

**buddhist material
culture, "indianism,"
and the construction
of pan-asian
buddhism in prewar
japan**
richard m. jaffe

duke university

ABSTRACT

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japanese Buddhism was marked by a wide-ranging fascination with Buddhist origins in India. This Indian turn in Japanese Buddhist circles manifested not only in elite academic scholarship, but also in Buddhist art and architecture. In this article I consider how the early twentieth-century artistic and architectural production of Itō Chūta and Ōtani Kōzui deployed Indian and Southeast Asian Buddhist motifs as part of the effort to create a universalized Japanese Buddhism.

Richard M. Jaffe is Associate Professor of Buddhist Studies at Duke University in the Department of Religion. He is a specialist in early modern and modern Japanese Buddhism. He is completing a book concerning travel, cultural exchange, and Japanese Buddhism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *Seeking Śākyamuni: World Travel and the Reconstruction of Japanese Buddhism*, to be published by University of Chicago Press.

With the opening of Japan, beginning in the 1850s, to increased foreign contact with the rest of Asia, Europe, and the United States, Japanese Buddhist scholars and clerics, like other members of the Japanese elite, began to travel abroad in large numbers for the first time since the seventeenth century.¹ For much of the latter half of the Edo period (1603–1867) through the early years of the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japanese Buddhists endured a series of harsh anti-Buddhist, pro-Shinto measures, including several 1868 laws ordering the separation of *kami* and buddhas (*shinbutsu bunri rei*). Efforts by the new Meiji regime to institutionalize aspects of *kami* worship in the new government and purify Shinto shrines of all Buddhist elements triggered the widespread destruction of temples and forced laicizations of Buddhist clerics, a violent movement dubbed *haibutsu kishaku*, literally, “abolish the buddhas, demolish Śākyamuni.” In the immediate wake of the worst suppression of Buddhism in Japanese history, Buddhists answered charges of “corruption” and “parasitism,” by redefining their tradition, restructuring their institutions, and struggling to regain the support from the Japanese government and public in a variety of ways.

One part of this effort was the dispatching of Buddhists to study and practice throughout the globe. Such clerics and scholars as Shimaji Mokurai, Takakusu Junjirō, and D.T. Suzuki all returned from abroad to effect far-reaching changes in Japanese Buddhist intellectual life and practice. In the last decade, a small group of scholars have described how such Japanese Buddhist travelers to Europe and the United States reshaped Japanese Buddhism in response to increasingly bold Christian missionary efforts in Japan, exchanges with European Buddhologists, and Japanese Buddhist participation in the 1893 World Parliament of Religions.² Many of these studies have underscored the complex set of interchanges and refractions that occurred as Japanese Buddhists transculturated European and American scholarly ideas about Buddhism for their own apologetic purposes, in the process transforming the image and practice of Buddhism both in Japan and abroad.

Yet, as important as the Euro-American–Japanese exchange was for the construction of new forms of Japanese Buddhism, the network of global contacts made by Japanese Buddhists after the Meiji Restoration was not the almost exclusively Western–Japanese bipolar one that has been portrayed until now. Important cultural exchanges between Buddhists in Asia and travel by Japanese Buddhists to other parts of the world have received very little scrutiny. Nonetheless, after 1872, trips by Japanese clerics to Buddhist Asia, including India, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Nepal, and Thailand were fairly common. An investigation of these developing networks of exchange demonstrates that the reformulation of Buddhism in Japan and, more broadly, in Asia as a text-based, pan-Pacific/Asian (*Hantaiheiyō Bukkyō*) tradition involved Burmese, Chinese, Indians, Japanese, Koreans, Sri Lankans, Thai, and Tibetans who responded not

only to what Europeans and Americans said about Buddhism, but who also talked among themselves. The reconstruction of Buddhism in Asia thus included others besides European and American orientalist scholars and involved more than just texts, depending in large part on the growing circulation of people and material culture on a global scale. The forging of increasingly strong links between Japanese and other Asian Buddhists catalyzed the transformation of how Buddhism was conceived within Japan and, more broadly, elsewhere in Asia. Japanese Buddhists used knowledge of and contact with Buddhist others elsewhere to enhance their prestige at home, at times emphasizing Japanese Buddhism's transnational reach, at other times its superiority as the only form of the religion suited to the demands of the twentieth century.

Buddhist material culture was of central importance in the construction and dissemination of new notions of Japanese and pan-Asian Buddhism. Japanese artistic interpretations of their exchanges with Buddhists in other parts of Asia, exhibitions of imported Buddhist art wares, and the creation of new forms of Buddhist architecture expressive of the deep ties with the broader Buddhist tradition all impressed upon parishioners, ordinary clerics, and government officials the global context for Buddhist practice. Although disparate and, for the most part, uncoordinated in any overarching way, a wide range of scholarly, archaeological, architectural, and artistic renderings that were brought to or created in Japan during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped make Japan's connection with the other regional Buddhisms in Asia visible and tangible. These concrete markers of Japan's Asian Buddhist heritage are an understudied example of how developing notions like "Asia" were given expression in a way that reached a mass audience in Japan. They also were crucial elements in constructing Buddhism as a pan-Asian and, even, world religion.

To date much of the scholarly discussion of the emergence of the notion of "world religions" or the development of an understanding of Buddhism as a pan-Asian phenomenon has primarily focused on textual, particularly, scholarly sources.³ In this article I focus on one important way that ordinary clerics, Japanese lay Buddhists, and government officials were exposed to the idea that Buddhism was a "pan-Asian" or, even, "world religion." For all that has been said about the constructed, artificial nature of the so-called "world religions," little attention has been paid to what impact, if any, this redefinition might have had for nonscholars. Nor has much thought been given to the question of how temple/churchgoers might come in contact with this new conceptual terrain. The Japanese case also illustrates the importance of nontextual sources in building these new understandings of Buddhism and disseminating them to a larger audience. Although a great deal of the reconceptualization of Buddhism in Japan took place at the level of scholarship and doctrine in the Buddhist sectarian and imperial universities, the changing Buddhist material culture in Japan helped constitute these changes while also facilitating

the spread on the denominational and popular levels of the notion of Buddhism's pan-Asian or even global reach. In this sense, the Japanese case detailed here demonstrates more than how religious material culture served to *communicate* the transformation in the discourse about Buddhism that was taking place in the scholarly and popular literature. Precisely because the sorts of temples described in this article were visible to the Japanese and available to them as spaces for all kinds of activities that touched their lives, they actually created pan-Asian spaces in Japan that recalled Buddhism's past and evoked its future. As suggested by recent work concerning visual culture and American religion, Buddhist material culture in Japan not only influenced religious life; material culture, including architecture, played a central role in *constituting* Buddhism as a pan-Asian religion with a global future. Like religious material culture elsewhere in the world, Buddhist architecture in Japan played a variety of functions fundamental to religious life. On the one hand these temples were sites where people could initiate contact with the spirits of the deceased or places to communicate with Buddhas and bodhisattvas. They also served as loci for the creation of networks of Buddhists that included not only Japanese devotees, but also Buddhists across Asia, both past and present (Morgan and Promey 2001, 2–17). In their instantiation of Buddhism's global dimension, these structures function very much like the "translocal" shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami described by Tweed, which, despite its modern design, "transported viewers to a collective past . . ." (Tweed 1997, 112).

The rapid expansion of steamship routes throughout Asia in the nineteenth century allowed Japanese Buddhists to travel regularly to parts of the globe with which they previously had little actual contact (Jaffe 2004). Through their lectures, travel accounts, and studies of the conditions of Buddhism abroad, and through the newspaper articles detailing their overseas adventures, these early Japanese clerical travelers helped disseminate an awareness among their fellow clerics and other Japanese that Japan was indeed an integral part of a broader Asian world held together by a shared religious history, if not always a living tradition.

Increased contact with others in Asia also sparked an awareness among Japanese Buddhists that they shared not only a tradition with their co-religionists in South and Southeast Asia, as well as the rest of East Asia, but also a predicament. With only Siam and Japan left intact, albeit surrounded, by the forces of European and American colonialism, Asian Buddhists saw the necessity of cooperating to ensure the survival of their tradition into the twentieth century. The Mahā Bodhi Society, which was created in 1891 by the Sri Lankan Anagarika Dharmapala and a Japanese Shingon convert to Theravāda Buddhism, Shaku Kōzen, is a prime example of the new sense of a translocal Buddhist solidarity (Jaffe 2004). Kōzen, his teacher Shaku Unshō, and Dharmapala worked closely for years trying to wrest control of Bodh Gayā from the Hindus who, with the

consent of their British colonial overlords, remained in charge of the site (Jaffe 2005). Another aspect of the emerging strategy for Asian Buddhists was to go on the offense by proselytizing in the United States and Europe, particularly among those considered most sympathetic to Buddhism, the Theosophists. Shaku Sōen, for example, urged his fellow Buddhists to proselytize in Europe and the United States to ensure the survival of Buddhism, and members of the Nishi Honganji reached out to the English-speaking world through their journal *Bijou of Asia* (Jaffe 2004, 69, 83). As a result, although it is not terribly well known, Theosophical ideas and articles in translation circulated within denominational circles in Japan, particularly in the Nishi Honganji serial, *Kaigai Bukkyō jijō* beginning in the late 1870s. The English-language sister publication, *Bijou of Asia*, which derived its title from Edwin Arnold's influential poem, also had a Theosophical flavor (see Yoshinaga 2000; Tweed 2006).

These early travelers, many of whom were influential members of the Buddhist elite, also returned home with numerous samples of Buddhist material culture from South, Central, and Southeast Asia, a region that was still known broadly as "Tenjiku," the traditional Sino-Japanese term for India used in Japan. The imported objects were extremely diverse, including collections of textual materials in Indic languages, paintings, Buddhist ritual implements and clothing, relics, and sculptures, particularly Buddha images. Although some of the collections of texts became the object of scholarly inquiry, many of these treasures did not find their way into the quickly developing systems of Imperial, private, or Buddhist universities in Japan. Nor were these objects rapidly placed on display in museums for the general public, as was often the case in Europe and the United States. Rather, these artworks and sculptures remained in Japanese temples, where they were kept alive or, in the case of Indian materials, brought back to life as objects of veneration or put on display—in a temple context—for the public. In addition, the prominent placement of reliquaries, paintings, photographs, and sculptures marked the residents of the temple as ones that had made the pilgrimage to realms associated with the origins of the tradition, thus enhancing their prestige as well-educated, cosmopolitan Buddhists.

Itō Chūta, Ōtani Kōzui, and Indo-Saracenic Architecture in Japan

An even more conspicuous incorporation of "Asian/Indian" elements into Japanese Buddhist life was the product of a growing collaboration between Japanese clerical travelers, who had witnessed overseas Buddhist art and architecture first hand, denominational leaders, who wanted to find temple forms expressive of modern, expansive, twentieth-century Japanese Buddhism, and Japanese architects striving to move Buddhist architecture in a new direction. One architect in particular, Itō Chūta (1867–1954), worked in conjunction with several of the most influential Japanese Buddhist pilgrims to create a distinctively new form of

Indian-inflected Japanese temple architecture. Itō had studied architecture at the newly created College of Engineering at Tokyo Imperial University. There he had worked with some of the first professional architects in Japan, including Kigo Kiyoyoshi, a master carpenter turned teacher of Japanese architecture at the College of Engineering. It was Kigo, according to Cherie Wendelken, who first made Itō aware of the importance of Japanese architectural history and the importance of shrine and temple design for creating buildings suited to Japan. From 1902–5 Itō had traveled through much of Asia, including China, Southeast Asia, India, Central Asia, and Turkey, studying the pan-Asian roots of Japanese architecture (Wendelken 1996 and 2000). Following his three-year world tour Itō worked with some of the most important Buddhist clerics, including Shaku Kōzen, Ōtani Kōzui, and Hioki Mokusen, all of whom had also traveled to other parts of Asia. Itō was one of the most influential architects of his day, planning the main shrine buildings at the Meiji and Heian Shrines, the memorial for victims of the Great Tokyo Earthquake of 1923 (Shinsai Kinendō), and the Tsukiji Honganji. In 1943 Itō was awarded the Order of Culture Prize (Bunka Kunshō) for his achievements, the first architect to receive that honor.

For almost a third of a century, Ōtani Kōzui (1876–1948) was one of Itō's most important architectural influences, patrons, and collaborators. The twenty-second head of the Nishi Honganji, Kōzui was an avid explorer of continental Asia, bringing back large quantities of archaeological and textual materials, particularly from Dunhuang. Kōzui, with his strong interests in exploration, world travel, and international proselytization, is one of the personalities that tied together many of the pan-Asian architectural structures examined in this article. A man of enormous talent and ambition, Kōzui had free access to the deep pockets of the Nishi Honganji, one of the largest, wealthiest, and most actively missionary of the Japanese Buddhist denominations. As a result of his wealth and flamboyance, he was frequently a subject for the popular press, which according to one contemporaneous source, "turns to his latest doings when no subject of more immediately exciting character is at hand to titillate the reader" (*The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, October 17, 1929, 414). Kōzui remained an ardent supporter of Japanese expansion on the Asian continent throughout his life. Although removed from his position as head of the Nishi Honganji in 1914 for his fiscal extravagance, he remained influential in sectarian and government circles. In 1919 he founded a society, the Kōjukai. The vigorously expansionist group, which published the journal *Daijō* in Shanghai, aimed to promote Japanese expansionism throughout Asia. Kōzui also served as "supreme advisor" to Sun Yat-sen's government and, later, as a councilor in the Konoe cabinet and on the Greater East Asia Construction Council (Daitōa Kensetsu Shingikai) in 1942. As a result of his support for Japanese imperialism in Asia, the Occupation authorities purged Kōzui from office after Japan's defeat in 1945.

Kōzui and Itō got to know each other through two members of Kōzui's Central Asian expedition, whom Itō had met while in Yangsong (near Yunan Province), China, in late 1903. In the summer of 1906, one year after his return to Japan, Kōzui, then the head of the denomination, invited Itō to the Nishi Honganji. This marked the start of a long collaboration between the two men. Toward the end of the Meiji period (1868–1912), Itō and Kōzui collaborated on two similar “Indo-Saracen,” Mughal-style buildings. One of these structures, the Shinshū Parishioners’ Insurance Corporation (Shinshū Shinto Seimei Kabushiki Kaisha; today, Tokyo Life), completed in 1912, is still extant today near the main gate of the Nishi Honganji’s head temple in Kyoto (Kamekawa 2000, 111–14). The two-story brick structure was highlighted with white stone detailing, a common feature in Queen Anne Revival-style buildings that were popular in mid-Meiji Japan. But the Shinshū Parishioners’ building also featured arched windows and tiled, domed roofs that alluded to Indian architectural traditions (Kurakata 2003, 37–8).

Beginning in 1908 Kōzui and the Nishi Honganji affiliated architect Ukai Chōsabrō, along with Itō as an advisor, collaborated on another massive project, the construction of Kōzui’s villa (*bessō*), Nirakusō, in the foothills of the Rokkō mountains outside Kōbe in Hyōgo Prefecture. Kōzui, who had been struggling with members of the Nishi Honganji establishment over proposed institutional reforms and, increasingly, his fiscal extravagances, envisioned the expansive estate as a future center for the education of young, talented Shin clerics. The sprawling villa complex had estimated building costs of ¥300,000—approximately US\$73 million today. In addition to such “necessities” as tennis courts, the villa also included facilities for processing the materials brought back to Japan by Kōzui’s various Asian expeditions, a meteorological station, and a horticultural laboratory. Inside the main building of the villa, in true Euro-American imperial style were a variety of rooms decorated in



keeping with regional themes, for example an Arabia room, a China room, an Egypt room, a modern English room, and an India room. After being forced out of his position as head of the Nishi Honganji for financial malfeasance in 1914, Kōzui sold the estate and dispersed much of its contents. In 1932, a disastrous fire destroyed the main buildings of the estate (Ashiya Shiritsu Bijutsu Hakubutsukan 2003, 39; 146).

In articles published not long after the completion of the main buildings in 1913, Itō and Ukai characterized the exterior design for the building as "Indo-Saracen" (*Indosaracen*) (Itō 1913, 1). According to the Nirakusō exhibition catalogue published by the Ashiya Museum of Art, the main building was modeled after Akbar-period (late sixteenth century) Indian Mughal architecture, particularly the onion-shaped domes of the Taj Mahal (seventeenth century) (Ashiya Shiritsu Bijutsu Hakubutsukan 2003, 39). In choosing the so-called "Indo-Saracenic" style of architecture for both the Shinshū Parishioners' Insurance building and the main building at the Nirakusō, Itō and Kōzui gave these buildings a clearly Asian and yet, for Japan, an exotic character.

In adopting the Indo-Saracenic style for buildings in Japan, Itō and his collaborators were not breaking entirely new ground. Rather, they were following the lead of Josiah Conder, an important lecturer in architecture at the Engineering School of Tokyo University. Conder had incorporated "oriental" design elements in one of his most famous Japanese buildings, the Rokumeikan, which was completed in 1883. Conder's design for the Ueno Imperial Museum (1881) also was remarkable for what he called its "pseudo-Saracenic" features. In so doing, according to Toshio Watanabe, Conder ignored his Japanese patrons' expectations that the buildings would be purely "Western" and, therefore, "modern" (Tseng 2004; Watanabe 1996, 25).

Although Itō and Kōzui were clearly inspired by such monumental structures as the Taj Mahal, much of the "Indo-Saracenic" architecture that Kōzui and Itō would have seen did not pre-date British colonial rule. Beginning in the 1870s the British colonial architects constructed many public buildings, colleges, and museums in the Raj in this style. Although the term "Indo-Saracenic" referred to pre-British Mughal architecture in India, by the 1870s it also had come to describe a prominent style of British colonial architecture developed specifically for the Raj. In this more recent incarnation, "Indo-Saracenic architecture" described a hybrid form of construction created by such British architects as Major Charles Mant, Robert Chisholm, and William Emerson. In keeping with long-standing architectural practice in much of Europe, proponents of the style attempted to meld the best features of Hindu and Islamic architecture in India with the engineering expertise of European builders (Tillotson 1994, 33). Although not without its critics, who argued for a more assertively European or British form of construction in the colonies, British colonial architects completed numerous colleges, museums, government buildings, palaces, and villas

in the Indo-Saracenic style. In an analysis of Indo-Saracenic architecture in India Thomas R. Metcalf observes that the style, like much orientalist practice, rode roughshod over nuances of architectural regionality and period. "Unlike the 'pure Hindu' style, the 'mixed' Indo-Saracenic ideally suited the British vision of their colonial role in India. By drawing together and then melding forms distinctly labeled 'Hindu' and 'Saracenic,' the British saw themselves, the self-proclaimed masters of India's culture, as shaping a harmony the Indians alone, communally divided, could not achieve" (Metcalf 1989, 75).⁴ While utilizing older styles of architecture for decorative purposes, Indo-Saracenic buildings also drew upon the most advanced forms of engineering technology and expertise. The result was a pastiche of traditional forms constructed using the latest techniques and materials. In this fashion, the Indo-Saracenic buildings constructed by Kōzui and Itō, while evoking wider Asia, particularly India, also reflected colonial and imperial power as projected through the lens of British discourse.

Itō Chūta and the Construction of the Nation-protecting Stupa at Kasuisai

At the same time that Itō was collaborating with Kōzui, he was also experimenting on a number of projects with other clerics who, like Kōzui, had been bitten by the "Asia bug." Although the web of connections is not entirely clear, many of those who commissioned Itō to design Buddhist monuments or temple buildings had, like Kōzui, traveled or resided in South and Southeast Asia for extended periods of time. Shaku Kōzen for example laid out plans with Itō to construct a Shakuōden (Śākyamuni Hall) to house some of the numerous Śākyamuni Buddha images that King Chulalongkorn of Siam had given to him. Although the building was never constructed because of financial constraints, Itō drew up plans for a Siamese-style Buddha hall to be placed on a hill overlooking the Sanneji compound in Yokohama (Jaffe 2004, 88–90).

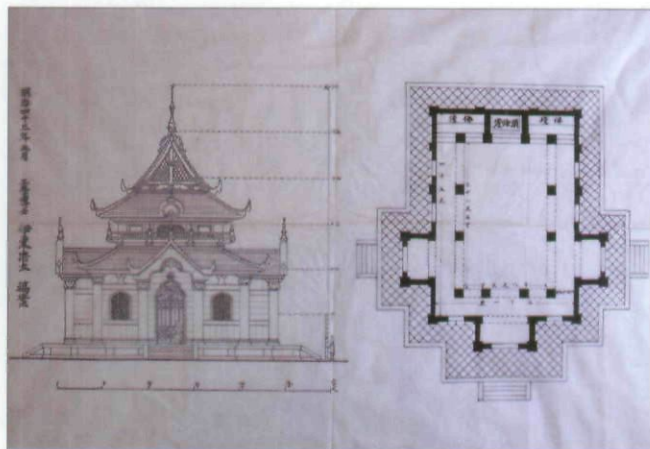


FIG 2
Itō Chūta's plans for the Shakuōden at Sanneji,
Yokohama. Source: Author, 2002. Courtesy of the
Department of Architecture, Tokyo University.



FIG 3
Gokoku-tō at Kasuisai, Fukuroi, Shizuoka
Prefecture. Source: Author, 2006.

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Concurrent with his Nishi Honganji projects, Itō also worked closely with the important Sōtō cleric, Hioki Mokusen, the incumbent of Kasuisai, a large, historically significant temple complex in Fukuroi, Shizuoka Prefecture, in central Honshū. Hioki, like Kōzui and Kōzen, had traveled to continental Asia on several occasions: once to receive the purported relics of Śākyamuni that had passed from the British to the Siamese to Japanese Buddhists and, again, to tour the Northeast Asian battlefields of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5) in order to pray for the repose of the nearly 80,000 deceased Japanese soldiers. Upon returning to Japan, Hioki assembled a group of 166 donors and supporters drawn from all over Japan that included a significant number of members from the military, the Diet, the bureaucracy, as well as private citizens to fund the construction of a Buddhist memorial for the war dead. The committee in charge of planning the stupa chose Hioki's



FIG 4
Shōgyōden at Hokekyōji, Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture.
Source: Author, 2006.

temple, Kasuisai, as the site for the memorial. They also employed Itō Chūta to design the “*gokokutō*,” literally, a “nation-protecting stupa,” to house the remains and effects of the Japanese war dead (*Gokokutō Hōsankai* n.d., 1–3).

The stupa at Kasuisai, which was completed in February 1911, represented one early Buddhist effort to compete with state Shinto for the privilege of honoring the war dead (*Gokokutō Hōsankai* n.d., 5). Unlike the few Buddhist monuments for the war dead that preceded it, for example the pagoda to house and honor the remains of dead Sino-Japanese War (1894–5) soldiers at the Gokokuji in Tokyo, the Kasuisai monument was what Itō referred to as a “Gandhara” stupa. In 1908 at a planning meeting for the construction of the stupa at Kasuisai, Itō suggested a style reflecting Indian-Gandharan Buddhist architecture because it was from Gandhara that Buddhism had spread to China at the start of the Common Era and, later, from China, to Japan. In effect, Itō claimed, Gandhara was the “mother country” (*bokoku*) for Japanese Buddhism. Not only did the Gandharan style reflect the Indian origins of Buddhist architecture. Itō asserted at the planning meeting for the Kasuisai stupa that the Chinese-style pagoda, so prevalent in Japan, did not clearly express Buddhism’s Indian origins. Hence, the Gandharan-style stupa was more appropriate for the “nation-protecting stupa” at Kasuisai and, one must assume, for the very similar structure he later designed for the Nissenji, and the nearly identical Shōgyōden (completed 1931) at the Hokekyōji, an important Nichiren temple in Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture.

Itō published one of his most detailed explanations of his Buddhist monument and temple design rationale in an article

in the journal *Nihon bijutsu* in 1911. There he elaborated the practical and the symbolic concerns that entered into his plans for the nation-protecting stupa. Exigencies of function and cost played important roles in Itō's choice of the Gandharan style for his structure. Unlike the traditional East Asian stupa, the Gandharan stupa had a much broader and taller base in proportion to the rest of the structure, which would allow it to accommodate the various relics of the war dead collected by Hioki (Itō 1911, 1). Money was another important practical consideration for the private group that was erecting the stupa. In order to economize, Itō drew up plans to build the dome of the stupa out of reinforced concrete, a relatively new construction material in late-Meiji Japan. Thus the base of the stupa was made of stone blocks, while the dome itself was poured reinforced concrete. Itō viewed the combination of old and new materials in a structure and the employment of new materials in traditional temple or shrine architectural forms as important elements in the development of a "hybrid" religious architecture, which he called "the eclecticism of old and new" (*shinkyū setchū*), a sort of architectural bricolage (*yoseatsume*). Itō saw this as a way to move religious, particularly Buddhist, architecture forward in Japan, after hundreds of years of stagnation and repetition (Itō 1937, vol. 1, 336; Itō 1911, 2). In effect the stupa recapitulated Buddhist architectural history and moved beyond it.

Itō's arguments for the Gandharan stupa reveal an attempt to transcend what he argued was a provincial, limited Sinitic form of Buddhism, symbolized by the three- or five-story pagoda, through the return to a Buddhist architectural model that was far closer to its Indian roots. The return to the Gandharan style had the added advantage, according to Itō, that it was not a form biased toward one particular denomination of Japanese Buddhism. Instead, the Indian form of the stupa was transnational and trans-sectarian in nature. Even further, Itō argued in his watershed 1891 study of the Hōryūji, Gandharan Buddhist art was a product of the fusion of Greek-Macedonian art with Indian Buddhist art (Itō 1937, vol. 1, 7). Thus by tracing Japanese Buddhist architecture back to its Gandharan origins, Japanese Buddhist architecture could be tied to "classic" Greek and, therefore, "Western" culture.

Of course privileging the Gandharan-Indian aspects of Buddhist architectural history elided Japan's indebtedness to the Buddhisms of Korea and China. The recuperation of the Indian tradition had the added advantage that in India, unlike China, Korea, and elsewhere in East Asia, few Buddhists were left to contest the growing Japanese Buddhist triumphalism. Itō's stupa "concretized" the growing number of Japanese assertions that only in Japan could one find the scholarship, complete collections of texts, and even temple architecture necessary for encompassing all of the pan-Asian Buddhist tradition.

Nissenji: The Japan-Siam temple

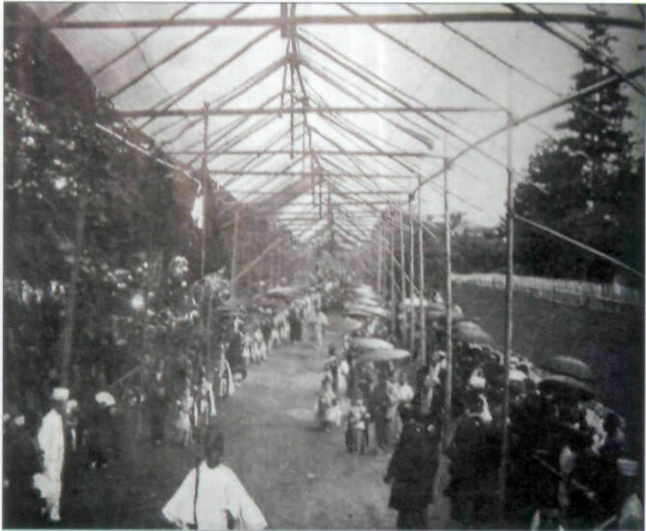
One of the most publicly prominent Buddhist monuments built by Itō was the Gandharan-style granite memorial stupa (*hōantō*) that enshrined relics gifted to Japan by King Chulalongkorn of Siam. The British gave the relics, purportedly those of Śākyamuni, to the Siamese monarch after their discovery by William C. Peppé in India in 1898. King Chulalongkorn then distributed portions of the relics to the Burmese and Sri Lankan Buddhist communities. Inagaki Manjirō, the Japanese ambassador to Thailand, was on hand to witness the transfer of the relics and subsequently requested a share for Japan as well. In his letter informing the Japanese Buddhist leadership that the relics would be transferred to Japan, Inagaki stressed that the event would enable Buddhism, which was one of the three great world religions, to further expand and strengthen by uniting "Northern" and "Southern" Buddhists in their reverence for the historical Buddha (Komuro 1903, 50–52).

At the order of the Meiji government, the Japanese Buddhist community assembled a mission of leading Buddhist clerics to go to Siam to receive the relics from Chulalongkorn in June 1900. The group of eighteen clerics, which was led by the prominent Higashi-Honganji cleric, Ōtani Kōen, also included Hioki Mokusen, incumbent of Kasuisai, and Nanjō Bun'yū, a Jōdo Shin scholar-cleric who had studied at Oxford with Max Müller. Upon returning to Japan on July 11, 1900, the relics were temporarily displayed in Nagasaki and then brought to Osaka, where once again they were shown to eager crowds of clerics and parishioners at the temple Shitennōji. On July 19 the relics were taken to Kyoto by rail and then carried to Higashi Honganji, in close proximity to Kyoto Station. From that temple, a group of approximately 30,000 clerics, Buddhist students, dignitaries, and musicians assembled to form the procession that would take the relics to their temporary resting place, the important Tendai temple, Myōhōin, some 2 kilometers away in the Higashiyama section of Kyoto. An estimated crowd of 200,000 onlookers—many in town for the famous Gion Festival as well—lined the route of the procession, hoping to catch a glimpse of the relics (Katō 2000, 100, 200; Spooner 1901, 585–92).

Although the relics arrived at their temporary resting place in Kyoto in the summer of 1900, it took years until the representatives of the various denominations of Japanese Buddhism resolved to move them to a final site in Nagoya, a region that had been favored by Hioki Mokusen. There they were enshrined in a novel sort of temple, a pan-sectarian one, named Nissenji, that is the Japan-Siam temple. (In 1939 when Siam became Thailand, the name of Nissenji was changed to its current name, Nittaiji, Japan-Thai temple.) At the temple, the Japanese enshrined as the principal image a "1,000-year-old" Thai gilt Buddha that had been presented to the Japanese when King Chulalongkorn learned the relics would be housed in a brand-new pan-sectarian temple in Japan. It was not until 1914 that ground breaking for the construction of the final memorial stupa to house the relics was begun.

FIG 5

Procession carrying the relics of Sākyamuni from the Higashi Honganji to the Myōhōin in Kyoto. Source: *Overland Monthly* 37 (1901).



To house the relics at the Nissenji, Itō, as he had done at the Kasuisai, designed a fifteen-meter-tall, granite Gandharan-style memorial stupa (*hōantō*) that was completed in 1918.

Itō's Indian-inflected design was not restricted to domestic structures alone. Although, as I have mentioned, he worked with patrons from a variety of denominations, Kōzui and the Nishi Honganji remained his most frequent collaborators. With greater wealth—despite Kōzui's financial profligacy—than most denominations and increasingly expansive plans for overseas missions on the Asian continent and in the United States, Nishi Honganji officials collaborated directly with Itō and built upon his and Kōzui's vision to design a series of unprecedented temples. Itō for example worked with Nishi Honganji officials to plan branch temples (*betsuin*) in Dalian (1907), Zhenxi (1911), and Hong Kong (1912) as the denomination expanded in continental Asia. Perhaps for reasons of cost, none of these temples was completed

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FIG 6

Sākyamuni Buddha image in the main hall at Nittaiji, Nagoya. Source: Author, 2006. Courtesy of Nittaiji.



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FIG 7

Hōantō at Nittaiji. Source: Author, 2006.
Courtesy of Nittaiji.



as planned. The Hong Kong Betsuin (1912), which, like the Nirakusō, was designed primarily by Ukai Chōsabrō with Itō's assistance, combines clearly Asian steeples with Euro-American church-like elements, a feature that the Nishi Honganji would use again in the 1930 Kōbe Betsuin (see next section). Although the three overseas temples that Itō helped design never were built, the extant architectural plans reflect the same sort of eclecticism visible in Nishi Honganji domestic and overseas temples that were completed. One such structure was the clearly Indian-influenced Nishi Honganji Shanghai Betsuin, which was designed by Okano Shigehisa and completed in 1931. The Honolulu Betsuin, constructed in 1918, was designed by two American architects under the supervision of the Nishi Honganji missionary, Imamura Emyō (1866–1932), and provides another example of the eclectic style of temple building that had become popular within the Nishi Honganji during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods. The Nishi Honganji Honolulu Betsuin combined

FIG 8

Nishi Honganji Shanghai Betsuin.
Source: Author, 2006. Courtesy of the
Ryūkoku University Library.



Indian and Western styles to create a hybrid temple that reflected Hawaiian Buddhism's Japanese roots and American future. George Tanabe suggests that Imamura believed this sort of hybrid architecture reflected the universality of "true religion," which rose above any individual national culture and was symbolic of the Shin triumphalism and universalism as preached by Imamura and another influential Hawaiian Shin Buddhist, Ryūsaku Tsunoda (Tanabe 2002, 8–9).

Modan Dera: The "Modern Temple"

The ongoing interest in developing a pan-Asian or even global style of Buddhist architecture within the ranks of the Nishi Honganji clergy is clearly demonstrated by the construction of the Honganji Kōbe Betsuin—Zenpukuji—an important branch

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FIG 9

Nishi Honganji Honolulu Betsuin.
Source: Moriya Tomoe, 2006.



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FIG 10

Nishi Honganji Kōbe Betsuin (Modan Dera).
Courtesy of Nishi Honganji Kōbe Betsuin.



temple that was completed in 1930. The temple, which quickly became known in the Kōbe area as “*Modan Dera*,” that is Modern Temple, was built to replace the original temple building that was destroyed by fire in 1917. The incumbent at the temple during the planning and construction of the new building was Ōtani Son’yu, Kōzui’s younger brother, who had collaborated closely with Kōzui on a number of projects. According to a lengthy newspaper article published several days after the dedication of the new building, it was the temple manager (*kanji*), Fujii Hōshin, who had spent a number of years as a missionary in Oregon, who planned the structure. In close proximity to the Tōkaidō railway line, the temple displayed the city and Japan’s cosmopolitan Buddhist modernity to rail passengers. Similar in style to Itō and Ukai’s plans for the Hong Kong Betsuin, the building was extremely eclectic, with a Euro-American church-like exterior, complete with stained-glass windows in addition to the clearly Asian-style steeples. On both sides of the entrance to the temple were two bronze bas-reliefs of Amida’s attendant bodhisattvas, Kannon (Avalokiteśvara) and Seishi (Mahāsthāmaprāpta) (*Kōbe shinbun* 1930, 8). In effect, the temple building, flanked by the two bodhisattvas, took the place of Amida Buddha in the traditional triad consisting of Amida and his attendants.

The altars in the main temple hall of the Modan Dera were equally novel and unique. Combining painting, calligraphy, and sculpture in a fascinating brew, Fujii Hōshin brought together central elements of Shin altar design with decorative elements that evoked Japanese Buddhism’s Asian past and hoped-for future. Like many Shin temples, the worship hall at the Modan Dera contains three subaltars, with the central one dedicated to Amida and the others dedicated to Shinran, and, in this instance, the former chief incumbent of the Nishi Honganji at the time of the temple’s reconstruction, Ōtani Kōzui. The structure of the altars reiterates the Indian and Southeast Asian influences of the exterior design, with each

FIG 11

Inner worship area of the Nishi Honganji Kōbe Betsuin. Source: Author, 2005. (The inner worship area was rebuilt in 1996 along with the temple building following the 1995 Kōbe Earthquake. The original 1930 altars, *ranma*, and other fixtures have been preserved.)

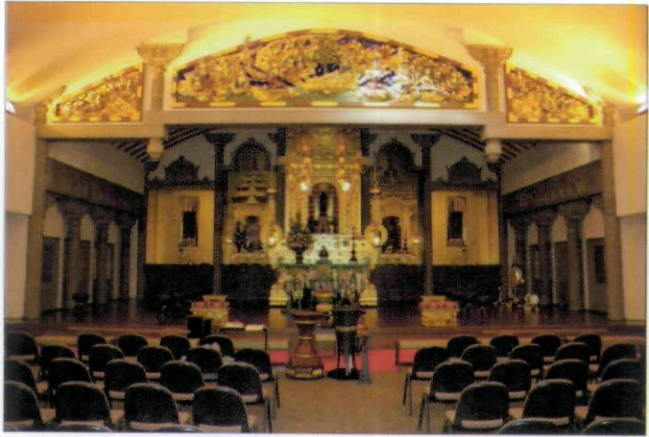


FIG 12

Detail of the Central Altar of the Nishi Honganji Kōbe Betsuin. Source: Author, 2005.

of the three altar units crowned with a Southeast Asian-style steeple. The designs of all three of the golden altar units were based upon well-known Burmese temples (*Kōbe shinbun* 1930, 8). The central image of veneration was Amida Buddha, but the artwork conflates Amida and Śākyamuni, India and Japan, through the very creative use of Brāhmī script, the same script that was being revived by other Buddhists who had made the journey to South Asia (Jaffe 2004, 90). At the Modan Dera, the curtains of the altar unit (*kūden*) containing the standing image of Amida are decorated with script copied from the Aśokan pillar at Lumbinī, the birthplace of the historical Buddha. Members of one of Kōzui's expeditions to Buddhist sites in India and Nepal had made a rubbing of the inscription on the pillar and had brought it back to Japan, where it is still extant. The pillar inscription is very matter of fact, simply recording that Aśoka, who had taken refuge in the Buddha, had made a pilgrimage to the spot of Śākyamuni's birth and erected the pillar. The overall effect of this juxtaposition of Brāhmī script and Amida is to link the two buddhas intimately at the time of Śākyamuni's birth and to express the deep connection between the Nishi Honganji, as representative of Jōdo Shin Buddhism, and the very origins of the tradition.

The same assertion is echoed by the "Descent of Amida" (*raigō*) relief sculpture that decorates the transom (*ranma*) at the entrance to the inner altar area. Katayama Chōbei, the sculptor, closely followed the famous painting, the twelfth-century *Amida shōju raigō zu*, depicting the descent of Amida and his retinue, which is preserved on Mt. Kōya, Wakayama Prefecture. Notable for its mere presence in a Shin temple, where "Descent of Amida" scenes are rare, the polychrome sculpture depicts the usual scene of Amida descending to accompany a dying aspirant to the Pure Land. Instead of placing an image of Amida at the center of the scene, as is typical of traditional *raigō* paintings, the artist has substituted a bodhi tree, the symbol of Śākyamuni that was common in early Buddhist depictions of Bodh Gayā. The

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FIG 13
Detail of the carved transom (*ranma*) at the Nishi
Honganji Kōbe Betsuin. Source: Author, 2005.

scene thus reinforced the connection between Amida and Japanese Buddhism and the very origins of the religion as it was increasingly understood in European, American, and Japanese scholarly circles.

At least two of the major newspaper articles describing the dedication of Zempukuji emphasize above all else the “modern” features of the building. As noted above, Kōbe residents soon dubbed the building, Modan Dera, that is “Modern Temple,” thus equating its unprecedented, Asian-inflected, European-hybrid design with modernity itself. The reporter for the local *Kōbe shinbun* also emphasized the modernity of the new temple, commenting, “one must say that this new style, as one that is appropriate for the new age, will provide an epoch-making impulse to the history of temple architecture” (*Kōbe shinbun* 1930, 8). Contemporaneous newspaper accounts agreed that the new Zempukuji had a variety of features that made it well suited to life in the modern, cosmopolitan seaport of Kōbe. For one thing, several reporters noted, unlike other recently constructed temples, Modan Dera allowed busy parishioners and visitors to enter the main hall of the temple to pay obeisance to “Oyasama,” that is Amida Buddha, without having to remove their shoes. Like other designers of innovative temples constructed in the wake of the 1923 Kantō Earthquake, Fujii and his co-designers built the outer worship area (*gejin*) of the main hall (*hondō*) to allow visitors to worship without removing their shoes or sitting on tatami. The temple was up to date in other regards as well. Takayama Aya, writing in *Chūgai nippō*, noted that the building also included a classroom for youth religious education and a sizeable library. In a rather humorous aside, Takayama remarked that the temple was equipped with sanitary flush toilets that were so modern, “not even Daimaru or Mitsukoshi [Department Stores] have them yet” (Takayama 1930, 2).

FIG 14

Nishi Honganji Tsukiji Betsuin. Source: Author, 2005.



Itō's greatest achievement in Buddhist architecture, the Tsukiji Honganji, which was completed in 1934 in Tokyo, reflects the same effort visible in Itō's earlier architectural ventures. In the Tsukiji Honganji we see Itō asserting Japanese ties with broader Asian and European architectural traditions, while underplaying the traditional elements in Japanese temple architecture. Cherie Wendelken, in a reflective article about the temple, notes that to Itō,

Japanese culture reflected a developmental progression from India through China to its culmination in Japan, and through India, Japan was linked to the West. Itō believed that Japanese architecture needed to reclaim and express this history in order to achieve what he called the next stage of development. He described this as "Eastern architecture adjusted to Japanese needs". (Wendelken 2000, 821–2)

Writing for a volume to commemorate the completion of the temple, Kitao Harumichi, an architectural critic, proclaimed that Itō had transcended the old, traditional forms to create a "splendidly elegant new Buddhist architecture possessing the fundamental expression of pure Mahayana Buddhism" (Kitao 1934, 1).

Public Display of Pan-Asian Buddhist Material Culture and Architecture in Japan

Even though many of these temples and monuments are all but forgotten today, even among art and architectural historians of Japan, the limited evidence available indicates that in prewar Japan these sites became significant points of interest for the general public. Many of the buildings influenced by "Indianism" in Japan became focal points for exhibitions, enshrinement ceremonies, and pilgrimages associated with pan-Asian Buddhism. In November 1912, to mention one very early event, Kōzui opened the newly completed main building of the Nirakusō for an exhibition of the villa, including a number of objects acquired during his Central Asian and Indian expeditions. Articles in the *Osaka mainichi shinbun* gave a room-by-room description of the villa, including the exotic contents on display. Photographs

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FIG 15
Woodblock map of Nissenji in Nagoya. Created by
Hamashima Jitsujirō, 1921. Source: Author, 2006.
Courtesy of the Aichi Prefectural Library.

in the newspaper show large crowds, which, on the second day of the exhibition, numbered some 2,000 people by 8 a.m. Throngs filled the trains heading to the closest station, forcing people to employ rickshaws to reach the foot of the mountain. Over the course of the two days when Nirakusō was open to the public, reporters for the *Osaka mainichi shinbun* estimated that 31,000 people visited the estate (Ashiya Shiritsu Bijutsu Hakubutsukan 1999, 68).

The Nissenji also drew large crowds for special ceremonies, enshrinements, and other occasions. As a symbol of amity between the Siamese and the Japanese people, government officials at all levels and Buddhist leaders gave full support to major events at the temple, particularly when they involved visits by members of the Siamese royal family. Judging from Hamashima Jitsujirō's 1921 poster advertising the temple, for example, it is clear that promoters of Nissenji placed the temple alongside the Nagoya castle as one of the important tourist attractions in the growing Nagoya region. More significantly, events celebrating the relationship between Siam and Japan drew large numbers of the general public, reinforcing the image of Japan as part of a broader Buddhist Asia.

One such event was the reception in 1927 of a new gold Buddha image that King Rama VII (aka Prajadhipok, 1893–1941) donated to Nissenji. As with other instances of public displays associated with these pan-Asian Buddhist sites, the celebrations surrounding the arrival of the Buddha image clearly demonstrate how the exhibition of Buddhism's

pan-Asian reach touched the lives of the broader Japanese public (Katō 2000, 155–7). When the train bearing the statue from Siam arrived at Nagoya Station on November 6, a sizeable crowd was on hand to greet the Buddha image. The statue was placed in a portable shrine (*mikoshi*) that was drawn by oxen from Nagoya Station to Nissenji. In addition to a group of 12,000 clerics and parishioners from the various denominations of Japanese Buddhism, a contingent of approximately 11,000 singers, students, confraternity members, and high-ranking clerical leaders were on hand at the station to take part in the procession for the 1-kilometer journey to Nissenji. The event was extraordinarily popular, as an estimated crowd of 100,000 people lined the procession route to Nissenji on that fine, sunny autumn Sunday. People continued to flock to Nissenji to see the statue, which was on display for several weeks after the event, and to attend the three-day ceremony welcoming the image to the temple (Katō 2000, 155–7).

Nissenji also became a required stop for visiting dignitaries from Thailand, for example an official delegation that came to Nagoya in 1934 at a time of deepening Thai–Japan economic, military, and cultural cooperation. During the visit, the mayor of Nagoya reminded his visitors that,

Above all it is the greatest glory of our citizens that we have the Nissenji Temple at Kakwozan [Kakuōzan] in the north-eastern part of the city, which is famous for that part of the sacred ashes of Buddha, presented several years ago from your country, and to see many devout followers of Buddhism visiting the temple every day reminds us of the mystic brotherliness of the two nations worshipping as one. We hope you may all understand that great joy and sense of gratitude with which we all meet you here at this sacred city, where the Soul of Buddha reposes. ("Address of welcome" 1934)

Similarly, the Tsukiji Honganji, with its large open plaza that served as a convenient gathering place for crowds, became a symbol of pan-Asianism, Japanese ascendancy, and the global reach of Japanese Buddhism. When a pan-Pacific meeting of the Young Buddhist Association was held in Tokyo in 1934, it was convened at the Tsukiji Honganji for these very reasons. The Buddhist journal, *The Young East*, which was aimed at the English-speaking Buddhist world, including South and Southeast Asia, announced that,

It is interesting to note that this giant structure differs entirely in every respect from other temple buildings in Japan and has many characteristic features of its own and peculiar to the ancient Indian Buddhist Vihara to which it resembles more than any other style, and is therefore a direct importation from the land of the all enlightened one.

Truly a sublime and imposing cream colored dome standing against the background of the azure sky, at once an apt symbol of earnest faith of thousands of devotees and the untiring labor of those who devoted their entire energy rebuilding from the ashes of the great catastrophe of 1923, and last of all but not least an appropriate form in awakening a deep devotional feeling to

those who happen to gaze upon it. Another noteworthy feature of the building is none other than the crystallization of that spirit predominant in this school since its foundation and which is amply testified by History, the pioneering spirit always in the vanguard of civilization and the leader and guide of the current thought. ("A general view" 1934, 1)

Conclusions

Between the middle of the Meiji era through the start of the Pacific War in Asia in 1937, Buddhist material culture, particularly Buddhist architecture, played a significant role in displaying and disseminating the view of Buddhism as a pan-Asian tradition with a global future. In its attention to the wider Asian sphere, Japanese temple architecture mirrored the inexorable expansion of Japan into Asia through the outright colonization of Taiwan and Korea and the ever more ambitious incursions in China. Although not ignoring past Sinitic architectural influence completely, the new temple architecture of the twentieth century embraced a South Asian Buddhist architectural past that for centuries had been relatively unknown in Japan and a Southeast Asian Buddhist present that was increasingly important to the Japanese. The absorption of European and American architectural elements, particularly in such buildings as Modan Dera, Tsukiji Honganji, and the Shinshū Parishioners' Life building, also demonstrated the missionary aspirations of Japanese Buddhists, many of whom desired to make Buddhism more than just a "world religion" in name.

As we can see in the architectural examples detailed above, Japanese Buddhist leaders were exceedingly resourceful in their adaptation of the latest archaeological and scholarly studies—not just European and American ones, but increasingly their own—to the various liturgical, doctrinal, and scholarly demands of their own religious organizations. By displaying the latest archaeological finds within the frame of their own specific liturgical practices, Japanese Buddhist leaders were able to stress the connection between current practices and a venerable Indian-South Asian past that was the focus of much European and American orientalist scholarship. In drawing upon Asian architectural models, some of which, for example the Indo-Saracen, were themselves the product of the European colonial vision, the Japanese were able to embrace Asia as the source of their civilization while downplaying the long-standing connection between Japanese Buddhist temple architecture and Sinitic architectural models. Finally, through the very process of picking and choosing from a palette of Asian architectural motifs, Japanese temple builders asserted the supremacy and power of Japan, while expressing solidarity with the rest of Asia.

The motivations driving the construction of a pan-Asianism were clearly conflicted. Temples such as Nissenji, which trumpeted the common ground between Japanese Buddhists and the rest of Asia, grew out of a sentiment that, as Rebecca Karl noted, was "rooted in non-state-centered

practices and in non-national-chauvinist culturalism" (Karl 1998, 1,097). The construction of Buddhist pan-Asian architecture, particularly in the Indian-inflected style that characterized many of the overseas missions and important branch temples of the Nishi Honganji, is an example of how, as Prasenjit Duara has recently described, nationalism, while deeply rooted in the idea of a universal civilization, in this case a Buddhist one, appropriated those same ideas for "expansionist purposes" (Duara 2001, 100).

These examples also demonstrate the need for us to move beyond simple models of bipolar exchange and Euro-American influences in the creation of Japanese modernity. The construction of the "modern" in Japan—a project in which Buddhists had an important, if overlooked, role—involved not only the importation and transculturation of practices encountered in the "far West," that is Europe and the United States. In a significant way, as we have seen, the formation of the Buddhist modern in Japan also involved a turning to the "South West," namely South and Southeast Asia. For the Japanese the "*modan*" was signified not only by clearly European-style buildings like Tokyo Station or the Akasaka Detached Palace (Akasaka Rikyū). The modern could also be found in the eclectic Zenpukuji/Modan Dera, with its Burmese-style roofline. There, weary visitors to the cosmopolitan port of Kōbe could find both relief in the presence of Amida Buddha without removing their shoes and relieve themselves using the very latest in sanitary plumbing.

Appendix: Glossary of Sino-Japanese Terms

<i>Amida shōju raigō zu</i>	阿弥陀聖衆來迎図
Bunka Kunshō	文化勲章
<i>Daijō</i>	大乘
Fujii Hōshin	藤井芳信
<i>haibutsu kishaku</i>	廃仏毀釈
Hantaihei'yō Bukkyō	汎太平洋仏教
Hantaihei'yō Bukkyō Seinen Kai	汎太平洋仏教青年会
<i>hōantō</i>	奉安塔
Imamura Emyō	今村恵猛
Itō Chūta	伊東忠太
<i>kanji</i>	監事
Kōjukai	光寿会
<i>kūden</i>	空殿
Nirakusō	二楽荘
Nissenji	日蓮寺
Nittaiji	日泰寺
Ōtani Kōzui	大谷光瑞
<i>raigō</i>	來迎
<i>ranma</i>	欄間
<i>shinkyū setchū</i>	新旧折衷
Shinsai Kinendō	震災記念堂
Shinshū Shinto Seimei Kabushiki Kaisha	真宗信徒生命株式会社
Shōgyōden	聖教殿
Tenjiku	天竺
Ukai Chōsaborō	鵜飼長三郎
Yangsang	楊松
<i>yoseatsume</i>	寄せ集め
Zenpukuji	善福寺

notes and references

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² See for example the works of Ketelaar 1990 and Snodgrass 2003.

³ See for example Almond 1988; King 1999; Lopez 1995; Masuzawa 2005.

⁴ Tillotson (1994, 33) contends that we should be careful about reading too much orientalism into the Indo-Saracenic style, as the sort of borrowing and homogenizing advocated by its proponents also was common practice in domestic European architecture.

A general view of the new Honganji building at Tsukiji Tokyo where the second pan-Pacific Y.B.A. conference will take place. 1934. *Young East* (July–September): 1.

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