanded. To begin with,
the writings of Kiyozawa, Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko are voluminous, and there is undoubtedly
more nuance to their thought than has been covered here. There is also plenty more research
to be done on the writings and activities of other Kiyozawa followers. I judged that Sasaki,
Kaneko, and especially Soga were the core figures in this story at least up through the Fifteen
Year War, but future research might consider the supportive role played by popular preachers
like Akegarasu, Takamitsu, and Fujiwara or by administrators like Sawayanagi Masatarō, Inaba
Masamaru, and Sekini Nin’ō. Also, more research ought to be done on traditionalists opposed to
Kiyozawa and his followers. This dissertation has drawn the basic contours of modern doctrinal
development within the Ōtani organization, but its coverage is by no means exhaustive.

There are also many topics within modern Ōtani history that received little attention in
this dissertation. One intriguing topic is the history of the Ōtani family and its role in directing
the Ōtani organization. These Chief Abbots and their family members did not write or speak publicly a great deal, and their lives within the gates of Higashi Honganji temple are kept quite private, all of which makes researching them difficult. Another central aspect of modern Ōtani history is the development of social outreach programs and gradual acknowledgment and reform of discriminatory social practices. The former topic has been considered in some Japanese-language scholarship, and the latter issue has been addressed in Jessica Main’s 2012 dissertation. Finally, other critical topics in modern Ōtani history include foreign missionary work in the United States and in Japan’s colonies, as well as the changing role and status of women. These topics have been covered by Ama (2011), Niino (2014), and Starling (2012). More research could be done either to integrate all of these topics into a comprehensive picture of modern Ōtani history, or to consider their relevance specifically in relation to the question of orthodoxy.

Another direction to take this research would be to make cross-sectarian comparisons.

Chapter One’s consideration of Kiyozawa’s discourse of “religious experience” could be

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10 Ōtani Kōen (1875-1943), Chief Abbot from 1908-1925 who had been tutored by Kiyozawa, authored a number of books of poetry, and Ōtani Kōshō (1925-1999) (eldest son of Chief Abbot Ōtani Kōchō (1903-1993)), who split off from the Ōtani organization to found the Jōdo Shinshū Higashi Honganji sect centered in Tokyo, authored a number of biographical and doctrinal books. Other than that, information about their lives and views can be gleaned from secondary accounts, newspaper reports, and the short “Kyōshō 教書” (also called “Goshinkyō 御親教”) sermons of the Chief Abbot published periodically in Shinshū.

11 Major social outreach activities were initiated in 1911 at the time of Shinran’s 650-year memorial services, resulting in the establishment of the Ōtani-ha Jūzen Kyōkai and the publication of the journal Kyūsai (published 1911-1919).
broadened to similar discourses by Buddhist intellectuals within other sects (or thinkers and scholars in other traditions and fields). I noted the language of “religious experience” in the earlier writings of Sōtō Zen scholar Hara Tanzan and in the later writings of D. T. Suzuki and Nishida Kitarō, but further research could treat this topic more exhaustively, clarifying the chronology and lines of influence. Chapter Two’s study of the modern sectarian studies developed by Sasaki, Soga, and Kaneko could be broadened to consider developments in sectarian studies in other sects. Also, research on the broader influence of Western philosophy, especially Neo-Kantianism, on Buddhist studies scholars other than Kaneko could prove fruitful. Chapter Three’s findings on the Kaneko heresy case could be situated within a broader study of Buddhist heresy cases, including the 1923 heresy case of Honganji scholar Nonomura Naotarō and the 1928 doctrinal controversy involving Sōtō Zen scholars Nukariya Kaiten and Harada Sogaku. Chapter Four’s investigation of Soga’s wartime writings and the 1941 Shin Doctrinal Studies Colloquium could be drawn upon in the construction of a more comprehensive study of Japanese Buddhism during the Fifteen Year War. Brian Victoria’s works, valuable as they are in documenting this history, do not sufficiently explain the underlying causes of Buddhists’ war cooperation. Finally, Chapter Five’s study of the Shinjin Society reform movement could be expanded into a larger project on postwar Buddhist reform movements. There are barely any studies of postwar Buddhist history, so this would be a particularly valuable topic to explore further.
Another direction would be to explore the impact of modern Ōtani history on Japanese history more broadly. The significance of Kiyozawa in the broader flow of Japanese intellectual history is a topic that has already received considerable attention, as has the impact of the popularization of the Tannishō, a text allegedly “discovered” by Kiyozawa. As for his followers, it is clear that Soga influenced Tanabe Hajime and his “philosophy as metanoetics”; that Kaneko’s writings led the list of wartime books recommended by the government; and that Akegarasu was a popular preacher well-known for his personal scandals and world travels.

Further research might investigate the extent of their broader historical impact beyond sectarian bounds. More to the point, this dissertation was primarily concerned with how Kiyozawa and his followers’ thought came to have influence within the Ōtani institution, especially from 1941 forward. Did differences in Buddhist thought (modernist versus traditionalist, Shin versus Zen or Nichiren) have different effects on the wartime policies of Buddhist institutions or the wartime decisions of sect members? Chapter 4 demonstrated that Soga and the modernists, unlike the traditionalists, were willing to support the idea that death in battle would bring about immediate rebirth in the Pure Land. How did that play out in terms of Ōtani policy? How did it play out on the battlefield? And in the postwar period, did Buddhist reform movements like the Shinjin Society or Dōbōkai movements influence democratic participation among Shin members? Did they influence Shin members’ views of governance or of the Emperor? Much attention has been paid to the political significance of Soka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō party, but the wholesale democratization of one of Japan’s largest Buddhist
organizations has passed largely unnoticed. The most observable political effect of the Ōtani organization’s transformation was its active opposition to government sponsorship of Yasukuni Shrine and to war more generally, but there must be more subtle, indirect effects as well.

Finally, this research could be extended by looking beyond 1956 to the history of how the new modernist orthodoxy was implemented by Ōtani authorities and how it was received by Ōtani members. In 1961, Kurube was appointed Head of Sect Affairs, and the follow year he announced a five-year Dōbōkai faith movement, in which seminars held at temples throughout the country instructed Ōtani priests and laypeople in Shin modernist ideology. The Dōbōkai movement’s messages included emphasis on individual awakening (rather than family-centered funerals and memorial services), understanding “rebirth in the Pure Land” as a teaching pertaining to this world (rather than an afterlife), and the abolishment of hierarchy between priests and laypeople.12 Instead of listening to sermons about the afterlife, Ōtani members were invited to participate in discussions of Shin teachings, to get involved in temple and sect affairs, and even to become active in national politics (in promoting pacifism and an

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12 The December 1962 issue of the sect journal Shinshū details the ideals of the movement as well as procedures for carrying it out. The seminars were led by priests who had attended three-month-long training seminars, and the newly created Gendai no setten: Kanmuryōjukyō jobun (Contemporary Scriptures: Introduction to the Sutra on Contemplation of [the Buddha of] Immeasurable Life) (1999; originally published in 1962), edited by the Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo, was used as the basis for doctrinal discussion. Gendai no setten provides the original text, modern translation, commentary, and discussion questions for the first eight (out of thirty-three) sections of the sutra.

end to nuclear weapons). This was apparently a great shock for many rural Ōtani members, whose political views, doctrinal understandings, and devotion to tradition contrasted sharply with those of the Dōbōkai instructors.\textsuperscript{13}

From there, the reform group continued to gain power within the Ōtani organization, ultimately rewriting the organization’s constitution in 1982 and demoting the Chief Abbot to a position of symbolic authority. However, this path was littered with conflict and scandal. The reform group waged an ugly battle with supporters of the Chief Abbot that led to several small groups breaking away from the main organization. Also, the Dōbōkai movement and its leaders were critiqued for the sect’s discriminatory treatment of burakumin (an outcast group associated with occupations like undertaker, butcher, or tanner) and for discriminatory remarks made by Kurube, Soga and others.\textsuperscript{14}

Beneath the surface of all this organizational reform and scandal, how have the views and practices of ordinary Ōtani priests and laypeople changed? In informal conversation, one Ōtani researcher speculated to me that only a small fraction—perhaps twenty percent—of Ōtani members even know the name of Kiyozawa Manshi. Yet Kiyozawa’s understanding of Shin Buddhism—developed and interpreted by his followers—has permeated Ōtani university classes,

\textsuperscript{13} This is the general finding of David Suzuki (1985, 50-61). However, more research is necessary to assess the reception of Dōbōkai ideals over time.

\textsuperscript{14} Documents related to these burakumin scandals were later compiled by the sect in Shinshū Ōtani-ha Kaihō Undō Suishin Honbu (1992). For critiques of Kiyozawa, Kurube, and other Shin modernists on these grounds, see Komori (1993).
training seminars for priests, dharma talks at Higashi Honganji temple, and all varieties of sect publications and memorabilia. What are the effects of this upon the beliefs and lives of Ōtani members? What are the broader effects upon understandings of Shin Buddhism in Japan and globally? One hundred years from now, will anyone still be deriding Japanese Buddhism as “funerary Buddhism”? Will anyone still be interpreting Pure Land Buddhism as teaching rebirth after death in a faraway land?
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Biography

Jeff Schroeder was born in Media, Pennsylvania in 1982. He wrote his undergraduate thesis on Gary Snyder and Shugendō at Reed College (B.A. 2005, Religion). After a year as a whitewater rafting guide and child counselor in Oregon and another as an English instructor in Himeji, Japan, he enrolled in a Master’s program in East Asian Studies at Duke University (M.A. 2009). Continuing on for his doctorate at Duke in Religious Studies, he received a University Scholarship and James B. Duke Fellowship in 2009, a Japan Foundation Doctoral Fellowship in 2012, and an Evan Frankel Fellowship in 2014. In 2014, he published “The Insect in the Lion’s Body: Kaneko Daiei and the Question of Authority in Modern Buddhism” in Modern Buddhism in Japan, edited by Paul Swanson, Ōtani Eiichi and Hayashi Makoto (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 2014). In the same year, he also published “Empirical and Esoteric: The Birth of Shin Buddhist Studies as a Modern Academic Discipline” in Japanese Religions (vol. 39). This summer, he will be moving back to Oregon with his wife, Lauren, and his two children, Zak and Naomi.