

The Propagation of Japanese Buddhism in China, 1910-40s: Japan as the Guardian of East Asian “Traditions”

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Abstract

This research examines the propagation of Japanese Buddhism in China in the first half century of 20c. From the Japanese government’s point of view, Buddhism is a useful “device” to understand local society and to make propaganda or penetrate into local society in China. In 1920, Japan organized religious groups including Buddhism to make some movements on cultural exchanges and friendship activities with Asian countries and colonies including China. In the 1930s, Japan occupied Manchuria and built the puppet state, Manchu-kuo. Buddhism and its organization were the important “device” to manage the Japanese society there and were expected to penetrate in Chinese society. However, it was so difficult to set some goals on Chinese local society. This research illustrates the processes in the negotiation about the right of propagation of Japanese Buddhism in China, with the Chinese government, and introduces the views and observations on Chinese religious society by Japanese Buddhism, in order to consider the factor of “religion” on Chinese modern history.

Keywords: *Japanese Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, Sino-Japanese Relations, Manchukuo, 21 Demands*

1. Introduction

This article examines the relationships and interactions between the propagation of Japanese Buddhism in China and Japanese aggression toward China. A look at the religious aspects of Sino-Japanese relations can shed light on a number of issues, including how the two countries interacted with each other, the nature of cultural aggression, and the ways in which a cultural foreign policy was formulated and implemented.

Several authors have published studies on Japanese Buddhism in China, including Xue Yu's *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism, Chinese Monks in the Struggle against Japanese Aggression, 1931-1945* (Routledge, 2005) and Brian Daizen Victoria's *Zen at War* (2nd Edition, Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). A number of Japanese articles also discuss the topic at length, though most of them similarly focus on the wartime period. However, in researching the ties between Buddhism and Sino-Japanese relations, one should not overlook the importance of an even earlier event: the issuance of the "Twenty-One Demands." On January 18th, 1915, Japan's Minister to China, Hioki Eki, submitted these demands to Chinese President Yuan Shikai. Two of the Demands were related to Buddhism: the demand that China should recognize the land ownership rights of Japanese hospitals, temples, and schools in China and the demand that China should allow Japanese individuals to preach there. Both demands were included as part of Group 5, which was considered by many, including individuals within the Japanese government, to have contained the most "aggressive" and "imperialistic" of the demands. Japan thus tried to withhold the contents of Group 5 from other major powers, even as they sought and were able to obtain their support for the remainder. After negotiations began in February 1915, China rejected any and all discussions concerning Group 5, and these two demands did not make their way into the resultant treaties and agreements that both countries came to sign in May 1915.

In fact, China acknowledged that it had already allowed Japanese to preach in China after it extended most-favoured-nation status to Japan as part of the Treaty of Shimonoseki (Maguan) in 1895. However, from the Japanese point of view, the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin, which included the right for foreign missionaries to preach in China, had only allowed for the preaching of Christianity. Though Japanese Buddhists conducted missionary work in China throughout the 1910s, the Japanese government felt a sense of unease about the situation, because their right to do so had not been explicitly recognized by China. On April 26th, 1915, Japan proposed revising the Twenty-One Demands to Twenty-Six Demands, which were accepted by China on May 9th. The two demands concerning Buddhism were not included within the new list, with the demand that "China recognize the land ownership rights of Japanese hospitals, temples and schools in China" withdrawn. The other demand, that "China recognize the right of Japanese to preach in China," was left to be negotiated in the future.

Jumping off from this discussion of the Twenty-One Demands, this article will turn to examine the relationships and interactions between the propagation of Japanese Buddhism in China and Japanese aggression toward China.

Necessary to this analysis is a consideration of the fact that Buddhism was already in China; it had originally been transmitted from India to Japan by way of China and Korea. What, then, could it have meant for the

Japanese to “propagate” Buddhism in China? If this meant the acquisition of new followers, individuals at the time must have perceived there to be differences between Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, leading them to have considered one to have been superior to the other. This article will also consider issues related to this, which allow us to move beyond conducting a basic examination of the points at which Buddhism made an appearance in the realm of modern Sino-Japanese relations.

2. Japanese Buddhist Activities in China after the Meiji Restoration

The mere fact that Japan sought treaty recognition for Buddhist preaching activities in China as part of the Twenty-One Demands is evidence that Japanese Buddhists had already tried to preach in China but had met with a variety of difficulties in their attempts to do so. First, a brief overview of the history of Japanese Buddhist missionary activities in China after the Meiji Restoration is in order.

After the Restoration, a Japanese monk from Kyoto’s Higashi Honganji Temple (東本願寺) which was the head temple (*honzan*) of the Ōtani-ha sect, travelled to China and ultimately decided to settle in Shanghai. His name was Ogurusu Kocyo (小栗栖香頂), and he subsequently opened a branch temple (*betsuin*) of the Honganji Temple there, which went on to educate and cultivate Chinese monks and spread its teachings across China. Higashi Honganji thereafter sent additional staff members to China, and they actively proselytized to both Chinese and Japanese followers. Higashi Honganji gradually intensified its efforts throughout the 1900s, and it eventually began spreading across southern China.

In addition to the group from Higashi Honganji, Nishi Honganji (西本願寺) was also active in China, though primarily in Fujian Province. Takeda Tokusho (武田篤初) travelled to Beijing to explore opportunities for exchanges with Chinese Buddhists, but he ultimately died during his journey there. Sotoshu (曹洞宗), one of the sects of Zen Buddhism in Japan, sent the monk Mizuno Baigyo (水野梅暁) to Hunan Province to open the Hunan School for Monks (Sengxuetang/湖南僧学堂), though he was subject to strong pressure from the provincial authorities.

Japanese Buddhists began to proselytize in Fujian Province in 1898, but in 1903, the provincial government claimed that Japan did not have the right to propagate religion, cautioning Japanese consuls not to issue “passports” for travel to central China. That is to say, it was not entirely true that Japan’s right to engage in Buddhist preaching activities had been recognized by the Treaty of Tianjin. The Japanese government therefore had reason to seek official recognition of this right as part of the Twenty-One Demands of 1915. In addition, violent incidents erupted at a Japanese temple in Fujian in

1904, and the Qing government asked Japanese monks and Buddhist leaders to leave the country because Japan did not have a right to proselytize there. Japan claimed that the right to proselytize had been included as part of the “most-favoured-nation status” it had acquired in the Sino-Japanese treaty, meaning that it had the same rights as Western countries in this regard. The Qing government, however, argued that religious rights were not included as part of “most-favoured-nation status,” and they correctly noted that most-favoured-nation status did not necessarily apply universally to all sections of every treaty.¹

In fact, the propagation of Japanese Buddhism caused a number of problems within local societies throughout Fujian province. The Provincial Governor felt compelled to control their activities in order to maintain the “status quo.” The case of Fujian is thus deserving of a closer look. The *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* wrote about it as follows:

After the Meiji Restoration, Higashi Honganji was the first Japanese Buddhist sect to set its sights on China.... They went about spreading their faith across the southern Qing Empire, with Katō Hiromi establishing a religious club in Macau in Meiji 31 [1898]. They developed contacts with local Chinese individuals and gradually opened up a religious front that passed through Zhangzhou and across southern Fujian Province. One could see their expansion proceed bit by bit as they established congregations and built study halls in gradual succession. At the time, they were in the local Chinese officials’ good graces, and the officials welcomed their activities. Not a single problem emerged.... Before this, in Meiji 31, Higashi Honganji’s church in Macau was set ablaze, and in Meiji 37 [1904], preachers in Zhangzhou and elsewhere were injured, with their study halls coming under repeated attacks by ruffians.²

Higashi Honganji’s Katō Hiromi conducted missionary work in Taiwan after the Japanese occupation, before eventually moving on to Fujian.³ Despite the fact that the article claimed that “not a single problem emerged” in the early days of Higashi Honganji’s activities, it curiously also noted that “Higashi Honganji’s church in Macau was set ablaze” shortly after its founding. Katō started preaching in Zhangzhou (漳州) in 1899, but his activities provoked the ire of local residents, with many joining local Chinese Christians to violently disrupt his activities.⁴ In light of this situation, the *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* went on to surmise that opposition to the preaching of Japanese Buddhism may have been primarily because it had been swept up into broader anti-missionary movements that had taken place across China.

The truth behind the matter is that decades of continued anti-missionary activities may have seen a resurgence, though this time directed at Japan. China has suffered because of Western Christianity. Each time a case involving missionaries has arisen, it has turned into an international incident.

Each incident has then ended with the granting of further concessions. Examples of this are too numerous to count.⁵

After the 1899 Zhangzhou Incident, Japan was the one seeking compensation. In dealing with this incident, the director of the Taiwan branch of Nishi Honganji, Ishikawa Kaoru, proposed several conditions for how compensation should be handled. A letter by Ishikawa stated, "In short, it is clear that Japanese subjects have been openly insulted by Chinese subjects. Please negotiate with the Qing in order to protect our country's rights and interests." He proposed two demands: first, the criminals responsible should be caught and punished. Second, the Qing government should provide Nishi Honganji with a parcel of land at least 50 mu in size (畝) and facilities for their missionary activities that had a total area of at least 300 ping (坪).⁶ The Buddhist organizations were now joining in on the practice of using their national government's authority to gain concessions from China.

A 1904 incident related to this matter occurred when a monk from Higashi Honganji sought to build a temple in Quanzhou, Fujian. The following record was made of the exchange:

In a letter sent to Ambassador Yano by the Foreign Affairs Bureau (previously the Zongli Yamen) in the tenth month of Guangxu 25 [1899], it was stated that references to churches and missionaries that have been included in various international treaties have only referred to those belonging to the Catholics and Protestants. None of the treaties make explicit reference to Japanese monks. The letter therefore stated that it would be difficult to handle cases involving Japanese monks in the same manner as those involving Western missionaries. The Viceroy of Min-Zhe was also made aware of this via telegraph, and various records of this exist.⁷

Chargé d'affaires Matsui Keishirō rebuked this claim, arguing that Article 25 of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation had granted Japan most-favoured-nation status. This meant, he argued, that the rights granted to Christian missionaries to conduct missionary activities should also be read as applying to Japanese Buddhist monks. The Qing government, however, did not accept this view.⁸ As a result, Japanese Buddhists did not have a recognized right to proselytize in China, a matter that the Japanese officials marked as a subject for future negotiations.⁹

On the other hand, the Qing government adopted a new education act as part of the Guangxu New Policies (光緒新政), which ordered local governments to construct schools within their jurisdictions. Local governments, however, did not have the financial resources to fund the construction of new schools. As a result, they coopted extant temple lands and properties for the new schools. As Chinese temples came under increasing pressure from the local authorities, Japanese Buddhists seized the opportunity to "cooperate" with Chinese temples. These problems then became diplomatic issues, with

Japan insisting upon its right to engage in Buddhist preaching due to its “most-favoured-nation status.” Rumors in Zhejiang Province held that Chinese temples had invited Nishi Honganji to take possession of them in response to having heavy new taxes levied on their lands and other properties.¹⁰

News of this incident reached Japan, with the *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* reporting the following version of events:

Chinese monks were suffering under official oppression, so they lodged complaints with Japanese preachers and sought a way to escape their plight. The most prominent case occurred in Zhejiang Province, where Itō Kendō of Higashi Honganji was stationed at the time. Dozens of prominent temples in Zhejiang wound up affiliating themselves with Higashi Honganji. Itō, likely responding to the requests of Chinese monks, moved to protect their temples. Local officials, however, considered his actions inappropriate, and they caused further problems. The issue became the subject of negotiations between the governments of China and Japan.

In short, the explanation they offered was that Chinese temples had actively sought the help of Japanese monks in hopes of evading official oppression.¹¹

Through incidents such as this, the propagation of Buddhism became a diplomatic issue, with some Japanese Buddhists becoming more aggressive in seeking recognition of their right to proselytize and more assertive as they conducted their activities in China. But why did Japanese Buddhism seek to expand in China? Writing in 1915, Ando Teccho (安藤鉄腸) gave three reasons: (1) though Western Christianity was actively being propagated across China, it had led to a number of clashes with local Chinese society; (2) Chinese Buddhism had lost its original spirit and ultimate potential; and (3) only Japanese Buddhism could help solve China’s societal problems and help realize true Sino-Japanese friendship.¹²

Roughly the same viewpoints came to appear in a variety of places, including within the *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* article cited above:

China also claims that it is already home to Buddhism. They say that the different Buddhist traditions from China and Japan might come into conflict. Claims like these are essentially unworthy of refutation. There is not a single lineage of Japanese Buddhism that is new to China, whether it be Tiantai, Huayan, Shingon, Zen, or Nianfo. Even the Nichiren and Pure Land sects, which were originally founded in Japan, work to transmit the teachings of Buddhist masters – such as Zhiyi and Shandao – from the Sui and Tang Dynasties. What sort of conflict could possibly arise? All that remains in today’s Chinese Buddhism is an empty shell, one that continues to exist only in books and buildings. Japan’s Buddhism must be reimported into China. In short, those who hope to revive the spirit of Chinese Buddhism cannot possibly hope to do so solely with the aid of what remains in China today.¹³

Japanese Buddhism was transmitted by the “masters” of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, meaning that there was no reason for there to be any sort of conflict of Chinese Buddhism. The problem instead, the argument went, was that Chinese Buddhism was in tatters. The plan was therefore to reimport Buddhism from Japan in order to bring about its revival. Could it not also have been said that China was in a similar state overall? This kind of perception was at the core of Japanese imperialism: a combination of anti-Western sentiment and respect for oriental traditions. Japan’s urgently felt need to reintroduce oriental culture back to China was one of the bases for Japanese imperialism. Japanese Buddhism came to possess much the same drive.¹⁴

3. The Anti-Japanese Buddhism Movement in China

Japanese Buddhists began their missionary work in China during the late Qing, but they came to face many difficulties along the way. The Japanese Minister to China, Ijuhin Hikokichi (伊集院彦吉) reported that their problems became especially acute after the 1912 founding of the Republic of China.¹⁵ In 1914, before the beginning of World War I, Baron Makino Nobuaki (牧野伸顯), who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs, sent a letter to the Japanese Minister to China, Yamaza Enjiro (山座円次郎). Within, he discussed the right to proselytize Buddhism within China.

When it comes to the matter of requesting that the Chinese government recognize our right to preach Buddhism in China, we have already negotiated with the Chinese government for many years without result. Therefore, I am now working on finding another way to solve the issue. During our previous negotiations, we principally took the stance that the “most-favoured-nation status” granted by Article 25 of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation gave us the same rights to proselytize as those given to Catholicism and Protestantism by the treaties signed between China and the Western countries. However, the provisions of those treaties with the West clearly mention Christianity. In no case do they leave room for a broader interpretation, meaning that we lack a real reason to demand equal treatment on that basis. It will be difficult for us to achieve our objectives by continuing this same approach, no matter how many times we attempt to negotiate. I think that an effective strategy would be to set the issue of “rights” completely aside and seek to resolve the matter as a question of “friendship.”¹⁶

Yamaza planned on requesting that China advance “spiritual exchanges” between China and Japan, putting forward the idea that the preaching of Buddhism should be seen as one such exchange. He then intended to expand his request from only covering Buddhism to include all of Japan’s religions.

Subsequent to Yamaza’s proposal, the next Japanese Minister to China, Hioki Eki, issued the Twenty-One Demands to Chinese President Yuan Shikai

on January 18th, 1918. As mentioned earlier, one of the Demands was that Japanese Buddhists have their right to preach in China recognized. Because it was included as part of Group 5, this demand was ultimately not subject to negotiations between Japan and China, as China refused to discuss the entirety of that set of demands. As a result, the treaties and agreements (民四條約) based on the revised proposal that Japan issued on April 26th did not include “the right of Japanese people to preach in China.” The propagation of Japanese Buddhism continued to be an unresolved issue between the two countries.

During World War I, Japanese Buddhist circles were publicly supportive of the Japanese government. They therefore hoped that they could find a way to resolve the issue of their right to preach. However, over the course of his negotiations with the Chinese government, Minister of Foreign Affairs Kato Takaaki came to declare that Group 5 of the Demands merely constituted a set of “requests.” As negotiations continued throughout March and April 1915, Japanese Buddhist groups discovered that their right to conduct missionary work had been demoted to become a lower-priority issue. Subsequently, on April 30th, monks from across the Japanese Buddhist community convened a meeting in Hibiya’s Matsumoto restaurant. They came to an agreement on May 1st and passed a resolution, stating:

A key element that underpins the development of peace and humanitarianism is the right to conduct missionary work. Christians have long enjoyed this right. However, despite the fact that the Western powers have the right to freely proselytize, we alone are left without the equal right to do so. There is no greater national disgrace than this. We Buddhist followers therefore hope that our proposals related to China are implemented. We especially hope that the question of the right to preach in China finds an appropriate resolution.¹⁷

Despite the Buddhists’ demands, however, none of the various agreements that were signed between China and Japan included provisions concerning their ability to conduct missionary work.

After concluding the treaties and agreements (民四條約) with China, the Japanese Minister to China, Hioki Eki, sent a letter concerning Japanese Buddhist activities to Kato Takaaki. Hioki quoted an article from the *Manshu Nichinichi-Shimbun* (滿洲日日新聞), a Japanese newspaper in China, which reported that Mizuno Baigyo (水野梅暁) had led famous and high-ranking Buddhists to China to meet with their Chinese counterparts.¹⁸ Hioki, who was responsible for submitting the same Twenty-One Demands that had included two articles about the propagation of Japanese Buddhism, reacted negatively to Mizuno’s activities. Hioki believed that Mizuno was a political activist in the mold of Miyazaki Toten (宮崎滔天) and Kayano Nagatomo (萱野長知), who were famous “friends” of Sun Yat-sen. He speculated that if Mizuno were to lead similar kinds of Buddhist activities in the future, the diplomatic situation

had the potential to become much more complex and politicized.¹⁹ Hioki was conscious of China's growing anti-Japanese movement, and Japanese Buddhism in China did indeed come up against anti-Japanese activities throughout the 1910s, especially after the issuance of the Twenty-One Demands.

4. The Right to Proselytize as *Fait Accompli*

The right to preach Buddhism in China may have been included as part of the Twenty-One Demands of 1915, but because China had completely rejected Group 5 of the Demands, the issue was ultimately left out of the final Sino-Japanese agreements. Japanese Buddhists lodged significant protests in response. Takashima Beiho, one member of the Buddhist community, summed up their general sentiments by declaring, "In the past, Japan was the beneficiary of much that was imported from China, whether it be in the spiritual or physical realms. Japan has to therefore work to repay the favor in the future."²⁰ His argument was that Japan had to reintroduce the same Buddhism it had learned from China back to the Chinese people in order to repay them for the favour of its original transmission. This is a perfect example of the line of thinking that held that China was no longer home to the "original Chinese Buddhism" and that Japanese Buddhism was now a better carrier of its doctrines.

Amidst this pressure, the Japanese government worked to ensure that the right to preach Buddhism in China was to become part of the "facts on the ground." This was despite the fact that the Chinese government had never acknowledged this right and also despite the emergence of an anti-Japanese movement that resisted Japanese Buddhism's expansion.

Along these lines, a branch temple of the Higashi Honganji sect that was located in Zhangzhou (漳州) faced a number of difficulties. The temple opened in 1899 and began to conduct missionary work shortly thereafter, but the head Japanese monk suddenly left in the late 1910s without designating a successor. Anti-Japanese movements then targeted the temple as part of their resistance activities, and they created a right-of-way that passed through the temple grounds. The Japanese Consul General and military officer in Xiamen discussed this matter with the commander of the Guangdong Military (粵軍總司令), Chen Jiongming (陳炯明). Chen visited Xiamen in 1920 and ordered that the public not be allowed to pass through the temple grounds. In response, Consul Fujita Eisuke (藤田栄介), proudly declared that Commander Chen's order meant that China had now recognized Japan's extant right to conduct missionary work. At the same time, he asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uchida Kosai, to support the renovation of the temple, because it had fallen into disrepair. This case shows the gap between the ideal image and the reality of the status of Japanese temples in China.²¹

Also in the 1920s, the Japanese government began stressing the importance of “cultural exchange,” designing a national project for cultural exchange with China (対支文化事業) that was to use the indemnity payments from the 1901 Boxer Rebellion to fund its activities. After the end of the Hara Takashi administration, Japan changed its diplomatic policy toward China to be more “modest” and “cooperative” with other major powers (with the exception of China). Under the so-called Washington System, Japan sought to avoid the use of military and political power as much as possible, using “economics and culture” to expand its influence within China in their stead. The resultant set of policies came to be known as “Shidehara diplomacy,” as it was identified with then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Kijiro Shidehara. Buddhism became a key part of this cultural influence project, though it has generally been more known for its promotion of student exchanges.²²

At the same time, new religious trends were emerging in China. In major cities, people organized both religious groups and Marxist anti-religion alliances (半宗教同盟). Their criticism of religion was mixed with elements of nationalism, and they identified Christianity as a tool of Western imperialism.²³ Though these groups primarily focused their complaints against the expansion of Christianity in China, Japanese Buddhism had also become a potential target. Anti-Christian movements also helped to cultivate a Chinese Buddhist reform movement. For example, the Fohua Xin Qingnianhui (仏化新青年会) led by two young intellectuals, Zhang Zongzai (張宗載) and Ning Dayun (寧達蘊), launched reform campaigns that spread across most of the country, with most provinces constructing their own branches of the organization. Taixu (太虛), a leader of the Chinese Buddhist reform movement, held study sessions at the Wuchang Buddhist Studies Academy (武昌仏学院) that the group had organized.²⁴ These advanced new ways of practicing Chinese Buddhism, especially promoting the idea of being a “Buddhist in one’s own home” (在家信者), which represented a stark departure from earlier traditions.²⁵

However, from the point of view of many Japanese Buddhists, this new movement offered the perfect opportunity to realize their policy goals, and Mizuno Baigyo (水野梅暁) came to closely follow its activities. When Taixu (太虛) convened the 1924 World Buddhism Convention (世界仏教大会) in Lushan (廬山), a large number of Japanese Buddhist believers and scholars were in attendance, including Saeki Join (佐伯定胤), who was the director of Horyu-ji (法隆寺貫主), University of Tokyo professor Kimura Taiken (木村泰賢), and Mizuno Baigyo. Saeki and Kimura, who received financial support from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to attend, gave lectures on the history of Japanese Buddhism and its fundamental doctrines. After returning to Japan, Kimura noted that Chinese Buddhists were highly interested in Yogachara (Vijñapti-mātratā, 唯識学), such that Japanese Buddhists who were

unable to discuss the topic were likely to have their messages ignored. He also criticized the activities of Japanese Buddhists in China, remarking that “a large number of Japanese Buddhists have been sent to China by their sects, but their academic backgrounds pale in comparison to those of the Chinese Buddhists, making it difficult to hold any exchanges. The Japanese side has to send more outstanding individuals to China.”²⁶ Saeki, on the other hand, boasted that Japanese Buddhism was much more advanced, leading him to propose that Japan open a Buddhist research institute in China. He also wanted each Buddhist school in Japan to teach their students the Chinese language for the purpose of continuing exchanges between the two countries.²⁷

In 1925, a second convention was held in Japan, though this time it was referred to as an “East Asian” Buddhism Convention rather than a “World” one.²⁸ It was sponsored by both the Ministry of Education and the China Cultural Affairs Bureau (対支文化事業部). It was held at Zojo-ji (増上寺) in Tokyo, with Mizuno playing a role as messenger between the Japanese and Chinese participants. Taiwanese and Korean Buddhists also attended alongside the Chinese delegation, and Taixu gave a speech that stressed the importance of Buddhist cultural exchanges.²⁹ The convention was an overall success, receiving high praise in the media. However, it was also the target of negative comments issued by several Buddhist activists, including Tanaka Shashin (田中舎身), who criticized the fact that Buddhists from India, Siam and elsewhere in Asia had not been invited.³⁰

Throughout the mid-1920s, the exchanges continued with complex intentions and a complicated public image. In Manchuria, for instance, Harbin (哈爾濱) continued to lack any sort of Buddhist facilities despite the fact that Chinese migrants had been continually expanding into Northern Manchuria. In response, local Chinese leaders, such as Zhu Qinglan (朱慶瀾), planned to build the “Jile temple” (極樂寺) there, but they did not have the financial resources to do so. Consequently, they asked the Japanese Consul General, Yamauchi Shiro (山本四郎), and the local director of South Manchuria Railway Company (滿鐵) for support. The South Manchuria Railway Company agreed, and the consul also asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its assistance. In his request, Yamamoto contended that, “our friendly support for this broad and sustainable project will elicit a positive response to our policies here. The temple itself is also a highly useful facility for penetrating into Chinese society.”³¹

5. Conclusion

This paper is just a preliminary note, using Japanese sources to explore how “religion” became a diplomatic issue in Modern China, especially in the late Qing and early Republican Periods (1890-1920s). A number of scholarly

debates have taken place regarding the spread of Christianity in China, but Buddhism was similarly a hot issue in Sino-Japanese relations.

Of course, there still remains much work to be done on this topic, but based on the research detailed above, we can take away some of the following key points.

First, the expansion of Japanese Buddhism into China was subject to competition between different sects, especially in central and southern China. This also resulted in the simultaneous expansion of Japan's interests. The Buddhist community within Japan believed that they should have been granted the right to proselytize in China, and they pressured the Japanese government to seek the recognition of that right from the Chinese government. The story of how Shintō expanded alongside the development of the Emperor System within the Empire of Japan is already well known, but Buddhism also worked hand-in-hand with the Japanese government to expand their right to preach in China.

Second, the Chinese government was steadfast in refusing to accept Japan's view that the most-favoured-nation status granted by Article 25 of the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation also gave Japanese Buddhists the right to propagate their religion in China. In addition, because the same demand was included within Group 5 of the Twenty-One Demands in 1915 – a set of demands that China had refused to even negotiate – the matter was not subject to further discussion. However, this does not mean that China's Foreign Ministry rejected Group 5 because of the Buddhist issue in and of itself. Japan would go on to attempt to have the right to preach recognized as a *fait accompli* by the Chinese government.

Third, when Japanese Buddhists attempted to preach in China, they did not necessarily hold the belief that Japanese Buddhism was unique or superior. Many Japanese Buddhists understood that Japanese Buddhism began in China, and they held great respect for Chinese Buddhism. However, they did believe that Chinese Buddhism had lost its way and was unable to return to its former glory on its own. They thus understood it to be their duty to reconstruct Chinese Buddhism through their missionary work. This logic was quite similar to later advocacy for an “advance” into China as part of the construction of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. While some Japanese monks sought a different path that existed separate from Chinese Buddhism, such as by travelling to Tibet in search of a form of Buddhism that existed before its transmission to China, most had deep respect for ancient Chinese Buddhism and believed that Japanese Buddhism embodied its original principles.

Finally, Buddhist cultural exchange activities both between China and Japan and across Asia were common, especially after World War I. Every country and region that was pursuing a reform movement saw at least some

level of exchange between their Buddhist communities. The Chinese and Japanese Buddhists were much the same. Chinese Buddhists may have viewed these Sino-Japanese exchanges as unwelcome interference, but it is without question that both the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist communities underwent changes as a result of their relationship. Issues related to this are ripe for further research, especially as they relate to the periods after the founding of Manchukuo and after the end of the Sino-Japanese War. I would like to continue research along these lines in the future.

Notes

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 5. "The Issue of the Right to Preach in China (1-7), (「対支布教権問題(一)~(七)」)" *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* (『東京朝日新聞』), May 15-21, 1915.
 6. "Letter from Ishikawa Kaoru to Ueno Sen'ichi, the Consul at Amoy, Apr., 1st, 1899," MOFA Archives, reference code: B120816200, JACAR.

7. December 15, 1904 (11/9 Guangxu 30) Letter from the Foreign Affairs Bureau to Chargé d'affaires Matsui Keishirō, "The Sino-Japanese Treaty Does Not Contain References to Buddhism, Please Withdraw Japanese Monks and Businessmen in Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in Accordance with the Telegraph from the Fujian Viceroy, (中日約内無仏教明文請照閩督所電將漳泉等処日僧商撤)", Zongli Yamen Archives (総理各国事務衙門檔案), 01-12-021-04-006.
8. December 22, 1904 (11/16 Guangxu 30) Letter from Chargé d'affaires Matsui Keishirō to the Foreign Affairs Bureau, "The Construction of Temples in China by Japanese Buddhist Monks is Done in Accordance with the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. It Would Be Undoubtedly Difficult to Assent to the Fujian Viceroy's Order to Withdraw Merchants (本国仏教僧侶到中国建堂任教係照中日通商行船条約而行閩督電請商撤一節断難允応)", Zongli Yamen Archives (総理各国事務衙門檔案), 01-12-021-04-007.
9. For example, missionary work by Japanese Buddhists also ran into problems in 1908. The Qing government refused to recognize their activities. June 8, 1908 (5/10 Guangxu 34) Letter from Chargé d'affaires Abe Moritarō to the Foreign Affairs Bureau, "Japanese Monks Preaching in China Enjoy the Same Right to Conduct Missionary Work as All Protestant and Catholic Missionaries (本国仏教僧侶在貴国伝教與耶穌天主各宣教師同享有布教之権)", Foreign Affairs Bureau Archives (外務部檔案), 02-05-009-02-019. See also, on the same date, Letter from Chargé d'affaires Abe to the Foreign Affairs Bureau, "Equal Treatment between Japanese Buddhist Monks and the Nationals of All other Countries. Please Forward to the Viceroy of Fujian (本国仏教僧侶與各国人一律相待請転粵督由)", Foreign Affairs Bureau Archives (外務部檔案), 02-05-010-02-017.
10. "Report from the Consul in Zhejiang on the Rumors that 35 Chinese Temples will become Affiliated with the Nishi Honganji Group (清国浙江省内三十五個寺院聯絡シテ大谷派本願寺へ帰属セントスル風説ニ関シ在全帝国領事館ヨリ具報一件)", 1903, MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081604400, JACAR.
11. "The Issue of the Right to Preach in China (1-7), (「対支布教権問題(一)~(七)」)", *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* (『東京朝日新聞』), May 15-21, 1915.
12. Ando Teccho (安藤鉄腸), *Religion's Diplomacy Problem* (宗教上の外交問題), Tokyo: Bukkyoto Yushi Taikai, 1915, 23.
13. "The Issue of the Right to Preach in China (1-7), (「対支布教権問題(一)~(七)」)", *Tokyo Asahi Shimbun* (『東京朝日新聞』), May 15-21, 1915.
14. Japanese Shinto (神道), Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, and Islam were all active within the Kwantung Leased Territory (旅順大連租借地), but it was reported that "Most Japanese and Chinese people do not care much about religion (日支人孰レモ其ノ多数ハ頗ル冷淡且無頓着)." See "The Report on the General Religious Situation, 1913 Annual Administrative Report of the Kwantung Office (大正二年度 諸般政務施行成績 関東都督府 8 / 第六 宗教ニ関スル一般ノ状況)", MOFA Archives, reference code: B03041562800, JACAR.
15. Letter from Ijuin to Minister of Foreign Affairs Uchida Kosai, "Reports Concerning Pressure from Officials within the New Government on Buddhist Monks and Temples in China (支那仏教僧侶寺院ニ対スル新官憲ノ圧迫ニ

- 関スル報告具進ノ件」)”, Nov. 7th, 1912. MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081602600, JACAR.
16. Letter from Yamaza to Minister of Foreign Affairs Makino Nobuaki, “Regarding the Attainment of the Right to Preach within China (支那内地ニ於ケル布教権獲得ニ関スル件)”, February 3rd, 1914. MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081602600, JACAR.
 17. “Buddhist Followers Rise into Action (仏教徒の奮起)”, *Shin Bukkyō* (新仏教) vol. 16, no. 6, 1915. Regarding the major trends within Buddhism at this time, see Akamatsu Tesshu (赤松徹真), “Politics and Religion in Modern Japan – New Buddhist Movement – 近代日本における政治と宗教: 新仏教運動の場合 〈宗教と政治〉” *Bulletin of the Research Institute of Bukkyo University* (佛教大学総合研究所紀要), no. 1, March, 1998.
 18. Mizuno Baigyo was a monk from the Sotoshu (曹洞宗) sect and famous *tairiku rōnin* (大陸浪人). Hironaka Kazunari’s article analyzes Mizuno’s activities and ideology, but he focuses on the 1920-40s and does not cover his activities in 1910s. see, Hironaka Kazunari, “Japanese Invasion of China and Baigyou Mizuno (日本の中国侵略と水野梅暁),” *Kokken Kiyō* (国研紀要), No. 146, November, 2015. See also, “Buddhist Demonstrations: a Group of High-ranking Buddhists plans to visit China (仏教徒の示威運動—名僧知識団の渡支計画)”, *Manshu Nichinichi-Shimbun* (満洲日日新聞), July 17th, 1915.
 19. Letter from Hioki to Minister of Foreign Affairs Kato Takaaki, “Regarding the Tenor of the Argument Concerning Japanese Buddhist Visits to China within Local Chinese Newspapers (日本仏教徒渡支ニ対スル当地漢字新聞論調ニ関スル件),” July 24th, 1915, MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081602600, JACAR.
 20. “Obtaining the Right to Preach within China (支那内地布教権の獲得),” *Shin Bukkyō* (新仏教) 16, no. 5, 1915. See also Akamatsu, “Politics and Religion in Modern Japan – New Buddhist Movement –.”
 21. Letter from Fujita Eisuke to Minister of Foreign Affairs Uchida Kosai, “The Issue of Buddhist Missionary Work and the Reform of the Higashi Honganji Temple in Zhangzhou (在漳州東本願寺教堂布教権竝教堂修繕補助方ニ関スル件)”, August 26th, 1920, MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081602800, JACAR.
 22. For example, it is also engaged in the recruitment of Chinese monks to Japan. See “A Reliable and Effective Policy for Cultural Exchange with China (着実で有効な対支文化事業),” *Osaka Asahi Shimbun* (大阪朝日新聞), April 2nd, 1926.
 23. Letter from Funatsu Shinichiro to Minister of Foreign Affairs Uchida Kosai, “The Issue of Anti-religion Alliances in Shanghai (上海ニ於ケル非宗教同盟ニ関スル件)”, April 4th, 1922, MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081602800, JACAR.
 24. Ohira Hiroshi (大平浩史), “The Fohua Qingnianhui in the 1920s and the May Fourth New Culture Movement (1920年代の仏化青年会と五四新文化運動)”, *Ritsumeikan Bungaku* (立命館文学), no. 619, 2010.
 25. Erik Christopher Schicketanz has pointed out that a schism between the “Buddhist in one’s home” movement and the Buddhist clergy was triggered by the reimportation of esoteric Buddhism from Japan. See Erik Christopher Schicketanz, “The Formation of Historical Consciousness in Modern Chinese

- Buddhism and Sino-Japanese Buddhist Exchange (近代中国仏教の歴史認識形成と日中仏教交流)” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Tokyo, 2012 (<http://www.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/postgraduate/database/2012/82.html>).
26. “Comments by Dr. Kimura,” The Circumstances Surrounding the Lushan Buddhism Convention (廬山仏教連合会ノ状況), MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081587500, JACAR.
 27. “Comments by Saeki Join,” The Circumstances Surrounding the Lushan Buddhism Convention (廬山仏教連合会ノ状況), MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081587500, JACAR.
 28. Taixu insisted on continuing to use the word “world,” but the Japanese side was against it. See, “Comments by Dr. Kimura,” The Circumstances Surrounding the Lushan Buddhism Convention (廬山仏教連合会ノ状況), MOFA Archives, reference code: B12081587500, JACAR.
 29. Shi Taixu (釈太虚), “Friendly Advice for Asian Buddhists (亜洲仏教徒ニ敬告ス),” East Asian Buddhism Convention, MOFA Archives, reference code: B050157321, JACAR.
 30. Tanaka Shashin, “The Real Purpose of the East Asian Buddhism Convention (東亜仏教大会の真目的),” *Nihon oyobi Nihonjin* (日本及日本人), November 1st, 1925.
 31. Letter from the Consul General, Yamauchi Shiro, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Matsui Keishiro, “An Application for Financial Support for the Harbin Buddhism Association’s Plan for Temple Construction (哈爾濱仏教公会ノ寺院建築資金ニ関シ稟請ノ件),” on June 6th, 1924, MOFA Archives, reference code: B050153114, JACAR.

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