Buddhist Contramodernism: Reconfigurations of Tradition for Modernity

Casey R. Collins
University of British Columbia

Shinnyo-en, and other twentieth-century Buddhist lay movements emerging from older monastic and temple institutions, reconfigures elements of "traditional" Buddhism and "folk" religion to meet the conditions of modernity. Shinnyo-en's founders and their successors envisioned a particular strategy for being Buddhist in modernity, one which aligns with some, but not all, scholarly characterizations of Buddhist modernism. As a result, Shinnyo-en and other lay organizations have largely remained on the margins of Buddhist studies despite their apparent popularity and proliferation. This article offers a new category for theorizing and positioning such organizations as *contramodern*—connected with, but divergent from mainstream forms of Buddhist modernism. In this light the emergence of Shinnyo-en in the 1930s, and the soteriological centrality of its founders' lives, can be better understood in their historical and social contexts as being both connected to over one-thousand years of Shingon tradition and completely unique. The concept of contramodernism opens scholarly discussion of the many forms of Buddhism extant in modernity to those movements and organizations that are historically new, yet not entirely modernist.

Keywords: Shinnyo-en: Shingon: Buddhist modernism: contramodernism: new religions

T he concept of contramodernism I introduce in this article is intended to open studies of contemporary Buddhism to studies of Buddhist "new religions," their founders, the identities they inform, and Buddhist communities that defy the boundaries of Buddhist modernism. A new category, or at least a new way of thinking about contemporary forms of Buddhism, is needed because not all contemporary Buddhisms are modernist. Indeed, many Buddhist organizations, lineages, groups, and individual temples see ritual, interaction with deities, devotion to founders, and other magical practices as the most effective means for modern people to achieve Buddhist goals. In this article, I take up the case of Shinnyo-en as an example of Buddhist

contramodernism.[1] In Japan and beyond, Shinnyo-en and other twentieth-century Buddhist lay movements emerging from older monastic and temple institutions reconfigure elements of "traditional" Buddhism and "folk" religion to meet the conditions of modernity. These reconfigurations—emerging from the experiences of a charismatic leader—are patterned on emic Buddhist doctrinal hierarchies that privilege a particular lineage, practice, or scripture as the most potent means for achieving enlightenment in a particular era.[2]

Not all new Buddhist groups that have been called "new religions" are contramodernist. This category does not function as a surrogate for "new religion." Rather, it denotes a particular soteriological orientation toward modernity that is distinctly *not* modernist. In the case of a contramodernist Buddhism, Buddhist goals are articulated, realized, and mediated through the framework of a charismatic leader's lived experiences. Thus, Gedatsukai is contramodernist and Sōka Gakkai is not. Jingak Jong is contramodernist, Won Buddhism is not. The True Buddha School is contramodernist, Foguangshan is not.[3] The category can also be applied to individuals or texts within a contemporary tradition—one Tendai teacher may have a modernist orientation, while another might be called a contramodernist. Using Shinnyo-en as an example, this article will illuminate what I see as the significant distinctions among the many different Buddhist responses to modernity and recommend the application and development of contramodernism as a conceptual category for religious studies.

Similar to modernist Buddhist reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,[4] the charismatic founders of contramodernist Buddhist organizations sought a revitalization of Buddhism. On one hand, modernist reformers (e.g., Inoue Enyō 井上円了 [1858–1919], Hara Tanzan 原担山 [1819–1892]) advocated for the modernization of Buddhism through education, social movements, and the reform of extant Buddhist institutions. Contramodernist reformers (e.g., Itō

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[1] Other examples include Gedatsukai 解脱会 (Earhart, 1989), Agonshū 阿含宗 (Reader, 1988; Baffelli and Reader, 2019), Risshō Kōseikai 立正佼成会 (Morioka, 1994), Sanbōkyōdan 三宝教団 (Sharf, 1995; Guthrie, 1988), Shinrankai 親鸞会, Bentenshū 辯天宗, and many other organizations that remain understudied. In Japan, many of these organiziations and other marginalized "new religions" (*shin shūkyō* 新宗教) were in dialogue with one another, aware that they were Buddhist yet also ostracized. One official body that facilitated connections and communication among its member organizations is the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan (Shin Nihon Shūkyō Kyōdan Rengokai 新日本宗教団体連合会). Due to the limitation of space I offer Shinnyo-en here as an example (not the prototype) of a contramodernist Buddhism.

[2] The justification for innovations or doctrinal hierarchy (Jpn. *kyōsetsu* 教説)—a well-established pattern in Buddhist discourse—often has to do with the effectiveness of the new practice for attaining enlightenment within contemporary social conditions.

[3] Due to the limitations of space I cannot go into detail for each of these East Asian cases from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, respectively. I hope that experts on each of these traditions might consider whether my claim here is true. For example, it could be argued that while Sōka Gakkai may not have begun as a contramodernist lay movement, increasing emphasis on the charismatic Daisaku Ikeda's life and personality (devotional nostalgia), the reframing of his relationship to members as a guru-like teacher (alternative social network), and the miraculous power of chanting the *daimoku* (re-enchantment of the world) may suggest that Sōka Gakkai is *becoming* contramodernist.

[4] See Shields (2017) on progressive and radical trends within the Buddhist Enlightenment movement (*bukkyō keimō katsudō* 仏教啓蒙活動), which Shields places between 1886 and 1911. This movement was driven by the "writings and activities of paradigm scholars and scholar-priests" (Shields, 2017: 33).

Shinjō 伊藤真乗 [1906–1989], Kiriyama Seiyū 桐山靖雄 [1921–2016]), on the other hand, founded new organizations based on the pattern of confraternities (kō 講), teaching assemblies (kyōkai 教会), and lay societies (kessha 結社),[5] and sought to modernize Buddhism through their own experiences and insights. I call these contramodernist founders "charismatic" because they—their personalities, bodies, activities, and sacred biographies—inspire a devotion that itself becomes the means for salvation for their followers. Followers are specifically and repeatedly taught to internalize and replicate the charismatic leader's experiences and the reconfigurations of tradition they discovered as the most effective or complete form of Buddhism in modernity.[6] Regarding Kiriyama Seiyū, the founder of Agonshū, Erica Baffelli and Ian Reader write:

> His personal experiences not only provided the basis around which Agonshū emerged and developed; they also form the framework around which followers should deal with their own lives, following his example, performing his rituals, and, now, venerating his spirit and relics. They indicate that Agonshū is not simply a religion founded by Kiriyama but a religion of Kiriyama, in which he remains alive and present. (2019: 160)

For a contramodernist Buddhist, the charismatic leader's experiences and understanding are "universal and applicable to all," even as they draw upon "Japanese concepts grounded in the folk and Buddhist realms, about karma, ancestors, and the spirits of the dead, and on practices found in Japanese traditions such as mountain asceticism, esoteric Buddhism and ancestor veneration rituals" (Baffelli and Reader 2019: 159). Recognizably Buddhist rituals, narratives, objects, and concepts are reconfigured in relation to the body, experiences, and presence of a sacred person, a charismatic leader, who is believed to have accomplished the revitalization of Buddhism in the twentieth century. This revitalization takes place not through modernist excision of "superstition" and ritual, or solely through appeals to Buddhism's affinity with science and reason, but through a revaluation of ritual and the promise of an immediate experience of something magical that cannot be explained rationally.

Contramodernist forms of Buddhism are independent from established Buddhist institutions and align with some, but not all, scholarly characterizations of Buddhist modernism.[7] The founders

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[5] See Ikeda (1998).

[6] Baffelli and Reader refer to Agonshū as a "founder veneration movement," and a "personalized religion, born out of Kiriyama's experiences" (2019: 158–159). These terms highlight central features of organizations like Agonshū, which I would call a form of Buddhist contramodernism. The term contramodernism is meant to clarify Agonshū's relationship to Buddhist modernism, its orientation within modernity, and its place within the broader landscape of contemporary Buddhism. Contramodernism addresses veneration for charismatic founders by theorizing what such veneration accomplishes for a religious institution and its adherents. Namely: that veneration (which I call devotional nostalgia) distinguishes the movement from other forms of Buddhism because it creates alternative social networks and re-enchants the world.

[7] The information about Shinnyo-en presented in this article was gathered between April 2005 and December 2012, during which time I was a member of Shinnyo-en. Between September 2009 and December 2012 I lived in Tachikawa and worked at Shinnyo-en's headquarters with their Doctrine and Media Resources team, which was a special office within the International Affairs Department responsible for translation and publication of non-Japanese materials.

of Shinnyo-en, for example, considered specific Buddhist roles, concepts, and practices as appropriate methods for adapting Buddhism to modernity, but they reconfigured those features independently of established Buddhist institutions, a strategy that distinguished Shinnyo-en from mainstream Buddhist modernisms.[8] Forms of Buddhist contramodernism, including the Shingon-inspired Shinnyo-en 真如苑,[9] elude the overly simple "traditional" versus "modern" opposition. This is because events in their charismatic founders' lives—miraculous, effervescent, even revolutionary—become for their followers the means for tradition to become immediately accessible, relevant, and powerful.[10] Members of Shinnyo-en are taught to emulate and embody the lives of its founders, Shinjō and Tomoji Itō, who are not only reformers and modernizers, but objects of devotion and the means of salvation. Buddhist contramodernist movements are based on their founders' reactions to perceived shortcomings of modernity and modern Buddhism. These movements, and the identities informed by them, can be understood through their relation to modernism: divergent, against—*contra*.

In his introduction to *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, David McMahan outlines several formulations of Buddhist modernism. McMahan lists features such as emphasis on reason, meditation, the rediscovery of canonical texts, the de-emphasis on ritual, image worship, and "folk" beliefs, alignment with social reform and nationalism, emphasis on the individual, laicization, and urbanization (2008: 7–8). Many of these characteristics of Buddhist modernism were articulated in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century discourses in Asia, encompassing social, political, and economic projects, as well as religious reform. Examples include the "Protestant Buddhism" of Sri Lanka, the "New Buddhism" (*shin bukkyō* 新仏教) of Japan, and the "People's Buddhism" (*minjung bulgyo* 민중불교) of Korea, each of which enjoyed widespread (although not unchallenged) support among intellectuals, politicians, clerics, and laypeople. Contemporaneous with these discussions and reforms was the formation of new lay-oriented communities that coalesced around charismatic founders who in most cases championed some, but not all, of their tenets. Instead, they adopted and reconfigured roles (e.g., a thaumaturgic sage or medium), concepts (e.g., the altruistic bodhisattva ideal), and practices (e.g., esoteric Buddhist fire offerings) as more powerful or appropriate means of

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This all took place before I became a graduate student. What I present here cannot really be called an ethnography or the notes of a participant-observer. Rather, I offer my perspective on Shinnyo-en based on my own experiences during my membership (which included time spent at Shinnyo-en institutions in Japan, Canada, France, Singapore, San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Honolulu), on English and Japanese publications and scholarship, and on notes that I took during sermons and other Shinnyo-en activities.

[8] When referring to the Buddhist mainstream in this article, I have in mind monastic and temple institutions that were founded centuries ago and which derive their legitimacy in part through their history and lineages. I also include modernist forms of Buddhism that do not primarily distinguish themselves with reference to their founder. This category is also negotiated by governments that sanction religion.

[9] Shingon 真言 Buddhism was started by the monk Kūkai 空海 (774–835, commonly known as Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師) in the ninth century. It is one of Japan's Vajrayāna, or Tantric, Buddhist traditions. For more on Shingon, see Yamasaki (1988) and Hakeda (1972).

[10] Agonshū is another example of Buddhist contramodernism that centralizes the life experiences of its founder as the most effective means for being Buddhist in modernity. For more on Agonshū see Reader (1988) and Baffelli and Reader (2019).

practicing Buddhism in modernity.[11] In this article, I hope to expand on McMahan's work by focusing on Shinnyo-en and similar Buddhist lay organizations that do not quite, or only partially, fit McMahan's model.

Shinnyo-en is structured as a voluntary association primarily based on devotion to a founder/teacher whose life experiences *become* the paradigmatic solutions to the problems of modernity and the source of individual salvation (Earhart 1989: 9). This structure—directly tied to a charismatic founder and their supernormal experiences, ontological status, and/or the novel practices or powers they teach or extend to the world—diverges from historical Buddhist institutions and places Shinnyo-en on the margins of "established" Buddhism and mainstream forms of Buddhist modernism. Japanese scholars, newspapers, and governments have labeled Shinnyo-en and similar organizations "new religions" (*shin shūkyō* 新宗教) in an attempt to avoid the more pejorative associations of other popular terms, such as cult (*karuto kyōdan* カルト教団), superstition (*meishin* 迷信), pseudo-religion (*ruiji shūkyō* 類似宗教), heresy (*itan* 異端; *jakyō* 邪教), or even cult of personality (*kojin sūhai* 個人崇拝).[12] Yet, while this label of *shin shūkyō* has allowed academics, the media, and governments to refer discreetly to communities based upon what has been taken for granted as somehow aberrant religion, mention of these Buddhist movements tends to be absent in studies of Buddhist modernism in Japan. Japan is the *locus classicus* for the academic study of new religions worldwide. When case studies of "new religions" (e.g., McFarland 1967, Hardacre 1986, Earhart 1989) have been conducted, they often point to how these movements are "modern" yet highly particular responses to the upheavals of modernity. On the other hand, the universalistic rhetoric of modern Japanese religious movements has been juxtaposed with their Japan-centric particularism to suggest that they are, in fact, tacitly anti-modern reactions to the crisis of rapid modernization (Cornille 1999: 2000). However, while these studies have provided glimpses of new religions and their members, no link is made with broader takes on Buddhist modernism.

I argue that a clearer understanding of large but marginalized Buddhist movements comes to light when they, too, are acknowledged as forms of Buddhism in modernity. The large lay movements of early twentieth century Japan stand out in contrast to the strategies and configurations of Buddhist modernism adopted by contemporaneous reformers, even as they too sought to make Buddhism relevant and vital within modernity—they are examples of a Buddhist *contramodernism.*

What I mean to say is that these movements *are* modern, but differently so. Members of these movements are neither nightstand Buddhists, nor are they temple Buddhists affiliated with a centuries-old sect or school. They are neither modernist (fully aligned with rationalism, science, egalitarianism, etc.), nor are they antimodernist (rejecting secular democratic values, science, technology, etc.). The movements to which they belong are neither Westernized forms of Buddhism (like James Coleman's "new Buddhism"), nor are they fully welcomed or counted among the modern

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[11] The term "modernity" is itself deeply contested in a number of fields. Acknowledging that important ongoing conversation, I here use David McMahan's conception of Buddhist modernity and S. N. Eisenstadt's theory of "multiple modernities" (2000) as a starting point for introducing contramodernism as a further intervention in the discourse on Buddhism in modernity.

[12] For more on the Meiji era discourse on religion, secularism, and superstition, see Josephson (2012).

Buddhist mainstream. This is despite the fact that several of these are transnational movements claiming hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of members, extensive properties, universities, hospitals, and sophisticated media output. They are distinguished from Buddhist modernism, however, by the unique innovations and centrality of their founders, the implications of which are discussed below in contrast to the values that scholars consider so central to Buddhist modernism. By introducing the conceptual category of contramodernism and applying it to a lay Buddhist movement like Shinnyo-en, I highlight its similarities with mainstream Buddhist modernism, expressed through alternative social networks, devotional nostalgia, and re-enchantment of the world, all in reference to its charismatic founders.

Within the Scholarship of Buddhist Modernism

Despite the success of many contramodernist Buddhist organizations, scholars have yet to rigorously position these communities in relation to Buddhist modernism because those organizations are insufficiently theorized. For example, James Coleman (2001), although primarily focused on Buddhism in North America, divides Buddhism around the world into just two categories: "ethnic" and "new."[13] These categories, however, are deeply ideological, stratifying Buddhists around the world according to race and class, creating a model of Buddhism in modernity that consequently ignores anything and anyone who does not fall into either of the two camps. Coleman associates value with these strata, connecting ritualism, devotionalism, Asian ethnicity, and poverty with "ethnic" Buddhism. Within the category of "new" Buddhism he locates meditation, education, reason, and White middle-class affluence. Such a division is deeply problematic. The limitations of Coleman's model become apparent when applied to what I would characterize as a contramodernist movement. While considering the case of Sōka Gakkai, Coleman concedes that it seems to be "perched somewhere between" what he sees as the "ethnic" and "new": the ethnic, benefit-seeking Buddhism of Asian immigrants and the new, rational Buddhism of and for Westerners (Coleman 2001: 9; see endnote 3). Indeed, "somewhere-between" movements seem to be quite widespread in modernity. Surely their prevalence merits a more fine-grained analysis of their relationship to Buddhist modernism.

In scholarship focused on Japan, scholars have sought to identify the features and concerns of Meiji Buddhism, New Buddhism, and modern Buddhism, as in the work of Orion Klautau (2014, 2015), Ōmi Toshihiro 碧海寿広 (2010), and Iwata Fumiaki 岩田文昭 (Harding, Iwata, and Yoshinaga 2014). There is also the recent work of James Mark Shields (2017) on "progressive and radical Buddhism" in modern Japan. Each of these Buddhisms and the visions or values they capture is bounded by a larger discourse of modernization and nationalism in Japan that took place between 1868 and 1945.

McMahan's "Buddhist modernism" includes only those forms that "have emerged out of an engagement with the dominant cultural and intellectual forces of modernity" (2008: 6). I assert that

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[13] James Coleman's paradigm of Two Buddhisms (ethnic and new/convert) has been repeatedly criticized (see Numrich, 2003; Rocha, 2006; Hickey, 2010; Spencer, 2014; Han, 2017). I mention his work here, however, because these important critiques have not brought forth a separate category for groups and movements like Shinnyo-en, which Coleman sees as falling somewhere between his Two Buddhisms.

contramodernist groups emerged out of this engagement, too, but fall into a separate category because of how they reconfigure traditional and modernist elements of Buddhism specifically in relation to a charismatic founder. McMahan's Buddhist modernism involves a vision of Buddhism that emphasizes reason, meditation, and a rediscovery of classical texts, and de-emphasizes ritual, image worship, and "folk" beliefs (2008: 7–8). Contramodernist forms of Buddhism do something more complex: they are visions of Buddhism that consciously merge reason *and* folk, classic texts *and* new oral traditions. McMahan acknowledges that "The line demarcating a modernist from a traditionalist is often blurry and uneven," and "[m]odernist movements often do not set out to establish something new but on the contrary may claim to be casting off the new and reviving the old" (2008: 27). But contramodernist forms of Buddhism do indeed seek to carve out new spaces that are both within and against (i.e., *contra*) that modern mainstream. The founders of Shinnyo-en frequently acknowledged the novelty of their movement.[14] These forms of Buddhist modernism have created new Buddhist identities and networks, new buddhas and sacred sites, and new rituals often rooted in "folk" traditions. There is also an aspect of survival and defense in this merging. As the founders of contramodernist Buddhist movements reconfigured these elements and created new organizations, they were painfully aware of the stigma of being regarded as dangerous cults. It comes as no surprise then that Shinnyo-en has a tendency to publicly assert those of its features that align with mainstream Buddhist modernism and downplay or reserve for members that which is disdained or rejected by the same. Most controversial, of course, is the tremendous focus on its founders, their powers, and the gratitude members are taught to feel and express for them.

Without a new category, the scholarship of Buddhist modernism will continue to have trouble analyzing contramodernist movements. Indeed, such movements may not be open to collaboration with scholars precisely because there is no theoretical framework for understanding them in their own terms and as properly Buddhist. Such movements will continue to appear marginal, antimodern, deceptive, strange, or nefarious.[15] Learning to understand contramodernist forms of Buddhism (or any other religion for that matter) need not be a tacit endorsement of their beliefs, nor need it

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[14] "Until recently, Japanese esoteric Buddhism was represented by the two schools of Shingon and Tendai Buddhism. Now there is a third, a new esoteric movement born in the twentieth century, called 'Shinnyo esoteric Buddhism' (or simply 'Shinnyo esotericism' [*Shinnyo Mitsu*])" (Shinnyo-en, 2009: 509). Elsewhere I have framed the polysemous nature of Shinnyo-en in terms of two spaces, expressed in Shinnyo-en's emic metaphor of itself as a garden without borders (Collins, 2015).

[15] Particularly during the late twentieth-century, popular and academic discussion of new religions tended to focus, quite eagerly, on scandal, or what Jonathan Z. Smith referred to as "the pornography of religion" (1982: 109)—sensationalistic revelation of perversity, backwardness, or violence that scandalize modernist values. Speech about scandal in marginalized communities was, and continues to be, a kind of *euangelion* for mainstream modernity. The "good news" of a scandal is the ultimate delegitimizing evidence that once and for all settles any question of the vileness and illegitimacy of any marginal "cult" or its leaders, thereby reinforcing and justifying the mainstream. Be that as it may, the scholarship of new religious movements has advanced significantly since the cult scare of the 1980s. A large and growing body of scholarly work treats new religious movements seriously, as historical phenomena, without focusing on scandal. This article represents an effort to bring the studies of new religious movements and organizations into conversation with studies of Buddhist history, particularly those concerned with Buddhism and modernity.

represent sympathy with their activities. But without analyzing the religions at the fuzzy edges of Buddhist modernism, it will remain unclear how Buddhist modernism is itself mutually constructed *contra* that which it has rejected or deprioritized.

Contramodernism

As a first effort at exploring the concept of contramodernist Buddhist movements as a subtype of Buddhist modernism, this article examines how the founders of Shinnyo-en, Shinjō 真乗 and Tomoji Itō 友司伊藤, created a form of Buddhism in the mid-twentieth century that seems to sit somewhere at the margins of mainstream Buddhist modernism. Three features of Shinnyo-en—each related to what are believed to be the Itōs' unique experiences and powers—are important here: its alternative social networks, its devotional nostalgia for the founders, and its practices that re-enchant the world. I define Buddhist movements as contramodernist when they reconfigure rituals, concepts, texts, and practices through the lens of a charismatic founders' lived experience, which their followers revere and perform as an appropriate form of modern Buddhist practice and identity. Contramodernist Buddhist rhetoric might be inclusive, but claims its own methods, originating with or rediscovered by a charismatic founder, as the most effective for modernity.[16] "Contramodernism" is a concept intended to complicate the traditional-modern binary in specific ways, to acknowledge the tremendous vitality of religious communities that may not fit neatly into current conceptions of "Buddhism" or "Buddhist modernism," and to challenge the view that Buddhism in modernity is neatly aligned with either a monolithic modernism (the West) or traditionalism (the East).[17]

Contramodernism for these communities (whether religious or otherwise) provides a framework for living within secular modernity while consciously resisting, rejecting, reconfiguring, or subverting certain aspects of mainstream modernities without opposing modernism altogether.[18] Contramodernism should be distinguished from anti-modernism, which is a complete rejection of modernity through either isolation or violent opposition. On the contrary, contramodernist communities are often prosocial and at least nominally committed to progressive values (e.g., secular

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[16] Many Mahāyāna doxographies are inclusive but place one practice or school at the pinnacle, portraying it as the best, most powerful, or easiest way to practice Buddhism. A similar structure is visible here. The Itōs expressed the simultaneous inclusivity and superiority of the Shinnyo teachings using the language and metaphors of "embracement" (*shōju* 摂受) found in the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Daijō daihatsunehan kyō* 大乗大般涅槃経, hereafter simply the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*). The Itōs adopted the five-part canonical classification system called *goji hakkyō setsu* 五時八教説 developed by the Tiantai monk Zhìyǐ 智顗, which places the *Lotus* and *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*s at the pinnacle of the Buddha's teachings, only the Itōs asserted that the teachings of the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, which they considered synonymous with their own teachings, are superior to those of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Shinnyo-en, 2009: 102–3).

[17] S. N. Eisenstadt argues: "One of the most important implications of the term 'multiple modernities' is that modernity and Westernization are not identical; Western patterns of modernity are not the only 'authentic' modernities, though they enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference point for others" (2000: 2–3).

[18] There are of course concepts similar to contramodernism that have been explored in other fields. Contramodernism could be meaningfully compared with concepts such as queerness, counterculture, or counterpolis. I see contramodernism as distinct from these insofar as it highlights how, in this case, religious communities or their founders articulate concerns with modernity itself while not rejecting modernity altogether.

democracy, technology, egalitarianism). Rather than disengage from society, contramodernist Buddhists make society a primarily spiritual space for self-cultivation, reimagined as a Buddhist mandala, for example.

The prefix *contra-* is intended to avoid the potentially pejorative relational connotations of other options such as anti-, pseudo-, semi-, inter-, counter-, or quasi-. I specifically want to avoid any suggestion that Shinnyo-en, or similar organizations, are corruptions or bastardizations, not to be taken seriously. Innovation and reconfiguration are undoubtedly centuries-old features of Buddhism in East Asia. It would not be correct to argue, however, that every instance of religious innovation in the history of Japanese Buddhism has been contramodernist. We may delineate a subset of twentieth-century organizations and movements as contramodernist insofar as they are conscious, deliberate, and selective reconfigurations of tradition for modernity, all in reference to a charismatic founder.

The prefix *contra-* has a variety of evocative meanings that might help generate new metaphors for conceptualizing how non-mainstream religious traditions relate to mainstream religions or historical traditions, even as both exist in, and respond to, modernity in different ways. In the entry for *contra-* in *The Oxford English Dictionary* we find that this prefix refers to something that is against or opposed to something else. *Contra* can also refer to one underground vein of ore that crosses another in a mine. Using this sense, contramodernism connotes depth and divergence—simultaneous depth of historical precedent and divergence from other veins. This meaning is helpful in distinguishing contramodernism from anti-modernism. Where the former is connected to, but divergent from, modernism, anti-modernism represents a separate set of political and doctrinal projects centered on the desire to reverse, resist, or destroy modernity. Contramodernist Buddhist communities exist alongside other modernisms within modernity, even while they consciously adopt practices and beliefs aimed at surmounting what are felt to be the various challenges of modernity. In music, *contra* denotes "parts marked on the stave alongside (above or below) and opposite to" other parts, or "a pitch of an octave below." Contramodernisms are thus frameworks that exist within and in relation to mainstream, dominant forms of modernism, or can be thought of as behind and beneath the same.

Shinnyo-en couches its own teachings in the idiom, aesthetic, and organizational structures of Buddhist modernism, but articulates its doctrines in relation to its founders. For example, a Buddhist modernist reformer might place a statue of Śākyamuni on their altar. A reclining image of Śākyamuni is also central in every Shinnyo-en temple and home altar, but it is a particular image of Śākyamuni: one carved by Shinjō Itō himself. Shinjō did not simply foreground Śākyamuni in an effort to return to Buddhism's roots, as other modernist reformers have done. To members, it is not so important that it is an image of Śākyamuni on the altar, but that Shinjō carved the image. Hidden in the statue's texture, the shape of its hands and face, are Shinjō's fingerprints and Tomoji's likeness. When members sit before it, they are told to imagine themselves before Śākyamuni, receiving his last teachings, *and* they are reminded of the events in the Itōs' lives leading up to Shinjō's creation of the image itself. And it is these very events in the founders' lives that provide the framework for their followers' self-cultivation, dispositions, decisions, and sentiments. Contramodernist reformers like the Itōs differ from their modernist contemporaries because they have become objects of devotion

concealed within or equated with Buddhist referents, and the details of their lives become the means for salvation—the Dharma itself.

The Itōs and their successors insist that they *are* Buddhist, and see themselves as proclaiming a true Buddhism for the modern world. They innovated and taught *contra* what they believed were ineffective Buddhist sects and practices, rendered useless and irrelevant by a world that was changing around them, unable to provide salvation and enlightenment, and weak in the face of colonial and imperial threats from abroad. To them, efforts to modernize Buddhism were already outdated and doomed to irrelevance because they were lacking the social connections, emotional affects, and powerful rituals they believed to have been available in pre-modernity. Unable, unwilling, or uninterested in pursuing change within established Buddhism, they chose to create a new organization without completely abandoning the inherited ritual, textual, and material culture of Shingon and Japan's other religious traditions.

Shinnyo-en

Shinnyo-en began in 1930s' Japan with the Itōs and a small group of their followers. Although they formally affiliated themselves with the Daigo branch (*Daigo-ha* 醍醐派) of the Shingon school (*Shingon-shū* 真言宗) for legal expediency during the Second World War, they became independent in 1952. Shinnyo-en is today one of Japan's largest new religions with temples and members around the globe.[19] Shinnyo-en's practices and beliefs revolve around the lives and teachings of its founders, the Itō family, who are central to Shinnyo-en soteriology. Here, I will introduce the Itōs and then provide examples of what I argue are the contramodernist features of Shinnyo-en: its alternative social network based on fictive kin relationships with the Itōs and other members, the devotional nostalgia for the Itōs that is so central to Shinnyo-en, and the unique practices the Itōs created to reinvigorate Buddhism in the face of modernity and to re-enchant the modern world.

Shinnyo-en's charismatic founders, Shinjō and Tomoji Itō, were born and raised in neighboring villages in Yamanashi prefecture, surrounded by the Yatsugatake mountains. Many of Shinnyo-en's beliefs and practices come from the spiritual culture of the Itōs' rural upbringing and their family traditions. They first attracted a small following during the mid-1930s when they began performing healings and shamanic consultations in their home in Tachikawa. During the late 1930s and 1940s, Shinnyo-en cultivated close ties with various Shingon and Shugendō 修験道[20] establishments as Shinjō underwent training at Daigoji 醍醐寺, a historically important Shingon monastic complex just south of Kyoto. This affiliation and the priestly status Daigoji conferred upon Shinjō guaranteed legal status for the Itōs' community and activities.

The Itōs and their supporters were aware of the group's position with respect to Buddhist modernism, the Shingon establishment, and the Shōwa-period government. Shinjō indicted established forms of Buddhism as ineffective and unable to provide meaning or real solutions in an

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[19] In 2019 the Agency for Cultural Affairs reported 938,156 members (Bunkachō, 2019: 71).

[20] Shugendō is a syncretic tradition believed to have been started by the semi-mythical En-no-gyōja 役の行者 (also known as Jinben 神辺). Shugendō involves magico-ascetic practices conducted in sacred mountain ranges, and many Shugendō lineages have for at least several centuries been associated with Buddhist temples.

increasingly globalized world. The rituals the Itōs conducted in their home were believed to materially improve the lives of those who came to them for healings, divination, exorcism, or to seek prosperity and other material benefits. These activities inevitably attracted the attention of neighbors and the police, who in the mid-1930s regarded any private religious meetings as a punishable and traitorous state crime, especially ones that involved unauthorized religious activities officially regarded at the time as superstitious and dangerous to the nation.[21] After rumors began to spread and police suspicion was aroused, the Itōs decided in 1935 that it would be necessary and expedient to enshrine a Buddhist statue and become affiliated with an established Buddhist institution recognized by the Imperial Government. During the next four years, Shinjō obtained clerical credentials through Daigoji.[22] Nevertheless, the stigma associated with the Itōs' religious fervor, their innovations, and the devotion they received from their followers did not diminish as Shinnyo-en grew in the ensuing decades.

During the 1940s, the Itōs' seminal group grew from a confraternity centered on Shingon practices and linked to specific Shingon temples (first Naritasan Shinshōji and later Daigoji), into a sizeable independent community centered chiefly on the Itōs' personalities and powers. After the Allied Occupation and following a protracted legal battle involving Shinjō's alleged beating of a disciple in 1950, Shinnyo-en reorganized and renamed itself (Shinnyo-en, 2009: 401–410). Tomoji became the official leader of Shinnyo-en, while Shinjō acted as its head priest. Shinnyo-en adopted the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* as its scriptural locus, Śākyamuni as its main image of worship, and a modern aesthetic that eschewed the disciplines of Shingon monasticism and scholasticism. Shinjō began wearing Western suits at most services rather than monastic robes, and the community banded together to build a new, larger facility that looked more like a community hall than a Buddhist temple.

As Shinnyo-en continued to grow and build new temples in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, the Itōs used television, stage lighting, and the latest audio-visual technologies to enhance religious services that were both traditional and contemporary (Itō 2010: 75). Even now, more than thirty years after Shinjō passed away, members receive formal dharma transmission from Shinjō via video recording, in which Shinnyo-en's firm commitment to tradition and the authenticity of Shinjō's status as a Buddhist preceptor—now eternally present through video media—are emphasized. Even as he insisted in sermons and in his writing that Shinnyo-en is an independent tradition, Shinjō always maintained that Shinnyo-en preserves a legitimate lineage connection to Shingon Buddhism through his own training at Daigoji (Itō 1977a, 1977b, 1979). There is even now a Shinnyo Samaya Hall (Shinnyo Sanmayadō 真如三昧耶堂) at Daigoji, dedicated on September 11, 1997, with busts of the Itōs and a

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[21] See Josephson (2012).

[22] This selection was made in consultation with Hōkai Urano 法海浦野, to whom Shinjō was introduced by a priest named Shuko Obori. Urano took the Itōs under his wing and assisted with their religious activities for several years (Shinnyo-en, 2009: 379). Daigoji was selected because of its association with Shugendō and charismatic reformers. The founder of Gedatsukai, Eizō Okano 岡野英蔵 also trained at Daigoji and was ordained there in 1942 (Earhart, 1989: 33–36).

reclining Buddha image enshrined within, which Shinsō and members refer to as proof of Shinnyo-en's status as a legitimate lineage derived from Daigoji (Itō Shinsō 1997).

In other areas, too, as we shall see below, Shinnyo-en reconfigures well-known characteristics of mainstream Buddhist modernism and the traditional or the folk. The Itōs frequently addressed traditional Japanese Buddhist and folk rituals familiar to the early Shinnyo-en community. Rather than discarding these traditions, the Itōs encouraged their revival, so long as they were correctly understood in light of the Itōs' lives and their modern, rational approach to central Buddhist teachings such as the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. Shinnyo-en maintains connections to Shingon Buddhism and Japanese folk practices, but realizes their modernization independent of Daigoji, and through devotion to the Itōs, who are always and everywhere at the center in Shinnyo-en. Shinnyo-en thus occupies a space of both/neither, offering its members an alternative social network that is familiar and connected to Shingon, but outside of Shingon institution, based on nostalgic affect and esoteric practices that re-enchant the modern world specifically through devotion to the powers and personalities of the Itōs.

Shinnyo-en's founders admired efforts of early-twentieth-century Buddhist reformers. They shared in the excitement caused by the academic, modern rediscovery and re-characterization of the Buddha and of Shingon patriarchs of past eras. Shinnyo-en publications consistently portray Shinjō himself as a polymath of humble beginnings who achieved scientific and artistic sophistication but abandoned them for the sake of serving humanity as a religious leader. In addition to reading classical Buddhist texts, he also claimed to have read an entire Buddhist encyclopedia while he was imprisoned in the early 1950s, and he frequently mentioned Buddhist newspapers such as the *Chūgai Nippō* 中外日報 and *Rokudai Shinpō* 六大新報 in his sermons (Itō 1968).

Shinnyo-en is not, however, simply a modernized Shingon Buddhism. For example, while the latter might look to Kūkai and his disciples as relatable objects of devotion who prefigure but embody modernist values, Shinnyo-en looks to the Itōs, who both embody and supersede those values. Shinjō, like other modern Shingon clerics, is legitimized through his lineage connection to Kūkai and other Shingon figures, but the historical narrative is progressive: Shinjō created something new, just as Kūkai and even the Buddha himself surpassed their contemporaries. It is no surprise that Shinjō and his disciples even mobilized instances of reform within Shingon history, drawing parallels between Shinjō and the twelfth-century figure Kakuban 覚鑁, who challenged corruption on Mount Kōya and established a new sect, even in the face of great adversity and personal risk (Itō, 1965; 1978).

Alternative Social Networks

Contramodernist forms of Buddhism instantiate social networks that diverge from established Buddhist institutional hierarchies and provide their members with a layer of identity below (*contra-*) or within the other components of their identity. When a person joins Shinnyo-en, it is usually through the introduction of another person who is currently a member. The new member is placed under the guidance of the person who introduces them to Shinnyo-en. This mentor is called a "guiding parent" (*michibiki oya* 導き親), and the junior member is called their "guiding child" (*michibiki no ko* 導きの子). Guiding parents themselves have guiding parents, who also have guiding

parents, and so forth. All of these members belong to a lineage (*suji* 経) under the leadership of a lineage parent (*suji oya* 経親). Several lineages are organized into divisions (*bukai* 部会), which are in turn organized into districts (*kyōku* 教区). This system establishes members within a fictive kin relationship with the founding family and a Buddhist lineage hierarchy through the notions of dharma stream (*hōryū* 法流) and dharma bloodline (*kechimyaku* 血脈).

Shinjō and Tomoji, the original guiding parents, are themselves referred to as the Shinnyo Parents (*shinnyo sōoya-sama* 真如双親様). All of the original members of Shinnyo-en received direct, individual guidance and care—in many cases food, clothing, and shelter in addition to spiritual and practical advice—from the Itōs. Shinnyo-en sermons and publications such as *The Path of Oneness* (*Ichinyo no michi* 一如の道), or issues of periodicals like *Kangi Sekai* 歓喜世界 or *Naigai Jihō* 内外時報 abound with stories of receiving help and guidance from the Itōs either directly or through dreams and miracles. In Shinnyo-en's earliest days, the Itōs' teachings and kindness were framed as parental manifestations of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion. As Shinnyo-en grew too large for each member to interact directly with the Itōs, it became the responsibility of guiding parents to convey the Itō's "heart" (*mikokoro* みこころ) to their guiding children and to non-members through *otasuke* お助け (lit. "helping"), or proselytization.

Otasuke refers to "guiding" new members into Shinnyo-en and encouraging their consistent practice and enthusiastic participation. All members are encouraged to advance in their efforts at *otasuke* until, ideally, they become guiding and lineage parents themselves, with dozens or even scores of guiding children under their care. The lineage system and the social networks it creates are an extension of the parental role that the Itōs themselves fulfilled as spiritual advisors when Shinnyo-en was still small enough for them to provide each member with individual guidance and attention. Connecting a person to Shinnyo-en entails taking on the role of the Shinnyo Parents as mentor and guide, roles that are described in Shinnyo-en publications[23] and retold in sermons, Chiryū Gakuin 智流学院[24] lectures, and at informal home meetings. Members are also reminded during services and meditation activities of the Itōs' hardships in guiding people to the Shinnyo-en teachings, tacitly admonishing them to make similar efforts in order to "repay" and "please" the Shinnyo Parents through emulation. This constant repetition preserves the charisma of the founding family and reinforces the sense of belonging to the Shinnyo-en family both while at Shinnyo-en and in everyday secular contexts.

Members obtain a new family when they join Shinnyo-en: the Itōs become one's spiritual parents, the Itōs' sons become one's benevolent older brothers, and the other members of one's lineage an extended family. The Itōs' sacred biography, which took place in modernity, is mapped onto one's own modern life as one adopts a calendrical cycle of services and observances all tied to events in the Itōs' lives. The Itōs' lives are therefore presented as an effective way of practicing Buddhism in modernity, more transformative than Japans' historical institutions, which the Itōs argued had been reduced to mere "funeral Buddhism," and more practical than mainstream Buddhist

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[23] See *The Path of Oneness* (Shinnyo-en, 2009), *A Wisteria Cluster* (Shinnyo-en, 1992), and *The Light in Each Moment* (Itō, 2010).

[24] Shinnyo-en's Dharma school; see Collins (2015: 45, 72–73).

modernism, which the Itōs regarded as overly cerebral. The community they created provides a person with another layer of identity not completely aligned with Buddhist modernism. The Shinnyo Parents are not merely modern Buddhist teachers, reformers, or leaders. To the members of the Shinnyo-en family, they are compassionate, ever-present spiritual beings whose lives have become the paradigmatic means and goal of Buddhist practice.

Devotional Nostalgia for the Founders

In addition to constantly reminding members of the Itōs at the temple, in publications, and with the clock and calendar, Shinnyo-en also teaches members to see the Itōs everywhere, all the time. This helps cultivate a sense of devotional nostalgia for the founders—their presence, their belongings, their time in history, and places associated with them, especially the Shinnyo-en headquarters in Tachikawa, called Oyasono (親苑, lit. "Parent Garden"). This type of nostalgic affect is contramodernist because it privileges the local, particular, and emotional above the global, universal, and rational. Whereas mainstream forms of Buddhist modernism emphasize the timelessness and universality of Buddhism, contramodernist forms of Buddhism retain an emphasis on particular places and figures who are imbued with universal significance. In Shinnyo-en, the Itōs are the nucleus of this nostalgia. Members are taught to detect their "ever-presence" (*jōjū* 常住) in everyday events wherever they are, and are also encouraged to strengthen their connection to the Itōs by visiting Oyasono, often referred to nostalgically as the "home" of each member's heart (*kokoro no furusato* 心の故郷).

Events in Tachikawa, such as building projects or a service, are the focus of Shinnyo-en's global community. Indeed, nearly every Shinnyo-en service at every temple throughout Japan and around the world is a recording of a service conducted by the Itōs' daughter Shinsō 真聰 (the current leader of Shinnyo-en) in Tachikawa. While branch temples maintain elaborate Shingon-style altars, no priest performs public rites there, as Shinsō does in Tachikawa. Instead, members watch a recorded service on large screens to either side of the altar. Before, during, and after the service, members are shown scenes of Tachikawa and the various Shinnyo-en facilities there. Gratuitous shots of Shinsō processing through the temple, often interspersed with footage of her father walking the same halls decades ago, are often met with tears, waving, and applause among attendees who are told to think of the screens as a link between them and their teacher. In many ways, visiting a Shinnyo-en temple connects the member to Oyasono and to the Itōs.

Ideally, reminders of the charismatic founding family reach beyond the rituals and ceremonies of the temple into one's daily life. Just as a Shingon initiate trains himself to understand everything in the phenomenal world as a manifestation of Mahāvairocana's body, speech, and mind, Shinnyo-en members learn to perceive the founding family's "ever-presence" in a variety of ways, especially through a kind of free association exercise understood in terms of mindfulness of and gratitude to the Itōs. Dates and the time of day, flowers, colors, numbers, songs, objects, and even shapes in the clouds can all trigger a feeling of the Itōs' presence or spiritual blessings. These triggers (called *riburai* リブライ, derived from the English word "reply") are largely part of an extensive oral tradition. Shinnyo-en's Facebook page ("Shinnyo Sangha International") provides glimpses of how members

train each other to see the Itōs in the clouds, in the numbers on their movie tickets, the time of day, or in the color of a flower.[25] Shinnyo-en selectively utilizes highly edited media to standardize and disseminate representations of normative emotional affects (e.g., enthusiasm, devotion, nostalgia). These are supplemented by the many mimetic triggers that members circulate among themselves through informal testimony of personal experiences of the Itōs' ever-presence, which accomplishes a re-enchantment of the world.

Re-enchantment of the World

Members also learn to see and feel the Itōs everywhere in the world through a variety of innovative practices and rituals. This re-enchantment is predicated on the belief that the spiritual world and the material world are not separate, and that Shinnyo-en's esoteric (*mikkyō* 密教) teachings, derived from Shingon and enhanced by the Itōs, enable one to overcome challenges and benefit others. The foremost example of this is Shinnyo-en's unique form of meditative training, called *sesshin*.

Not to be confused with the Zen practice of the same name, *sesshin* 接心 (lit. "to touch the heart") is Shinnyo-en's main meditative practice, which involves a trained spiritual guide (*reinōsha* 霊能者), and was invented by the Itōs (Shinnyo-en, 2009: 195–6). There are in fact two different types of *sesshin*. "Formal *sesshin*" (*usō sesshin* 有相接心) involves a spiritual guide and occurs at the temple. "Formless *sesshin*" (*musō sesshin* 無相接心) is daily contemplation and reflection inspired by what one learns in formal, or structured *sesshin*. The formal type of *sesshin* is conducted only inside a Shinnyo-en temple or other approved venue, with the assistance of a member who has been appointed as a spiritual guide. It is a ritualized experience through which Shinnyo-en communicates oral teachings related to the Itōs and their conceptions of Buddhist practice. The guidance one receives before and during *sesshin* training always refers to the Itō family and encourages the trainee to grow closer to the Itōs, remember specific events in their lives, feel gratitude toward them, emulate them, and tell other people about them. The experience of *sesshin* is believed to be tailored to the individual trainee through the spiritual guide's indescribable sympathetic intuitions perceived while in a state of spiritual communion (*nyūshin* 入神).

The form and content of *sesshin* is more or less concealed from non-members and beginners, as it is considered part of Shinnyo-en's esoteric teachings. One pamphlet for non-members, *What is Shinnyo-en?*, describes *sesshin* as follows:

> Shinnyo-en has its own unique form of meditation, called *sesshin* ("touching the essence"). It is performed with the aid of other followers who have trained enough to become spiritual guides (*reinōshas*) and act as spiritual mirrors for trainees in meditation. In short, *sesshin* helps people to look into themselves and strip away the

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[25] Simon Coleman (2000) addresses the roles of media and technology for global charismatic Christian communities. Coleman argues that official edited media helps depict and standardize the embodiment of an "idealized, generic enthusiasm" (2000: 172). This collective representation is then distributed globally and consumed by believers in ways that are not dissimilar to the consumption of mediated services and framing of identity in Shinnyo-en.

greed, anger and ignorance that may be clouding their Buddha-nature and preventing them from aspiring higher and developing themselves further. (Shinnyo-en 2003: 9)

Another pamphlet intended for members, *A Walk Through the Garden*, explains the Itōs' special role in creating and enabling *sesshin*:

The Shinnyo spiritual faculty activated in Shojuin-sama [Tomoji] worked as a key to unlock the door to the spiritual world. When Kyoshu-sama [Shinjō] and Shojuin-sama embarked on the religious path, both positive and negative forces flowed in as a result. However, with the passing of Kyodoin-sama [Chibun 智文], their first son, the negative forces came to be embraced. He went into a spiritual wilderness, and created an environment in which positive spiritual forces could manifest more easily to guide people. Later, after the passing of Sooya-sama's [双親様, i.e., Shinjō and Tomoji] second son, Shindoin-sama [Yūichi 友一], the conveyance of such spiritual power became much easier...Kyodoin-sama forged the path and made communication between this world and the spiritual world possible, and Shindoin-sama further enhanced and strengthened that path. (Shinnyo-en 1999: 44)

In contrast to the pamphlet for non-members, this selection emphasizes the roles the Itōs play in *sesshin*: they were essential to its creation and continuing function, and were endowed with extraordinary abilities that enabled them, and only them, to do so. *Sesshin* is presented here not so much as Buddhist meditation (at least not in the Buddhist modernist sense) but rather as a technique involving the afterlife, positive and negative spiritual forces, and communication between this world and the spiritual world, all of which are tied to the Itōs.[26] While the explanation for non-members alludes to Buddhist concepts (e.g., Buddha-nature, the three poisons), the explanation for members focuses on the unique role of the Itōs. Their unseen spiritual actions are presented as historical events. Although sometimes couched in concepts and terms deeply embedded in Buddhism, the vein of the Itōs' lives, deaths, and afterlives in the twentieth century *diverges* as a contramodernist articulation of those concepts.

Sesshin is one of Shinnyo-en's most distinctive features, but it reconfigures a number of Buddhist, Shugendō, and folk concepts and practices. It has not been uncommon in the history of Japanese religion for charismatic figures to combine elements of Buddhism, Shugendō, and folk religion (including mediumistic practices). These traditions by themselves or in combination are not new. Yet, while the Itōs mobilized recognizable aspects of Japanese religion as means to re-enchant Buddhism and the modern world, they did so in deliberate contrast to Buddhist modernism, which they felt was ineffectual, elitist, or corrupt.

Conclusion

I have argued here that the concept of contramodernism applies to religious organizations like Shinnyo-en, which reconfigure recognizable elements of Japanese religious traditions for modernity,

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[26] For more on *sesshin* see (Collins 2015: 54–63, 73–75).

as a form of Buddhism that is both rooted in and divergent from extant Buddhist institutions. The Itōs were aware of, and sympathetic to, many contemporaneous efforts to adapt or reform Buddhism in response to changing social and political conditions. They consciously and deliberately formed alternative social networks, attracted their followers' nostalgic devotion, and invented new rituals that re-enchanted industrialized, urban society. As the "parents" of Shinnyo-en, the Itōs became the charismatic core of their new community. They reconfigured concepts, texts, and practices adopted from Shingon, Shugendō, and other sources, and invented new ones like *sesshin* that allow followers to map the miraculousness of the Itōs' lives and ever-presence onto the world around them. Their sacred biography, internalized and embodied by their followers, became the framework for a distinct Buddhist identity that is thought to be well-suited to contemporary life. Due to the limitations of space, I have focused here on Shinnyo-en not as a prototype of Buddhist contramodernism but as a preliminary example. I anticipate that further exploration and articulations of contramodernism will bring much-needed nuance to the study of contemporary Buddhism.

Future study of contramodernist Buddhist groups may lead to a better understanding of how contemporary mainstream Buddhist identities, affects, aesthetics, rituals, architecture, etc. are themselves constructed in relation to the contramodernist religions against which they lean. Indeed, folk traditions and the "local" have seen a tremendous resurgence within mainstream Buddhist institutions as strategies for re-enchanting the world and attracting large numbers of followers (Park 2012). Future studies might explore how mainstream Buddhist institutions might be adopting some of the most attractive features of contramodernist Buddhisms, even as they reject others.

Further consideration of contramodernism may be helpful in understanding various social and religious phenomena outside Asia. Such movements and the people who create them provide a framework of values that are set *against* specific challenges and concerns not addressed by mainstream social or religious forms of modernism. In seeing these as *contra*modern—co-emergent, but divergent—their founders and followers become more meaningfully analysable.

Corresponding author:

Casey R. Collins
Department of Asian Studies
University of British Columbia
caseyrcollins@gmail.com

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