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## H.H. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and the Japanese Buddhists

### An Account and Analysis of Complicated Interactions

#### *Introduction*

On April 18, 2008, Buddhist priests of Zenkō-ji in Nagano reversed their initial decision to offer their temple as starting point for the Japan torch relay in preparation of the Olympic games in Beijing. This was eight days before the event was scheduled to take place. The priests provided two reasons for their refusal: On the one hand, previous disruptions of the torch relay and demonstrations in other countries caused safety concerns for Zenkō-ji's believers and its "cultural assets." On the other hand, referring to the protests in Tibet in March 2008, they stated: "We were concerned about the crackdown on Buddhists in Tibet who rose up." And: "Indiscriminate killings were undertaken in Tibet." (JT April 19, 2008) Previously, the temple had received about 100 phone calls mostly in protest against the original plan. Subsequently, however, in the night from April 19 to 20, vandals retaliated and sprayed graffiti on the wooden walls of the 1,400 years old temple, a national treasure. (JT April 21, 2008)

This episode indicates a conflict between Japanese Buddhist loyalties towards their Tibetan brothers and sisters on the one hand and the present political relationship between Japan and China on the other. In modern times, the Buddhist connection between Japan and Tibet reaches back to the Meiji Period when monks such as Kawaguchi Ekai (1866-1945) and Teramoto Enga (1872-1940), in "search for the dharma," undertook dangerous trips to Tibet in order to acquire "authentic" Buddhist sutras.<sup>1</sup> Study of these old texts played an important role in the vigorous endeavor in Japanese "Modern Buddhism" (*kindai bukkyō*) to define its identity in times of radical changes in the social, political and religious environment brought about by severe criticism and persecution during the Meiji revolution.

After the Pacific War, the political and religious world in Asia again changed fundamentally, which had considerable impact also on Japanese Buddhist

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1. Kawaguchi, an Ōbaku-shū priest, undertook his first trip to Tibet 1897-1903 and his second trip (including India and Nepal) 1905-1915. Teramoto, a priest of Higashi Hongan-ji (Ōtani-ha) went first to Tibet 1899-1900 and then again 1904-1906.

connections with Tibet and China during recent decades. By focusing here on H.H. the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's (subsequently abbreviated as Dalai Lama) visits to Japan, this essay attempts to trace various forms of religious and political interactions between the Tibetan Buddhist leader and Japanese Buddhist representatives of diverse denominations. In the sequence of eleven visits discussed here, the character of the Dalai Lama's visits to Japan changed considerably, especially since becoming a celebrity in Europe and America and after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Subsequently, the scope of the inviting organizations expanded from Buddhists to others, such as new religions and secular groups. This essay tries to decipher the rationale behind the invitations, in other words, to clarify the diverse motivations of the host organizations. It is an attempt to systematize and analyze the various interactions between the Dalai Lama and Japan. I do not aim at providing an exhaustive study of this topic, but intend only to elaborate some basic structural problems in this interaction.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, born in 1935, was publicly recognized in his future role in 1939 and the following year enthroned. In 1950 the Chinese army invaded Tibet. After the failed Tibetan uprising 1959 he fled to India. The following year he took up residence in Dharamsala and established in 1963 the first Tibetan Parliament in exile there. (Official website) Since being in exile, his first trip abroad was to Japan in 1967 and the next to Thailand in the same year, both countries with a predominantly Buddhist population. He traveled to Europe for the first time in 1973. (Official website) Later, during his eighth trip to Japan in 2003, the Dalai Lama emphasized his special relationship with Japan because it was the first destination of his trips abroad and he had many friends here. (Darai Rama 2004: 204)

In the following essay I will provide first an overview and an account of the Dalai Lama's eleven trips to Japan between 1967 and 2007 as far as information was available. I will mention also his brief stays for transit at a Japanese international airport as well as a few important events or developments elsewhere as far as they seem relevant for the present topic. In the final section I will attempt to systematize and analyze the various interactions between the Japanese hosts and their distinguished Tibetan guest.

#### *Overview of the Dalai Lama's visits, official hosts and occasions*

- (1) 1967: Society for the Promotion of Buddhism and Yomiuri Newspaper: Exhibition of Tibetan Treasures, Tokyo
- (2) 1978: Japan Buddhist Federation: 12<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, Tokyo
- (3) 1980: Japan Buddhist Federation office for the Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists: Memorial service for the victims of the atomic bomb, Hiroshima
- (4) 1984: Narita-san Shinshō-ji: Consecration of the Great Pagoda, Chiba Prefecture
- (5) 1995: Kurozumi-kyō (Okayama): Memorial service for the victims of the atomic bomb (50<sup>th</sup> anniversary), Hiroshima

- (6) 1998: Nembutsu-shū Sanpō-zan Muryōju-ji and Mahābodhi Society: First World Buddhist Propagation Conference, Kyoto
- (7) 2000: Kyoto Seika University: Establishment of the Department for Environmental and Social Studies, Kyoto
- (8) 2003: Federation of Parliamentarians Concerned with the Tibet Problem: Lectures and sermons, Tokyo
- (9) 2005: Renge-in Tanjō-ji: 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Renge-in International Volunteer Organization, Kumamoto
- (10) 2006: Daishō-in: 1200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its founding, Miyajima (Hiroshima Prefecture)
- (11) 2007: All Japan Buddhist Association and Kanagawa Prefecture Buddhist Federation: 40<sup>th</sup> Great Assembly of the All Japan Buddhist Believers Conference, Yokohama

*Account of the Dalai Lama's visits to Japan*

(1) Sept. 25 – Oct. 10, 1967

The Dalai Lama's first visit to Japan Sept. 25-Oct. 10, 1967, was facilitated by an official invitation by the Society for the Promotion of Buddhism (Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai, BDK) and sponsored by Yomiuri Shinbun, one of the major Japanese newspapers. Yomiuri Shinbun had organized the "Exhibition of Tibetan Treasures" at the Matsuzakaya Department Store in Ueno (Tokyo) featuring the Dalai Lama's own treasures for the first time in Japan. It was organized in cooperation with the Tibet House (Tokyo) and Indian Airways; the Indian Embassy provided security for the Dalai Lama. A newspaper reported that the 32-years old Dalai Lama disembarked from the plane with folded hands (*gassho*) and a smiling face. (*Mainichi Shinbun* Sept. 26, 1967) This kind of greeting would become the trademark of his future visits abroad. In Tokyo he first attended the opening ceremony of the exhibition on Sept. 26. Then he visited a number of temples and Buddhist headquarters (*bonzan*) in Kyoto, Nara, Osaka and Nikko. In Kyoto he visited Chion-in (Jōdo-shū) and Ryūkoku University on Sept. 30.<sup>2</sup> During his stay, the Dalai Lama also visited Saitama Medical University which was engaged in medical aid and training for Tibetan refugees since 1965.<sup>3</sup>

Representatives of the host organization Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai emphasized that the purpose of the visit was the exchange with Japanese Buddhists in order to deepen friendship. It was purely "religious,"<sup>4</sup> in other words, not "political." In an article about this event, the China-friendly *Asahi Shinbun* (Sept. 25, 1967) mentioned the political difficulties with China implied in this trip and quoted critical Chinese statements.

2. *Jōdo-shū Shinbun* Oct. 7, 1967; Ryūkoku Daigaku sanbyaku gojū-nen shi henshū iinkai 1998: 1309. In 1980, he gave a lecture at this university which is affiliated with Nishi Hongan-ji (Jōdo Shinshū).

3. He visited this university again in 2000.

4. *Jōdo-shū Shinbun* Oct. 7, 1967; *Mainichi Shinbun* Sept. 26, 1967

In 1976, the Tibet House in Tokyo became the Liaison Office of H.H. The Dalai Lama for Japan, and then also for East Asia (Tibet House website), which would play a crucial role in planning and executing the Dalai Lama's trips to Japan.

(2) Oct. 4–6, 1978

The Dalai Lama's second visit to Japan took place Oct. 4–6, 1978, in order to attend the 12<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (Sekai Rempō Bukkyō-to Kyōgi-kai, Oct. 1–6) in Tokyo,<sup>5</sup> which was organized by its Japanese chapter, the Japan Buddhist Federation. This Federation made his participation possible (p. 112), in other words, it issued the official invitation. Since the Dalai Lama's "Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs" (in the Tibetan Government in Exile) was a member of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, two of its representatives attended the conference as official delegates. The Dalai Lama arrived after the conference had already started and was counted among the "distinguished guests." Within the framework of the conference program, on Oct. 5 he chanted a sutra at a Prayer Service for World Peace at Zōjō-ji. Along with other dignitaries or their representatives – such as the King of Thailand, the President of Sri Lanka, the President of the USA (Jimmy Carter), the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, the Pope, etc. – he delivered an official message. He emphasized that in the time of the current "spectacular rates of economic growth and industrialization" it was necessary to "combine and harmonize external material progress with inner mental development." (p. 112 f) As during his first visit, he refrained from taking up political themes.

In the background of this visit, the Dalai Lama and the host organization faced some difficulties with attaining a visa. After Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei had started to "normalize" political relations with Mainland China in 1972 – which implied severing ties with Taiwan – the Japanese government tried to avoid any possible conflict with Communist China. When the Dalai Lama was in 1978 in Canada and expressed his wish to visit Japan, the Japanese foreign minister publicly announced that a visa would not be issued. Hearing this news, the office chief of the Sekai Rempō Nihon Bukkyō-to Kyōgi-kai, the Sōtō-shū priest Gunji Hakudō, quickly informed the Dalai Lama to apply for a visa at the Japanese embassy in Canada before it would learn about the Foreign Ministry's recent decision.<sup>6</sup> When the visa was issued and the Dalai Lama's visit and schedule were announced by Gunji in Japan, the embarrassed Japanese Government could do nothing else than to impose strict rules for the visit. The limitations were that he was not to appear in radio or TV broadcasts, that he would confine his speeches to purely religious matters and refrain from politics, and that he would be permitted to stay only for a week. Hence, these visa problems very likely account for the fact that the Dalai Lama's 1984 visit was very brief.<sup>7</sup>

5. The information of this paragraph relies on the official publication by The 12<sup>th</sup> WFB Confab Japan Committee and Japan Buddhist Federation (eds.) 1978.

6. Information in this paragraph is based on an essay by Gunji Hakudō's grandson published on the internet (Gunji Hakudō website article) which I could not confirm independently.

7. According to personal information, during this stay the Dalai Lama visited also briefly

## (3) Oct. 31 – Nov. 18, 1980

The third time the Dalai Lama came to Japan was Oct. 31–Nov. 18, 1980. Previously he had voiced his hope to visit the memorial site for the victims of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. This time he received the invitation again from the Japanese office of Sekai Rinpō Bukkyō-to Kyōgi-kai which planned and organized his schedule. The annual memorial ceremony for the victims in Hiroshima (*Hiroshima irei-sai*) was organized by the Religious Federation of Hiroshima Prefecture (Hiroshima-ken Shūkyō Renmei), but among its members was resistance against inviting the Dalai Lama. Gunji Hakudō played again a crucial role by convincing them to invite the Dalai Lama to this ceremony. He argued that it was of great significance for Japan to invite a Buddhist leader of world rank to the Hiroshima memorial service. The Dalai Lama participated in the ceremony on November 4. (Gunji Hakudō website article)

On Nov. 7, the Dalai Lama gave a memorial lecture (*kinen kōen*) on the theme “For the young people in Japan” at Ryūkoku University (Jōdo-shinshū) in Kyoto.<sup>8</sup> The following day, the Dalai Lama visited the headquarters of Oomoto-kyō in Kameoka near Kyoto.<sup>9</sup> Its President (*sōchō*) Deguchi Kyōtaro and other officials had met the Dalai Lama the year before in Dharamsala and invited him to their headquarters. Since the 1920’s already Oomoto-kyō had developed connections with Tibetan Buddhists in its endeavor to foster mutual understanding among different religions.<sup>10</sup> The Dalai Lama’s visit to its headquarters on November 8, 1980 included an Oomoto religious ceremony as well as a banquet and speeches. The Dalai Lama emphasized that humankind in this world is one in spite of all national and religious conflicts, and that it is important to realize world peace and the harmonious co-existence of human beings. Deguchi Kyōtaro said that Lamaist Buddhism is a strong pillar among world religions, and that he hoped that its activities would increasingly contribute to world peace and the happiness of humankind. (*Aizen-en* Dec. 1980: 8-10)

## (4) May 1 – 17, 1984

The Dalai Lama was invited for his fourth visit to Japan May 1-17, 1984, by Narita-san Shinshō-ji, a Shingon temple complex in Chiba Prefecture next to Tokyo which is best known in Japan for its traffic safety (*kōtsū anzen*) rituals.

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the temple Narita-san in Chiba Prefecture next to Tokyo, whose representatives later (1984) invited him to Japan.

8. Ryūkoku Daigaku sanbyaku gojū-nen shi henshū iinkai (ed.) 1998: 1340. It was his second visit to the university.
9. Oomoto-kyō may be called a Shinto derived new religion which was founded in 1899 by Deguchi Nao and Deguchi Onisaburo.
10. In 1924 Oomoto made first contacts with Tibetan Buddhists. When it established the World Religious Federation (WRF) in order to foster religious unity, representatives of Tibetan Lamaist Buddhism attended the WRF opening ceremony 1925 in Peking. In the 1970’s, Tibetan monks repeatedly visited the Kameoka headquarters. (Oomoto Foundation 1997: 39)

In commemoration of the 1150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kūkai's death, the founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism, the wealthy temple had built the "Great Pagoda" (*daitō*). The Dalai Lama was invited to participate in the consecration ceremonies (*rakkei hōyō*) between April 28 and May 28. Together with a number of Tibetan monks, he held a Tibetan Buddhist consecration ritual for the Great Pagoda as well as a *goma* fire ritual between May 7 and 9. (*Chikō* May/June 1984: 18-20) Japanese esoteric Buddhism has a close connection with the Tibetan Tantric tradition. Already for some time Narita-san had fostered exchange with Tibetan Buddhism in various ways.<sup>11</sup> As mentioned, during his second stay in Japan 1978, the Dalai Lama had briefly visited Narita-san. In 1980 Narita-san priests had met him in Dharamsala. (*Narita-san Bukkyō Kenkyū-sho Kiyō* No. 17 (1994): 15) The construction of the Great Pagoda was intended to be a symbol for world peace. The pagoda contains messages from a number of dignitaries, such as the Pope, the Dalai Lama, Queen Elizabeth, the kings of Thailand and Nepal, the American president and other heads of state. In its basement Buddhist sutras are enshrined, including the "Narutan Edition of the complete Tibetan collection of Buddhist sutras, laws and treatises" presented by the Dalai Lama, the "Buddhist head priest of Tibet." (*Kōbō Daishi 1150-nen go-onki kinen jigyo* 1984: no page numbers)

The Dalai Lama's stay in Japan was also used as an opportunity by Agon-shū, a so-called new-new religion, to invite the Dalai Lama in order to attend the "Aura Festival World Peace Prayer Service" in the Nippon Budō-kan, a sports arena in Tokyo, in May 1984.<sup>12</sup> Its leader (*kanchō*), Kiriya Seiyū and the Dalai Lama conducted together a *goma* fire ritual as prayer for world peace. (Agon-shū 1989: 9 and 12 [English part]) According to Agon-shū sources, Kiriya had met the Dalai Lama first during his previous visit to Japan in 1980 in Tokyo, and later he was invited by the Tibetan leader to attend his Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo 1989. (Agon Shū International Department 1994: 40) Agon-shū claims to have had close links with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition since 1983.<sup>13</sup> Since Agon-shū was founded recently, it is in need of religious legitimization from some tradition like any newly established religion. In order to provide its own profile and religious authorization in distinction to established Buddhism in Japan of the Mahāyāna tradition, Agon-shū claims to derive its teachings and practice directly from Śākyamuni's "original teaching" contained in the Agama Sutras (in Japanese Agon-kyō) as well as from old Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Since Agon-shū is known in Japan for its successful use of media in its propagation, the Dalai Lama's

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11. This includes research trips, the study of Tibetan Buddhism in its research facilities, and publications dedicated to Indology and Buddhism.

12. This group was established 1954 and assumed its present name in 1978; the founder Tsutsumi Masuo (born 1921) changed his name to Kiriya Seiyū. According to personal information, officials of the main host Narita-san were angry with Agon-shū's invitation of the Dalai Lama.

13. Agon Shū International Department 1994: 8 and 41. Kiriya is said to have received the highest rank of priesthood of Tibetan Buddhism in November 1993.

invitation to the big event in Tokyo may be perceived as part of its strategies in public promotion as well as a means to gain religious recognition.

The next trip to Japan was only eleven years later. In the meantime important developments occurred elsewhere, namely the Dalai Lama's growing international recognition and popularity, first of all in Europe. In 1986 the Vatican invited the Dalai Lama to participate in the Peace Prayer in Assisi convened by the Pope. In the same year, the Dalai Lama met the Austrian President and gave public lectures in Austria. In 1988 he addressed the Swiss Parliament in Bern.<sup>14</sup> In 1989 he received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. In 1990 he visited Czechoslovakia, Belgium, the Vatican, Spain, Sweden, Holland, Germany, France and Canada, and in 1991 England and America (both twice) as well as various European countries. During these trips he had high-level meetings with political, religious and intellectual leaders. A number of similar trips followed in the subsequent years. (Tibethouse website) The International Year of Tibet was organized 1991. In 1993, the Dalai Lama attracted for the first time a huge audience of 13,000 people at the Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag, a biannual Protestant church gathering, in the Olympia Hall in Munich. In the same year, Richard Gere denounced the social injustice against Tibetans at the Academy Awards Ceremony which was broadcast worldwide; the television viewers were estimated to amount to 1 billion people. Subsequently, the "fight for Tibetan freedom was upgraded to a celebrity cause." (Cf. JT March 14, 1997) Film and music stars turned the spiritual leader into a global celebrity.

#### (5) March 29 – April 6, 1995

It took a span of eleven years until the Dalai Lama received the next visa from the Japanese government to enter the country for his fifth visit March 29-April 6, 1995. In April of the previous year he had applied for a visa since he had been invited by a university in Japan to present a lecture. However, bowing to pressure from the Chinese government the Japanese Foreign Ministry did not issue the visa.<sup>15</sup> Thus, on his way to America, on April 14, 1994, the Dalai Lama stayed at Narita Airport for transit only. President Bill Clinton had invited him officially to the United States. In 1995 again, the Chinese Foreign Ministry demanded from Japan to refuse a visa "in order not to cause unnecessary adverse effects on bilateral relations." (Ibid.) This time, Japanese authorities were a bit more courageous and granted entry on condition that he would not harbor a "politically significant intention." (Ibid.)

The Dalai Lama was officially invited by Kurozumi-kyō, a Shintō sect founded during the end of the Edo period by Kurozumi Munetada (1780-1850), whose

14. Cf. Gassner 1999: 3. These three important trips to Europe are not mentioned in the list of the Dalai Lama's trips abroad between 1967 and 1999 published on the official website of the Tokyo Office. The year 1989 for his fourth trip listed here must be corrected to 1984.

15. *The Nikkei Weekly* April 3, 1995. Up to now I could not find out details about this failed invitation, such as the name of the university.

main shrine and headquarters are located in Okayama. Since no other religious group was willing to act as official host because of the political difficulties involved, the Committee for Inviting the Dalai Lama (Hōō shōchi iin-kai) approached Kurozumi-kyō which eventually accepted the request and agreed to act as main host.<sup>16</sup> During his stay March 29 - April 6, the Dalai Lama first traveled to Hiroshima in order to conduct a Buddhist ceremony at the memorial for the victims of the atomic bomb. The occasion was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing. Then he went to the Kurozumi Headquarters in Okayama where he stayed for five days. Here he first gave a lecture in the main shrine, and the next day he had a meeting and exchange with young members of Kurozumi-kyō. Sightseeing tours of a social welfare center and a science research laboratory followed. (Kurozumi-kyō Honbu (no year), pp. 26 f)

The Dalai Lama's official website lists among the major awards an honorary doctorate he received from Rishō University in Tokyo during his 1995 stay, which is affiliated with Nichiren Buddhism. This is the only official honor he received from a Japanese university. According to personal information, Chinese diplomats put pressure on the university by threatening to withdraw its Chinese students. Hence, the ceremony to confer the honorary degree was not conducted in public.

Apart from the difficulties to obtain a visa and secure an official host, the 1995 visit was marred by another problem. Shortly before the Dalai Lama's arrival in Japan, on March 20 the poison gas attack on subways in Tokyo had occurred, allegedly executed by the new-new religion Aum Shinri-kyō. Its leader and representatives had met the Dalai Lama on several occasions in Dharamsala, and they had also given considerable amounts of donations for Tibetan refugees and the Dalai Lama's office at various occasions. During a press conference in Tokyo the Dalai Lama admitted the contacts and at the same time distanced himself from the group.<sup>17</sup> The Chinese Government did not miss this opportunity to discredit the Tibetan leader for these contacts.

#### (6) April 3 – 12, 1998

The Dalai Lama's sixth visit took place April 3-12, 1998. He was invited by the new Buddhist group Nembutsu-shū Sanpō-zan Muryōju-ji to attend the First World Buddhist Propagation Conference (Zen-sekai bukkyō kōryū kaigi) in the Kyoto International Conference Center (Kokuritsu Kyōto Kokusai Kaikan). This conference was co-sponsored by the Mahābodhi Society of India (JT April 16, 1998), whose President at that time happened to be also the leader of Nembutsu-shū. The conference was held during the Flower Festival (*Hana matsuri*), the celebration of Buddha's birth. The *Japan Times* (April 8, 1998) reported about the event as follows:

16. Kurozumi-kyō Honbu (no year), pp. 26 f (cf. the official website of Kurozumi-kyō), and personal information.

17. JT March 30, 1995. For the relationship between Aum Shinri-kyō and the Dalai Lama, see Repp 1997: 17 f and 96.

The conference, attended by high-ranking Buddhist leaders from 13 Asian countries and regions, adopted a joint communiqué that said efforts should be made to maintain and keep up eight Buddhist holy places, and that participants will try to restore the glory of Buddhism in countries where it once flourished. The organizers said the occasion was not aimed at political activities. China had urged Japan not to allow the visit by the Dalai Lama, who fled to India from Chinese-occupied Tibet in 1959 and has been calling for Tibetan autonomy and the protection of his country's culture.

The Dalai Lama attended the conference from April 6-8 and also gave a speech. (JT April 4, 1998) According to the weekly *Shūkan Asahi* (April 17, 1998), on this occasion the Nembutsu-shū donated about US \$ 2 Million (2 oku yen) to the Dalai Lama. Nembutsu-shū is considered to be a questionable new religious group called a "secret cult."<sup>18</sup>

On April 11, the Liaison Office of H.H. Dalai Lama organized the following two events in Tokyo. First, the Dalai Lama gave a four-hour talk to 1,200 people at Tokyo Big Sight (Tokyo International Exhibition Center), which includes a conference hall. Then a welcoming reception was held for him which was attended by 800 people.<sup>19</sup> – The Dalai Lama's next brief stay in Japan would be four years later when he stopped at Narita International Airport for transit on Oct. 10, 1999.

#### (7) April 13 – 20, 2000

The Dalai Lama's seventh visit again had a diplomatic prelude. In February 2000, the Chinese Foreign Ministry urged the Japanese government not to issue a visa "in order to avoid creating a new obstruction to bilateral relations." (JT Febr. 26, 2000; cf. JT Febr. 24) The Japanese Foreign Ministry eventually permitted the visit "in due process of law." (JT April 13, 2000) However, it also demanded from the Dalai Lama's Tokyo Liaison Office for the first time a written pledge that he would refrain from political involvements. (*The Nikkei Weekly* April 24, 2000) This characterizes Japanese policy as a "two-pronged approach in dealing with Tibet's spiritual leader-in-exile." (Ibid.) To make matters more complicated, Ishihara Shintaro, the right-leaning Tokyo Governor and outspoken China critic, announced his intention to meet the Dalai Lama. (Ibid.) The Foreign Ministry warned the Dalai Lama's office in Tokyo not to arrange a meeting with Ishihara, otherwise he would never receive a visa again. (JT April 16, 2000) Hence, the Dalai Lama refrained from officially meeting his "old acquaintance." (Cf. JT April 14, 2000)

This time, the Dalai Lama was officially invited by Kyoto Seika University for a conference at the occasion of the establishment of a Department for Environmental and Social Studies. This was the first time that the Dalai Lama was invited by a secular organization in Japan. Before attending this forum, the Office of Tibet organized four public lectures of the Dalai Lama in the Tokyo

18. For these informations, see the article on Nembutsu-shū Muryōju-ji in Wikipedia.

19. JT April 16, 1998; Darai Rama 2002: 249 f.

NHK Hall on the theme “Wisdom and compassion” on April 14 and 15. About 6,000 people attended this event.<sup>20</sup>

On April 16, the Dalai Lama gave a lecture on “Searching for a harmonious life with nature” at Seika University in Kyoto. The following day he participated as panelist at this university’s forum on “Environment and Human Beings – In search for new life style” at the Kyoto International Conference Center.<sup>21</sup> Ca. 1,800 students and citizens attended the lecture. Previously, 22,000 people had applied for tickets for this event. (*Kyōto Shinbun* April 17, 2000) This indicates that the Dalai Lama’s popularity by now had spread from Europe and America to Japan as well and had grown considerably among its citizens.<sup>22</sup> After the forum some participants voiced their disappointment not to have learned more about the political situation in Tibet. (*Kyōto Shinbun* April 17, 2000) The *Japan Times* (April 16, 2000) reported about the events in Kyoto as follows:

Security for the event has been extra heavy and public and media access has been greatly curtailed following protests by the Chinese government over his presence. Chinese officials reportedly visited Kyoto Seika [Seika] University after the invitation was issued, demanding that it be cancelled. Another university in Kyoto had also extended an invitation to the Dalai Lama, but revoked it for reasons it claims were unrelated to Chinese pressure.

According to personal information by someone involved in this failed invitation, Chinese officials had warned the religious organization behind the latter university not to issue visas anymore for its priests if the invitation would not be cancelled. This incident indicates that Chinese diplomats in Japan had become bolder in their attempts to deter Japanese organizations from inviting the Dalai Lama. Such a strategy was probably also behind the failed invitation by a Japanese university in 1994.<sup>23</sup>

On April 18, the Dalai Lama gave a talk in Shizuoka organized by a Tibet support group. About 1,200 people attended; among them were Buddhist priests from the region as well as the diet member Makino Seishū who established a non-partisan group of parliamentarians concerned with Tibet (Darai Rama 2000: iv) which would invite the Dalai Lama for his next visit to Japan 2003. On April 19, the Dalai Lama gave a talk at Saitama Medical University for 350 people.<sup>24</sup> It was

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20. Darai Rama 2000, Introduction by translator, p. iii-iv. According to another source, on April 14 the Dalai Lama was invited by a citizens groups “Milarepa Foundation” (*Milarepa kikin*) to speak to a group of 30 students and adults at a Hotel in Chiba. (*Jiji Tsūshin* April 14, 2000)

21. Darai Rama 2000, Introduction by translator, p. iv; cf. *Kyōto Shinbun* April 18, 2000.

22. The growing popularity of the Dalai Lama among Japanese has been observed already in a *Japan Times* article March 19, 1997, titled “Tibet studies seen on rise here despite little academic support.”

23. See above the section on the visit 1995

24. *Saitama Shinbun* April 20, 2000; Darai Rama, 2000, Introduction by translator, p. iv f.

his second visit to this university which was engaged in medical aid and training for Tibetan refugees.<sup>25</sup>

On April 18, the Dalai Lama gave a news conference in Tokyo where he remarked that the Japanese government was “a little overcautious” in granting his visa. (JT April 20, 2000) Upon the question why he had not accepted Ishihara’s invitation to meet, he responded: “I don’t want to create any embarrassment for the host organization and country. We can meet in the future.” (Ibid.) He also emphasized that he does not demand independence of Tibet, but its autonomy within China in a “mutually agreeable” way. (Ibid.)

After the Dalai Lama’s visit, Pema Gyalpo, professor at Gifu Women’s University and former representative of the Dalai Lama’s Liaison Office in Tokyo (1976-1990), stated: “The Japanese remain apologetic to China because they feel they gave China grounds for grievance (during and before World War II). But they ignore the grievances China has been provoking among the Tibetans.” (*The Nikkei Weekly* April 24, 2000) He also criticized Japanese politicians for lacking backbone. (Ibid.) The Dalai Lama’s next stay in Japan was for transit in Narita International Airport Nov. 4-9, 2002.

(8) Oct. 31 – Nov. 11, 2003

The Dalai Lama’s eighth visit to Japan was made possible again by a secular group like in the previous case.<sup>26</sup> This time it was not a university, but a non-partisan political group of parliamentarians called Chibetto mondai o Kangaeru Giin Renmei (Federation of parliamentarians concerned with the Tibet problem) under the leadership of Makino Seishū.<sup>27</sup> The Chinese foreign ministry again voiced its protest against the visit. A Japanese Foreign Ministry official stated: “As for the status of Tibet, it is the constant position of the Japanese government that it is an internal affair of the Chinese government.” (JT Nov. 1, 2003) A *Japan Times* article explained the ambiguous relationship between the two countries as follows: “Sino-Japanese ties are often frayed by China’s memories of Japan’s wartime occupation and Japan’s fear of being overtaken in terms of economic and diplomatic clout by its giant neighbor.” (Ibid.)

The Dalai Lama’s visit began with a welcome party on the evening of Oct. 31 in a hotel located in the Government district Nagata-chō. About 500 persons participated. Talks were given about the present situation of Tibet and future perspectives, and the importance of “compassion” and “dialogue” was stressed. On Nov. 1, the Dalai Lama presented a lecture on “The power of compassion” mainly

25. The first visit was during his first stay in Japan 1967.

26. If not indicated otherwise, information in this section relies on the Tibet House website and on Maria Rinchen’s postscript in: Darai Rama 2004.

27. This group does not appear much in public and hence is not well known in Japan. It was founded 1994 by five parliamentarians; in 2003 it had grown to 54 members and it is said to have now 150 supporters in the parliament. (Maria Rinchen, Postscript in: Darai Rama 2004: 203) In April 1996, some of its members had visited the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. (JT July 8, 1996)

for young people at the Ryōgoku Kokugi-kan (Ryōgoku National Sumō Stadium).<sup>28</sup> Now, Japanese celebrities, such as the author Banana Yoshimoto and actress Miyazawa Rie, to my knowledge for the first time entered the stage together with the Dalai Lama and participated actively in the gathering. The following day (Nov. 2), in the same stadium he gave a sermon in the morning, and in the afternoon he participated in a symposium on “Buddhism and natural sciences in dialogue” together with two renowned professors, one of them Koshiba Masatoshi, a Nobel prize recipient for physics. During these two days, altogether about 5.000 people attended these meetings in Tokyo.

Then followed a program of sightseeing, meetings and talks in the Kansai area. On Nov. 4 the Dalai Lama visited Ise Shrine. On Nov. 5 he participated in a non-public meeting on the theme “Wisdom and practice” with about 40 religious scholars in a hotel in Nara. Then visits to the famous Nara temples Tōdai-ji (Kegon-shū) and Kōfuku-ji (Hossō-shū) followed where he met priests and the abbots in order to deepen exchange. On the following day he presented a memorial lecture in the Culture Hall of Nara Prefecture on “Compassion in daily life,” which was attended by ca. 1.300 people. Thereafter, the Dalai Lama traveled to Kanazawa where he gave non-public sermons on the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* for the group Busshō-kai. This group invited him to Kanazawa also during his next visit to Japan.<sup>29</sup> The Dalai Lama returned to India Nov. 11.

(9) April 8 – 19, 2005

The Dalai Lama visited Japan April 8-19, 2005, for the ninth time.<sup>30</sup> He was invited by the temple Renge-in Tanjō-ji<sup>31</sup> in Kumamoto (Kyushu) in order to attend an anniversary of its volunteer organization. – On the day of his arrival April 8, the Dalai Lama visited the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo, dedicated to the veneration of the deified Meiji Emperor and his consort. On the next day (April 9) he first gave a public talk on “Compassion and human relations” at the *sumō* stadium Ryōgoku kokugi-kan, the same venue where he lectured in 2003. Those being interested to attend had to apply for tickets in advance on the Tibet House website. The prices ranged between 5.000 and 7.000 Yen per ticket, and the seats were sold out.

The Dalai Lama then traveled to Kumamoto (Kyushu) where he gave talks and sermons. On April 10, he presented a keynote lecture on “From peace of mind to world peace” at the Kumamoto kenritsu gekijo konsāto hōru (Theater

28. This stadium can be rented for big events.

29. According to websites concerning this visit, this group supports Tibetan refugees. The name Busshō-kai (Society for Buddha Nature) is written in old Chinese characters which is unusual for a contemporary organization in Japan. I could not gather more information about it.

30. If not indicated otherwise, information in this section relies on the Tibet House website.

31. This is the main temple (*bonzan*) of an independent Shingon-Ritsu (Shingon Precepts) school. (Ueda Noriyuki 2007: 229)

and concert hall of Kumamoto Prefecture). On April 12, he first gave a sermon on “Wisdom and compassion” at the Okuno-in of the Renge-in Tanjō-ji, his official host. Afterwards he attended the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremony of the Renge-in International Volunteer Organization which supports also Tibetans in exile. For this occasion a symposium was organized to which also Ueda Noriyuki was invited, the author of the bestseller *Ganbare bukkō!* (“Try your best, Buddhism!”). (Ueda 2007: 229)

On April 12, the Dalai Lama gave a lecture for staff and students of Kyūshū kango fukushi daigaku (Kyushu University of Nursing and Social Welfare). During his stay in Kyushu, he visited also the Aso jinja, a major Shinto shrine of the region. On April 16 and 17, the Dalai Lama gave three sermons on “Bodhisattva Nagarjuna” in Kanazawa. The homepage of the Dalai Lama’s Tokyo office announced the conditions for attending his Dharma talks in the Ishikawa Ongaku-dō (Ishikawa concert hall) as follows: Admission was free of charge, but applicants had to send a postcard in advance to the organizers who selected according to lottery. These sermons were organized by Busshō-kai, the support group for Tibetan refugees (Chibetto nanmin shien gurūpu) in Kanazawa, which had invited the Dalai Lama already in 2003. This event was co-sponsored by the Dalai Lama’s Liaison Office in Tokyo. On his trip from Kanazawa back to Tokyo April 18, the Dalai Lama stopped in Kyoto in order to visit Nishi Hongan-ji where he was greeted by temple officials and worshippers. After paying homage in the main hall, he met the Monshu, the head of the Nishi Hongan-ji branch of Jōdo shinshū. The Dalai Lama had visited this temple already in 1980.<sup>32</sup>

On April 19 the Dalai Lama returned to India. Later in this year, the Dalai Lama stayed for a brief stop over at Narita International Airport on Nov. 3. It should be mentioned that in July 2006 the Chinese Government had completed the railway to Tibet which was called by the Dalai Lama’s nephew China’s “second invasion of Tibet.” (JT July 2 and 6, 2006)

(10) Oct. 30 – Nov. 12, 2006

For his 10<sup>th</sup> visit to Japan Oct. 30-Nov. 12, 2006, the Dalai Lama was officially invited by Daishō-in, a Shingon temple located on the island of Miya-jima close to Hiroshima. The occasion was the celebration of the 1.200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. – On October 31, the Dalai Lama traveled to Hiroshima in order to attend the Hiroshima International Peace Summit 2006, organized by the Junior Chamber International, a Japanese youth organization. He gave a keynote address on the theme “Universal responsibility” Nov. 1 and another talk the following day. Two fellow Nobel Peace laureates, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Ms. Betty Williams, also gave speeches at this peace summit. (Official website) During the morning of Nov. 1, the Dalai Lama visited the Ryūzō-in Drepung

32. Probably the two religious leaders had met for the first time in 1967 at the General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists organized by the Japan Buddhist Federation, whose president was at that time the Monshu. (The 12<sup>th</sup> WFB Confab Japan Committee and Japan Buddhist Federation 1978: 21)

Gomang Temple in Hiroshima and blessed it. It was founded in 2004 as branch of the (Tibetan) Drepung Gomang Temple in South India and dedicated to the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to Japan. (Official website) On Nov. 4 and 5, the Dalai Lama gave talks and sermons at Daishō-in on Miya-jima, the official host of this trip, for its anniversary celebrations. From Nov. 6 to 8, he conducted here the *kanjō* ceremony, an initiation ritual for devotees.<sup>33</sup>

On Nov. 11, the Dalai Lama gave a lecture in Tokyo again in the Ryōgoku kokugi-kan organized by his Tokyo office and supported by Daishō-in, the Support Group for Tibetan Refugees, Busshō-kai, the group of parliamentarians concerned with the Tibet problem, and the Welcoming Committee of H.H. the Dalai Lama (Darai Rama Hōō rainichi kangei iin-kai). (Tibet House website) The prices for tickets were Yen 5,000 or 7,000. The Tibet House website mentions that the income would be used for the expenses and the surplus for cultural activities of the Dalai Lama's office in Tokyo in order to foster the Tibetan cause.

(11) Nov. 15 – 23, 2007

The Dalai Lama's 11<sup>th</sup> and up to now last visit to Japan was made possible by an invitation of the Zen-nihon Bukkyō-kai (All Japan Buddhist Association, AJPA) and Kanagawa-ken Bukkyō-kai (Kanagawa Prefecture Buddhist Federation, KBF).<sup>34</sup> The occasion for the invitation was a celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AJPA taking place in Yokohama Nov. 19-20.

On Nov. 18, the Dalai Lama visited Ise for the second time. At this occasion he gave a memorial lecture for an international religious forum at the Ise Campus of Kōgakkan University which is dedicated to Shinto studies. He participated also in the subsequent panel discussion with a number of well-known scholars of Shinto and Buddhism. On Nov. 20, the Dalai Lama delivered the memorial lecture at the 40<sup>th</sup> Great Assembly of the All Japan Buddhist Believers Conference at Kanagawa (Dai 40-kai Zenkoku nihon bukkyō-to kaigi Kanagawa taikai) in Yokohama on the theme "The believing heart and peace." This conference of the Zenkoku nihon bukkyō-kai and the Kanagawa-ken bukkyō-kai was also supported by other organizations such as a Buddhist youth organization and the Kanagawa-ken shūkyō renmei (Religious Federation of Kanagawa Prefecture). On Nov. 21, the Dalai Lama presented a talk in a hotel in Hachioji (Tokyo) on "Modern society and spiritual values" where ca. 350 people attended. It was organized by the Support Group for Tibetan Refugees together with the Dalai Lama's Tokyo office. On the next day (Nov. 22) the Dalai Lama presented a "Message for the young generation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century at Setagaya Gakuen High School (Tokyo). About 1,400 students and teachers attended. (tibet.com) Afterwards he visited Gokoku-ji, a Shingon temple in Tokyo, and had conversations with its priests. (Official website) Then he gave a talk on "Meaningful life and education" at another high school for about

33. Daishō-in website. This website advertises also the sale of pictures and posters of the Dalai Lama during his stay at Daishō-in.

34. Information of this section is mainly based on the Tibet House website. I could not find information on the website of the official host Zen-nihon Bukkyō-kai.

1,300 students. (Ibid.) The following day, Nov. 23, he returned to India.

It should be mentioned that in 2007, previous to his visit to Japan, the Dalai Lama had met with various heads of state, such as the Australian Prime Minister Howard in June, the German Chancellor Merkel in September, President Bush and the Canadian Prime Minister, both in October. During his stay in Australia, the Dalai Lama emphasized that he is not seeking independence but “genuine autonomy” in order to preserve Tibetan culture, language and environment. He warned in all seriousness that if the situation did not improve, the Tibetan culture would be destroyed in the next 15 years. (JT June 9, 2007) On April 11, 2008, the Dalai Lama stayed for transit briefly in Narita International Airport where he gave also a press conference. Here ends the account of the Dalai Lama’s visits to Japan. Before proceeding now to an analysis, a brief review of his titles and epithets attributed by Japanese media may help to understand how he is perceived in this country.

### *The Dalai Lama’s titles and epithets in Japan*

During his first visit 1967 he was called the “Living Buddha of Tibet (an Buddhism)” (*Chibetto [bukkyō] no katsubutsu*) and the “Dharma King” (*bōō*). Whereas the first title subsequently appears again only in early reports, the second is used as official religious title throughout his visits. After the early phase, the epithet most frequently applied is “(exiled) Tibetan spiritual leader.” He is also called the “Supreme leader of Tibetan Buddhism” (*Chibetto bukkyō saikō shidō-shū*). Since he received the prestigious award in 1989, the epithet “Nobel Peace Prize Laureate” is normally used as well.

The general absence of political titles in the reports is conspicuous. There are, however, a few exceptions. In one case he is called “Tibetan leader.” (JT April 16, 1998) This “political incorrectness” was probably rather a mistake than done on purpose. A representative of the Liaison Office in Tokyo called him the “supreme leader” of the Tibetan people. (*The Nikkei Weekly* Sept. 7, 1998) The Dalai Lama’s Japanese interpreter explicitly stated that he is the “supreme leader of Tibetan Buddhism as well as the political leader,” thereby emphasizing both his roles, the religious and the political. (Maria Rinchen in: *Dalai Lama 2004*: 224) The titles and epithets used in the Japanese media, however, clearly portray him in his religious role and generally tend to avoid any political aspects, probably in fear of harsh Chinese reactions.

### *Analysis of the Dalai Lama’s visits to Japan*

In order to understand the Dalai Lama’s visits to Japan, the structure of the invitation process is to be clarified first, and then the characters of the hosts will be analyzed. In general there are four kinds of agents involved in the invitation process. First of all, the Liaison Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama for Japan and East Asia in Tokyo (also called Office of Tibet) is instrumental in planning the visits and preparing the program. It is the main lobbying organization for the

Tibetan cause in Japan. When organizing the schedule, it functions as the control and communication center between the Japanese inviting organizations and the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala.

Next, when representatives of Japanese organizations express their wish to invite the Dalai Lama, an invitation committee is formed consisting of officials of the Dalai Lama's Tokyo office and representatives of the host organizations. This committee is established in order to coordinate the schedule of the visit. In case of the Dalai Lama's 1995 visit, such a committee approached various organizations with the request to serve as official host. This role involves issuing an official letter of invitation for the visa application. Since in this case a number of Buddhist organizations refused to cooperate, Kurozumi-kyō eventually agreed to issue the invitation. The official host is the second agent in the invitation process.

Once the main host for the Dalai Lama's visit is secured, the invitation committee organizes and coordinates the schedule with organizations which want to join and organize additional events with the Dalai Lama. These groups form the third category of agents in the invitation process and may be called additional or secondary hosts. Finally, there are Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines which serve as informal hosts when guiding the Dalai Lama through their precincts and holding informal, non-public conversations with him. This is the fourth category of agents during the Dalai Lama's visits to Japan.

From this perspective on the structure of the Dalai Lama's visits to Japan, the nature of the main hosts shall be examined and then also the character of the secondary host organizations. The first three invitations and the last one were issued by acknowledged Japanese Buddhist umbrella organizations which are to be distinguished from individual Buddhist main denominations and their head temples (*honzan*). This is true for the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai (1967) which (in its aim to propagate Buddhism worldwide) works in a trans-sectarian way even though it is affiliated with the Nishi Hongan-ji branch of Jōdo-shin Buddhism. In case of the Japanese chapter of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (1978, 1980) the "ecumenical" character is more evident since it consists of representatives of the major Buddhist schools in Japan. The same can be said of the All Japan Buddhist Association as well as its regional branch in Kanagawa Prefecture which invited the Dalai Lama for his last visit to Japan (2007).

In distinction to these trans-denominational organizations, the main hosts and sponsors during the time between the first three and the last visits consisted of different kinds of organizations. First, there were a number of individual schools or head temples, such as Narita-san Shinshō-ji (1984), Renge-in Tanjō-ji (2005), and Daishō-in (2006). The commonality between these three is that they are head temples (*honzan*) of Shingon sub-schools which are independent from the major traditional Shingon schools. Each of them invited the Dalai Lama in order to crown an anniversary. They seem to be quite wealthy and therefore able to bear the expenses of the Dalai Lama's visit. From the perspective of traditional Buddhist geography (according to which the religious centers of most traditional Buddhist schools are located in and around Kyoto, in Nara, on Mt. Kōya or close

to Mt. Fuji), the three temples are located rather at the periphery, Narita-san Shinshō-ji in Chiba Prefecture, Renge-in Tanjō-ji in Kyushu, and Daishō-in in Hiroshima Prefecture. The fact that these temples belong to Shingon Buddhism which has affinities with Tibetan Tantric Buddhism may explain the rationale behind the invitations to a certain degree. However, the question arises why the other, bigger Shingon main temples, such as Mt. Kōya (Wakayama Prefecture) or Daigo-ji (Kyoto), have not invited the Dalai Lama until now.

One may continue to ask why none of the traditional major schools of Japanese Buddhism appears on the list of official hosts. Certainly, a few of them, such as Chion-in (1967) and Nishi Hongan-ji in Kyoto (2005), or Tōdai-ji and Kōfuku-ji in Nara (2003), served as informal hosts for brief visits and conversations with the Dalai Lama, but not for public sermons or lectures. Seen from such a perspective, instead of main schools from the religious “centers,” rather relatively “minor” Buddhist temples from the traditional religious periphery seem to have played a major role in inviting the Dalai Lama. Moreover, two new Buddhist religions also joined the list of hosts, namely Agon-shū (1984) and Nembutsu-shū (1998).<sup>35</sup> However, these two cases give the impression of being attempts to use the Dalai Lama for self-promotion rather than to support the Tibetan cause. Since the Dalai Lama became a celebrity in Europe and America, and since he received the Nobel Peace Prize, he “sells” well also in Japan.

The absence of main Buddhist schools in the list of major hosts becomes even more conspicuous when considering the important role of non-Buddhist organizations in inviting the Dalai Lama to Japan. The Shinto-derived new religion Oomoto-kyō, which has long connections with Tibetan Buddhism for promotion of world peace, invited the Dalai Lama officially to its headquarters for one day (1980). Even more conspicuous is that another Shinto-derived new religion, Kurozumi-kyō, agreed to officially invite the Dalai Lama to Japan (1995) since no other organization (including Buddhist) was willing to do so. At various occasions the Dalai Lama officially visited Shinto shrines, such as Ise jingū (2003, 2007), Meiji jingū (2005) and Aso jinja (2005). He also was invited to deliver the keynote address for a symposium of the major Shinto university Kōgakkan (2007). When I asked the representative of a previous host temple about the Dalai Lama’s invitations by Shingon Buddhist temples *and* Shinto shrines, he explained that – similarly to Tibetan Buddhism – both venerate the local deities (*kami*). Still, the question remains how this sympathy and cooperation of Shinto and the disinterest and distance of mainline Buddhist schools can be understood.

As for the Dalai Lama’s invitation for lectures at Japanese universities, a distinction between those with a religious background and the secular ones should be made. Concerning the religiously affiliated universities, he presented a lecture at the (Buddhist) Ryūkyoku University (Jōdo Shinshū, 1980), he received

35. Considering the lack of transparency in newly established religions in Japan, one can hardly blame foreign officials of the Tokyo Tibet House for their cooperation with groups such as Aum Shinri-kyō or Nembutsu-shū, whose questionable character only later became publicly known.

an honorable doctorate from Risshō University (Nichiren-shū, 1995), and he gave a talk for a symposium at the Shinto university Kōgakkan (2007). Among the secular universities, the Dalai Lama was invited for lectures by Saitama Medical University (2000), which was engaged in medical aid for Tibetan refugees, and Kyushu University of Nursing and Social Welfare (2005). Kyoto Seika University (2000) finally was the only university which served as official host for the Dalai Lama's invitation. It should be recalled that at this occasion another religiously affiliated university withdrew its invitation because of pressure from its founding organization which again was caused by the intervention from Chinese diplomats. Apart from the two Buddhist universities mentioned above, the overall picture of the Dalai Lama's appearance at Japanese universities indicates a considerable distance from the Tibetan Buddhist cause among Japanese Buddhist universities in general. Considering the international context, according to the "List of Major Awards and Honorary Conferments Received" (Dalai Lama's official website), the only academic award the Dalai Lama received from a Japanese university was the honorable doctorate from Risshō University. Compared with the numerous doctorates he received from renowned universities in countries with a Christian cultural background, Japanese universities do not seem to equally acknowledge the Dalai Lama's achievements.

Finally, as for the secular organizations inviting the Dalai Lama officially to Japan, besides Kyoto Seika University (2000) there was the non-partisan group of parliamentarians concerned with the Tibet problem (2003). This invitation was the only one which explicitly expressed the political aspect of the Dalai Lama's visits to Japan even though this was very much tuned down. According to the sources presently available, only talks during the welcome party touched the present situation of Tibet and future perspectives. However, his subsequent public lectures focused on religious themes, such as "compassion," and "Buddhism and natural sciences." There was another political connection between the Dalai Lama and a Japanese politician, the Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro. A planned meeting between both in 2000 was cancelled due to pressure from the Japanese Government on the Dalai Lama's Tokyo Office.

How can these intricate interactions between the Dalai Lama and the various groups in Japan, associating with him or distancing from him, be understood? Different factors seem to be at work here. On the political level is a polarization between anti-China and pro-China politicians. The present Prime Minister and the Kōmei-tō party (currently forming the government together with the Liberal Democratic Party) belong to the latter.<sup>36</sup> I do not have sufficient information to clearly locate the political stance of the above mentioned group of parliamentarians concerned with the Tibet problem, but they hardly seem to belong to the pro-China faction of Japanese politicians. Ishihara Shintaro is an outspoken critic of China, and at the same time he is considered to be a right-wing politician. The

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36. Kōmei-tō is backed by Sōka Gakkai, the biggest Buddhist lay organization in Japan, and both foster close ties with the Chinese Government.

nationalistic attitude is still alive in certain Shinto circles, except for a few groups like Oomoto-kyō. It should be mentioned that the Dalai Lama visited 1980 also the Yasukuni Shrine for the war dead, including war criminals, in Tokyo which forms a symbolic center for the Japanese right-wing extremists. (Cf. Yasukuni Jinja websites) Apart from political and Shinto circles, the right-wing undercurrent in Japan can be found also in certain groups of Buddhist priests, including some of the Tibet activists whom I met. This political stance is sometimes combined with the fear that Japan will be the next country after Tibet to be annexed or colonized by China. This fear is shared by Japanese of other political orientations as well.<sup>37</sup>

The official political stance of most Buddhist mainline denominations (with a few exceptions), however, differs considerably. Their hesitation to publicly support the Tibetan cause derives from their endeavor to maintain a good relationship with Chinese Buddhist temples with which they have historical ties. During the period from about the 7<sup>th</sup> ce. to the 17<sup>th</sup> ce., most Japanese Buddhist schools derived in one way or another from Chinese temples and schools. In comparison, direct connections between Tibetan and Japanese Buddhism developed only since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the Japanese Government switched diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China in 1972, the Chinese Government actively encouraged Japanese Buddhist schools to cultivate the historical connections with temples on the mainland. (Personal information) Hence, through the official channel of the Chinese Buddhist Association, which is under the control of the Government's Department for Religion, representatives of Japanese Buddhist schools began to visit their "mother temples" and to support them financially. Thus the threat of not receiving visas from the Chinese Government for visiting the "holy places" (*seichi*) on the mainland – sometimes combined with the unresolved guilt complex concerning Buddhist involvement in Japan's colonialism and wars – is more important for them than any engagement for Tibetan Buddhism which is persecuted now.

However, the official attitude of most Buddhist schools has to be further distinguished from that of ordinary priests, lay people, and individual temples in Japan. As mentioned, the reversal of the Zenkō-ji's officials' decision not to allow their temple as starting point for the Olympic torch relay was caused by numerous phone calls from the public. According to personal information, the temple's reversal of its policy was caused by young priests. There are many other Buddhist priests, lay people and organizations in Japan actively supporting the cause of their Tibetan Buddhist brothers and sisters. (See for example *Hongan-ji shinpō* May 10, 2008, p. 6) After the crackdown on demonstrations in Tibet in March 2008, representatives of the Renge-in Tanjō-ji as well as of the Japan Theravada Buddhist Association publicly condemned the suppression by the Chinese police and military. However, the Japan Buddhist Federation (Zennihon Bukkyō-kai) issued a statement calling on both sides for restraint concerning the "Tibetan situation" (*chibetto jōsei*), thereby choosing a political "middle way." Some main schools issued similar statements. (See website of the Zennihon Bukkyō-kai) This

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37. Cf. JT Nov. 1, 2003, quoted in the section on the 8<sup>th</sup> visit.

situation indicates a political rift within the Japanese Buddhist community, being divided between loyalty to China and responsibility for Tibet.

In distinction, the considerable interest in, and sympathy for, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan cause among Japanese people in general is expressed by full auditoriums or in the 22,000 applications for the lecture organized by Kyoto Seika University (2000).<sup>38</sup> This indicates another rift, namely conflicting attitudes between ordinary Japanese citizens on the one hand and the government and main temples on the other. One wonders how these tendencies will develop in the future when China will continue to rise as a political, economic and military world-power. The aggressive nationalistic behavior of Chinese people abroad during the international Olympic torch relay recently did not foster sympathy for China in Japan or elsewhere.

### Conclusion

In the final analysis, the Dalai Lama's visits to Japan leave us with a number of contradictions, discrepancies, or paradoxes, which at the same time also indicate problems of wider extent.

*First*, there is the political contradiction that the Japanese Government bows to China while ignoring the Tibetan problem.<sup>39</sup> Upon the question of how he would like to see Japan handle the Tibet issue, Karma Gelek Yuthok, the representative of the Liaison Office in Tokyo in 1998, replied:

We want Japan to be a bit stronger and more expressive on the issue because Japan is a world leader. Since arriving in Japan in 1994, I have seen very little change in the government's stance on the issue. ... The Dalai Lama meets presidents, prime ministers and ministers when he travels. But he can't meet with them in Japan, and this shows a certain weakness. We are anxiously awaiting change. After all, the Tibet issue concerns all of Asia. (*The Nikkei Weekly* Sept. 7, 1998)

The *second* problem is connected with the previous political issue. Because the Dalai Lama is in constant need of international political support, and since the Japanese Government is hesitant to cooperate, he sometimes accepted support from Japanese individuals and groups with anti-Chinese and right-wing motives. On the one hand, such a political agenda indicates a certain continuity with Japanese politics and military involvement with Tibet before 1945,<sup>40</sup> but on the other hand it contradicts the Dalai Lama's public declarations that he does not hate the Chinese.

38. A *Japan Times* article about the Liaison Office (Tokyo) reports March 19, 1997, that interest in Tibet now began to increase among Japanese people: Students enrolling in classes on Tibetan language and Buddhism rose from 40 to 150, and the official newsletter of the office had 30,000 subscribers in Japan.

39. Cf. Pema Gyalpo's comments in *The Nikkei Weekly* April 24, 2000; partly quoted in the section on the visit in 2000.

40. See Yoichi Shimatsu's article "A Hidden History – 'Free Tibet, the Lost Crusade of Buddhist Japan'" in this issue of *Japanese Religions*.

*Third*, since Japan is a strong economic world power and has a major Buddhist population, the Dalai Lama certainly had high expectations for support from Japanese Buddhist groups in the beginning and limited expectations later. It is no incident that his first trips abroad in 1967 went to Japan. There was even the rumor that he was considering to seek exile in Japan after he fled Chinese-occupied Tibet 1959. (*Mainichi Shinbun* Sept. 26, 1967) His continuous, though not always successful, attempts to visit Japan underline his hope for stronger support from Japanese Buddhists. Among his eleven visits, however, he was never officially invited to Japan by a major traditional Buddhist school, and only four times trans-sectarian Buddhist organizations functioned as formal host. We observe here the paradox that Japanese mainline Buddhist groups sacrifice the cause of Tibetan Buddhism for the sake of maintaining good relations with Chinese Buddhism. In other words, their ostensible a-political stance in the end turns out to be very political.

*Fourth*, under the surface of the Dalai Lama's visits to Japan occasionally appear conflicts between Tibetan officials and Japanese supporters, as well as among Japanese supporters themselves.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the constant change of Japanese hosts is conspicuous. The discontinuity of their engagement indicates possible conflicts in the background caused by diverse interests or ulterior motives for hosting the Dalai Lama in Japan. Further, a group such as Agon-shū seems to have shifted allegiance from the Tibetan cause towards developing the China connection,<sup>42</sup> which may be the cause for not inviting the Dalai Lama anymore. Here we observe contradictions within the group of supporters of the Dalai Lama and Tibet. – Put in a broader context, internal discord can be observed also in the Tibetan Buddhist community itself which poses a considerable obstacle for achieving the political goals of preserving Tibetan culture, religion and ethnicity. Rivalries between the leaders of different orders during the last decades, such as the Dalai Lama (Gelugpa) and the Karmapa Lama (Kagyū) as well as the infighting within the Gelugpa order about the deity Dorje Shugden and related murders pose considerable obstacles for solving the Tibetan cause and discredit the leadership.<sup>43</sup>

*Fifth*, there is the social discrepancy between the official political stance of the Japanese Government and the main Buddhist denominations on the one hand, and on the other hand an increased interest in, and support of, the Tibetan cause among ordinary Japanese people, especially the young generation as well as individual Buddhist priests and temples. – A somewhat similar situation can be observed in the growing conflict between the Tibetan leadership in Dharamsala and young Tibetans in exile. The Dalai Lama's policy to pursue political

41. The website article about Gunji Hakudō's engagement mentions such a conflict with a Tibetan official, whereas in 1984 emerged a conflict between the main host Narita-san and a secondary host, Agon-shū.

42. Two years after having invited the Dalai Lama to the peace festival in Tokyo (1984), Agon-shū started activities in China (1986, 1988), including meetings with the President of the Chinese Buddhist Association (1990) and the Chinese Vice-President Wang Zhen (1991). (Agon Shū 1994: 37; cf. 40 f)

43. JT Febr. 8, 1997; Dec. 29, 2000; Dec. 8, 2002; Gassner 1999.

solutions through non-violent action, as well as his shift of political demand from independence (from China) to a relative autonomy, have drawn increased criticism from the younger generation of Tibetans who are frustrated with compromises and the lack of concrete results. (JT Febr. 21, 2000)

*Sixth*, in order to preserve the Tibetan culture and to pursue political activities, the Tibetan Government in Exile is constantly in need of financial support. However, since it sometimes received questionable funds, it later discredited the sincere striving for the Tibetan cause.<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion, based on the present account of the Dalai Lama's visits to Japan in the global context, it seems more likely to assume that in the future Tibetan Buddhists can expect more active and public support from Christian majorities and Buddhist minorities in the Western world than from major Buddhist organizations in Japan, in which they had put so much hope since the Dalai Lama's first visit to this country.

### Abbreviation

JT: *Japan Times*

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44. This is not only the case with Aum Shinri-kyō and Nembutsu-shū in recent decades in Japan, but starts internationally in the 1960s already when the CIA allotted secret funds to the Tibetans. (JT Sept. 19, 1998) The Dalai Lama has admitted this American support in his autobiography *Freedom in Exile* published 1990.

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