



BRILL

Japanese Buddhism in Austria

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Abstract

Drawing on archival research and interview data, this paper discusses the historical development as well as the present configuration of the Japanese Buddhist panorama in Austria, which includes Zen, Pure Land, and Nichiren Buddhism. It traces the early beginnings, highlights the key stages and activities in the expansion process, and sheds light on both denominational complexity and international entanglement. Fifteen years before any other European country (Portugal in 1998; Italy in 2000), Austria formally acknowledged Buddhism as a legally recognised religious society in 1983. Hence, the paper also explores the larger organisational context of the *Österreichische Buddhistische Religionsgesellschaft* (Austrian Buddhist Religious Society) with a focus on its Japanese Buddhist actors. Additionally, it briefly outlines the non-Buddhist Japanese religious landscape in Austria.

Keywords

Japanese Buddhism – Austria – Zen – Nichirenism – Pure Land Buddhism

1 A Brief Historical Panorama

The humble beginnings of Buddhism in Austria go back to Vienna-based Karl Eugen Neumann (1865–1915), who, inspired by his readings of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), like many others after him, turned to Buddhism in 1884. A trained Indologist with a doctoral degree from the University of Leipzig (1891), his translations from the Pāli Canon posthumously gained seminal status within the nascent Austrian Buddhist community over the next decades. His knowledge of (Indian) Mahāyāna thought was sparse and his assessment thereof was polemically negative (Hecker 1986: 109–111). He mentioned Japa-

nese Buddhism directly only once in passing, referring to the “association of Zen-sū” as an “order of nonverbal introspection,” thereby referencing Ryauon Fujishima’s *Le Bouddhisme japonais* (Japanese Buddhism, 1889) (Neumann 1911: 232). Buddhism in Austria during the closing years of the Habsburg Monarchy and the subsequent interwar and war periods was predominantly an intellectual affair, represented only by a few scattered Pāli tradition enthusiasts. Community building among Austro-Theravādins commenced in earnest soon after the end of World War II, resulting in the incorporation of the Buddhistische Gesellschaft Wien (BGW; Buddhist Society of Vienna) in 1948.

An early member and later BGW secretary, Franz Zouzelka (1923–1965) developed a particular penchant for Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗) after reading *Amida Buddha unsere Zuflucht* (Amida Buddha: Our Refuge, 1910) by the German Protestant theologian Hans Haas (1868–1934).¹ In November 1954, the BGW welcomed its first eminent international visitor Ōtani Kōshō 大谷光照 (1911–2002), the twenty-third abbot (*monshu* 門主) of Nishi Honganji 西本願寺.² While on a tour across Europe, he came to Vienna to deliver a talk on “gratitude,” which was subsequently published in the BGW bulletin. Allegedly, Friedrich Fenzl (1932–2014), later the founding father of Austrian Shin Buddhism (who joined the BGW in 1956 through Zouzelka), resolved to immerse himself into this tradition after reading this text (Fenzl 1993: 32).

A year later, Fritz Hungerleider (1920–1998; p. 1955–1976) was appointed the BGW’s second president, opening a period of gradually rising public visibility. Being of paternal Jewish descent, Hungerleider escaped the National Socialists in 1938 and travelled to Shanghai where he spent the war years. Surprisingly, it was not his exposure to the Chinese religious lifeworld but rather a copy of Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation, 1819), which he apparently found in a local bookstore, that had him turn his attention to Buddhism. Returning to Austria in 1946, Hungerleider joined the ranks of Pāli tradition connoisseurs. His increasing proclivity for meditation resulted in an eight-month sojourn to Japan in 1961, where he received training at the Kyoto-based Daitokuji 大徳寺, the head temple of the important Rinzaï 臨濟 branch of Zen 禪 Buddhism. Back in Europe, he hosted the very first intensive meditation retreat (*sesshin* 接心) in the German-speaking world in Roseburg near Hamburg in 1962. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Hungerleider was the Austrian face of Buddhism. Yet, despite his many

1 On Haas, see also Petersen (this volume).

2 That is, the head temple of the Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha 浄土真宗本願寺派, the largest Shin Buddhist denomination, followed closely by Shinshū Ōtani-ha 真宗大谷派.

efforts—comprising more than 1,000 lectures, numerous seminars, radio and TV appearances—the BGW and Buddhism overall remained marginal in numbers, likely not exceeding thirty regular practitioners at the time of his retirement in 1976 (Hutter 2001: 101).³

Notwithstanding this meagre outreach, culminating in the rejection of the application of the Buddhistische Gemeinschaft Österreichs (BGÖ; Buddhist Community of Austria)⁴ for formal acknowledgement by the authorities in 1975,⁵ various activities in particular during the first half of the 1970s set the stage for further expansion. In 1972, Erich Skrleta (1943–2010) established the mail order bookstore-cum-publishing house *Octopus*, which also released titles on Japanese Buddhism in translation, namely by Niwano Nikkyō 庭野日敬 (1906–1999), the founder of the Nichirenist Risshō Kōseikai 立正佼成会, and the cardinal Zen populariser in the West, Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966; see also Moriya in this volume). Importantly, *Octopus* gave life to *Bodhi Baum* (Bodhi Tree), the central organ of the BGÖ, published between 1976 and 1993. The most important contributors—aside from the fourth president, Walter Karwath (1919–1986; p. 1977–1986)—were Fenzl, who primarily wrote about Shin Buddhism, and Franz Ritter (b. 1947), who frequently used this medium to promote Shin Buddhist-derived Naikan 内観. Notably, since that time, Austria constitutes the largest hub of Naikan outside of Japan, with Ritter acting as the President of the International Naikan Association since 2016.

In November 1973, the fourteenth Dalai Lama (b. 1940) came to Vienna. While this was considered a “private” trip under the aegis of the then Roman Catholic Cardinal Franz König (1905–2004), he also attended a Q&A event organised by BGW. His visit, after which several more followed, not only paved

3 In contrast to Hutter’s observation, the official membership figure given for November 1976 is sixty-six people.

4 The BGW was renamed in November 1974. The change of name was reversed in 1976 upon the founding of the Österreichische Buddhistische Union (ÖBU; Austrian Buddhist Union). The latter was established as the new national umbrella organisation in connection with the foundation of the Buddhist Union of Europe (presently, the European Buddhist Union) in Paris a year earlier. In 1983, the ÖBU became the Österreichische Buddhistische Religionsgesellschaft (ÖBR; Austrian Buddhist Religious Society).

5 Since 1998, Austrian religious law stipulates a tripartite division of legal recognition: legally recognised churches and religious societies (*gesetzlich anerkannte Kirchen und Religionsgesellschaften*); state-registered religious confessional communities (*staatlich eingetragene religiöse Bekenntnisgemeinschaften*); and clubs/associations. Before, formal acknowledgement was only possible at the level of legally recognised churches and religious societies, involving a list of requirements—specifically that of a minimum membership (presently the threshold lies at circa 16,000 adherents)—met only by very few religious communities.

the way for many other visiting dignitaries, but heralded the advent of Tibetan Buddhism, which was soon to become the largest tradition within the Buddhist spectrum in Austria.⁶

In 1975/76, a former asylum for the blind in the village of Scheibbs in Lower Austria was turned into a countryside branch centre of BGÖ, henceforth serving as the key rallying point and major retreat/seminar site. In recognition of this achievement, the Scheibbs centre co-hosted—alongside the newly acquired BGW centre in Vienna's third district—the second annual meeting of the Buddhist Union of Europe in 1976. Japanese Buddhism-related events held in this pioneering period at the Scheibbs centre included seminars on Tendai 天台 (apparently the first ever conducted on European soil, headed by Hungerleider), Amidism (Fenzl), Sōtō 曹洞 Zen (François-Albert Viallet, 1908–1977), and Rinzai Zen (conducted by the Eigenji 永源寺 abbot Seki Yūhō 関雄峰, 1900–1982). Scheibbs was also chosen as place for the second European Shinshu Conference of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies in July/August 1982.⁷ Further lectures and seminars, mostly on Zen, were also organised elsewhere by local authorised teachers (e.g., Ritter via Seki Yūhō; Hungerleider) as well as visitors such as, prominently, Klaus Zernickow (b. 1940), Nagaya Kiichi 長屋喜一 (1895–1993), and Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle (1898–1990).

With the remigration of the Rinzai Zen priest (*oshō* 和尚) Herbert Koudela (Genro 玄朗, 1924–2010) in 1979, Austrian Buddhism entered a new era.⁸ Quickly attracting new practitioners—Sasaki's November 1979 lecture in Vienna had some 450 people in attendance—the Vienna centre was soon no longer able to accommodate its rising needs. Hence, in January 1980, the facilities were relocated to its present circa 700sqm location at Fleischmarkt, in Vienna's first district. The increasing visibility, based on an estimated 5,000 practitioners, was crowned by the long-sought formal acknowledgment as a legally recognised religious society in February 1983 (Prochaska 1999), rendering Austria the first European country to do so. Koudela became ÖBR president in 1986, serving until 2002.

6 In terms of membership, Tibetan Buddhism is followed by Zen, alongside its other East Asian manifestations as Chán, Sōn, and Thiền, as well as Nichirenism, mostly in its Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 guise.

7 The sixth and eighth European conferences were held in Vienna in August 1990 and August 1994, respectively.

8 Koudela was a disciple of Sasaki Jōshū 佐々木承周 (1907–2014) in the Myōshinji 妙心寺 lineage, to which he was introduced by fellow Austrian Zen practitioner (-cum-Benedictine) David Steindl-Rast (b. 1926) while living in the United States.

Another milestone in the history of (Japanese) Buddhism in Austria, and a sign of public and thus increasing political appreciation (actively supported by the top level of Austria's political elite, with the then President and Chancellor leading the way) was the erection of the Peace Pagoda in Vienna in September 1983, a twenty-eight metre tall stupa located at the banks of the Danube River at Handelskai. On a visit to Vienna a year earlier, the founder of Nichirenist Nipponzan Myōhōji 日本山妙法寺, Fujii Nichidatsu 藤井日達 (1885–1985), advised to have the then fifty-third of some eighty pagodas worldwide built at present—the first in a Western capital, and the second in Europe. Since its inauguration, the Peace Pagoda (and its adjacent temple) is overseen by Nipponzan Myōhōji monk Masunaga Gyōsei 増永行精 (b. 1945) and has developed into a central meeting point for the Vienna-based Buddhist community. Thus, it has also become the venue for the ÖBR's annual Vesak festival in Vienna.

Nipponzan Myōhōji, like the similarly Nichirenist but better known Sōka Gakkai, whose beginnings in Austria date back to the 1970s and its pioneer Nakamura Yoshio 中村嘉夫 (b. 1942), represent a new category of movements within the growing panorama of Japanese and broader East Asian Buddhism in Austria. That is to say, both were established by (Japanese) migrants rather than Western practitioners. While the traceable appearance of ethnic actors dates back to the 1960s, more often than not these communities remained very small, were short-lived, and invisible, for their activities were limited to a close-knit circle chiefly comprised of other expats. Additionally, such communities commonly had no lasting followers. A possible exception is the Shitenōji 四天王寺 tradition introduced by Harada Shinsei 原田晋誠 (1939–2006) between 1981 and 1984 at his Buddhist cultural centre in Hinterbrühl near Vienna. Yet, Harada had more impact as a martial artist teaching his own style, which was later named Jigenryū 慈眼流, than as a Buddhist priest.

Whereas Sōka Gakkai eventually became a fully-fledged member organisation of the ÖBR, Nipponzan Myōhōji has not.⁹ This is not unusual. In fact, many ethnic as well as otherwise small-scale Buddhist communities are, for various reasons (such as an anti-bureaucracy sentiment, general indifference, or ephemerality), not affiliated with the ÖBR.¹⁰ Of the estimated around 30,000 Buddhists in Austria (figures for the late 1990s indicate up to 20,000 practitioners), little more than one tenth are registered with the ÖBR. Out of the current total of thirty-two “orders and dharma groups” (*Orden und Dharma-gruppen*) enjoying membership status at the ÖBR, only five are related to

9 Instead, Nipponzan Myōhōji is listed as ÖBR “institute” alongside the Neunkirchen (Lower Austria)-based Naikan Neue Welt Institut (New World Institute) led by Ritter.

10 On the ÖBR, see Prochaska-Meyer 2018: 44–50.

Japanese Buddhism. These include BodhidharmaZendo (founded by Koudela) in Vienna; Sōka Gakkai (operating as Österreich Soka Gakkai International), the largest single Buddhist movement in Austria, headquartered in Vienna; Puregg Phönixwolke (i.e., Phoenix Cloud) Sangha, headquartered in Dienten am Hochkönig (Salzburg), following the Sōtō tradition of Otagawa Kōbun 乙川弘文 (1938–2002) and formally led by Vanja Palmers (b. 1948) and Steindl-Rast; the Senkōzan Sanghe Nembutsu Do Dharmagruppe¹¹ led by Ernst Stockinger (b. 1970) and headquartered in Linz (Upper Austria), representing the Naikan-inspired Shin-Zen hybrid tradition of Senkōbō 専光坊 in the West;¹² and the Zen Meditationszentrum Mishoan (i.e., Zen Meditation Centre *Mishōan* 微笑庵) founded by Fleur Sakura Wöss (b. 1953) and her husband Paul Matusek (b. 1948) in the Rinzai tradition of Shimano Eidō 嶋野榮道 (1932–2018), headquartered in Vienna.

Since the official recognition of the ÖBR, Buddhism in Austria gradually entered the religious mainstream. Whereas the first wave of post-World War II practitioners until the 1960s were predominantly staid middle-class intellectuals, mostly of rather advanced age, during the 1970s and early 1980s, new practitioners widely hailed from alternative milieus. However, since the late 1980s and 1990s, the social composition has increasingly diversified, as has the organisational spectrum and the related range of offerings—a rising “new complexity” (Herbert 2006: 171) within the Buddhist landscape. In the following sections, the Japanese-Buddhist share in this surging variety will be tentatively delineated, divided into the “big three” of Austro-Japanese Buddhism—Zen, Pure Land Buddhism, and Nichirenism. First, for the sake of further contextualisation, a few remarks shall be made concerning the overall past and present state of Japanese religions in Austria. In the concluding remarks, Japanese Buddhism’s contribution to the Buddhist and general religious history of Austria is briefly summarised.

2 Japanese Religions in Austria

A tentative historical survey rather unexpectedly reveals a bustling—albeit chiefly small-scale and perpetually renewing—presence of Japanese religions in Austria. The dominant aforementioned Buddhist actors aside, two traditions are especially visible to the public due to their legally obtained status:

11 Senkōzan Sange Nenbutsudō 専光山懺悔念佛堂.

12 Senkōbō Buddhism (*Senkōbō buppō* 専光坊佛法) has been devised by Sanbō 三宝-trained Usami Shūe 宇佐美秀慧 (1930–2019), abbot of the Senkōbō in Kuwana 桑名.

the Japanese Christian community and, more specifically vis-à-vis the non-Japanese public, the new religious movement *Kōfuku no Kagaku* 幸福の科学 (1986). The Christian community is naturally divided into a Catholic and a Protestant segment that is largely localised in Vienna. State-recognised Catholicism and Protestantism both maintain Japanese affiliates, namely the *Uin Nihongo Katorikku Kyōkai* ウィーン日本語カトリック教会 (Vienna Japanese Language Catholic Church) and the *Uin Nihongo Kirisuto Kyōkai* ウィーン日本語キリスト教会 (Vienna Japanese Language Christian Church), respectively. The former, comprising of some forty adherents, emerged in the 1980s and was formally incorporated in 2008. The latter, with some twenty core followers, was launched in 1974 and received formal status in 2003.

Operating out of a Vienna-based branch centre (*shibu* 支部), *Kōfuku no Kagaku* (also known in English as Happy Science) is a prolific and visible provider for a mostly esoteric-minded non-Japanese clientele that also brings along a general interest in things Buddhist.¹³ Its modest beginnings reach back to 1989, a few years after its establishment in Japan. Apart from the Japanese nucleus consisting of some five followers, *Kōfuku no Kagaku* continues to have a highly volatile membership, oscillating between ten to twenty individuals (Pokorny and Winter 2012).

The remaining groups of Japanese descent retain a low-key profile, rendering them hardly traceable and largely accessible only to fellow (ethnic Japanese and, occasionally, Latin American) co-religionist expats. Two illustrative examples are Vienna-based *Tenrikyō* 天理教 (1838), dating back to the healer-cum-medium Nakayama Miki 中山みき (1798–1887), and Taniguchi Masaharu's 谷口雅春 (1893–1985) *Seichō no Ie* 生長の家 (1930), both of which operate in close-knit settings of family and friends. The latter has been around—perhaps with some interruptions—since at least the late 1980s.

Given their loose structure, these diasporic groups are more often than not ephemeral, but also easily revived. An example of one such “historical” movement is Kitamura Sayo's 北村サヨ (1900–1967) *Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō* 天照皇大神宮教 (1945), which seems to have been in operation around the mid-1960s; however, its activities soon fell silent. A recently resuscitated move-

13 For many years, Austrian *Kōfuku no Kagaku* outwardly embraced a contiguity towards Buddhism. For example, emically, it has been the spirits of *Nikkō* 日興 (1246–1333) and, thereafter, his master *Nichiren* 日蓮 (1222–1282), who motivated the *Kōfuku no Kagaku* founder, *Ōkawa Ryūhō* 大川隆法 (b. 1956), to commence his religious career in earnest in the first place. Although in line with the shifting trajectory of the Japanese parent organisation, references to Buddhism have been reduced, the connection is still made to (at least temporarily) attract esoteric seekers with a penchant for Buddhism.

ment is Sekai Kyūseikyō Izunome Kyōdan 世界救世教いつのめ教団, specifically through its healing practice *jōrei* 浄霊, which involves the channeling of “divine light” through one’s palm. This group is the largest one within the Sekai Kyūseikyō (1935) cluster, which formed after the death of the founder Okada Mokichi 岡田茂吉 (1882–1955).¹⁴

A new and increasingly visible part of the Japanese religious landscape in Austria is Shugendō 修験道, a tradition notably influenced by esoteric Buddhism. Its representative, receiving authorisation from the small Higashine 東根-based Koryū Shugen Honshū 古流修験本宗 in 2011, is Austrian and originally hails from a martial arts background. Notably, the local Japanese martial arts scene, particularly *jūdō*, *karate*, *jūjutsu*, and *aikidō*, serves as a constant “spiritual” provider, growing in public perception following World War II and especially from the 1960s to 1980s. Finally, another incipient field is that of anime- and manga-based hyperreal or fiction-based religiosity such as, most prominently, Haruhiism, which draws on a divine teenage *manga* protagonist. Japanese hyperreal religiosity in Austria, as elsewhere, serves as an experimental faith reservoir recurrently tapped by younger generations (Buljan 2017).

3 Zen

Within Austria’s Japanese Buddhist portfolio, the Zen tradition expresses itself in the most diverse forms. While the beginnings of Zen praxis go back to 1962 and Fritz Hungerleider’s first *sesshin*, some of its doctrinal aspects were embraced earlier by a wider public, most saliently through Eugen Herrigel’s (1884–1955) *Zen in der Kunst des Bogenschießens* (Zen in the Art of Archery), published in 1948.¹⁵ Hungerleider continued to regularly hold retreats until the end of his BGW and later ÖBU presidency (from 1955 to 1976). Towards the end of his active career, Hungerleider also became a sort of television personality deemed Austria’s chief connoisseur of Buddhism.

Opportunities for Zen retreats increased substantially from the mid-1970s. Apart from the then newly launched Scheibbs centre, *sesshin* were notably conducted in Catholic venues, such as the Missionshaus St. Gabriel (Maria Enzersdorf) run by the Society of the Divine Word, or the Cistercian Zwettl Abbey. Small wonder that Zen courses began to be offered by Catholic priests as well, notably by Karl Obermayer (b. 1939) as early as 1973. The famous Jesuit Zen

14 For detailed information on the new religious movements mentioned in this paper, see Pokorny and Winter (2018).

15 On Herrigel, see also Porcu (2008); and Brandt and Prohl (in Part II of this special issue).

teacher Enomiya-Lassalle had Obermayer embark on the Zen path, on which he later became the disciple of Nagaya Kiichi, an important Zen populariser in Germany who also held frequent retreats in Austria in the 1970s and 1980s. “Catholic Zen” has gained a lasting presence ever since, with Obermayer regularly inviting international Zen teachers to Austria, such as French Ōbaku 黄檗-trained Claude Durix (1921–2012) and the Indian Jesuit Sanbō-trained Ama Samy (b. 1936). Today, Obermayer’s Zendo is located in Vienna’s fifth district, with many of his disciples offering Zen praxis across Austria as well as abroad. As before, Zen retreats keep being organised chiefly in Catholic venues, including the Dominican nunnery in Kirchberg am Wechsel, the Cistercian nunnery Marienkron, the Bildungshaus St. Hippolyt and the Bildungszentrum St. Benedikt of the Diocese St. Pölten, and others.

A first stable group of Zen practitioners meeting weekly was formed under Franz Ritter (Yōshin 養心) once a permanent Buddhist centre was established in Vienna at Dannebergplatz in 1976. However, Ritter largely ceased his formal Zen teaching activities in the ÖBU following the arrival of Herbert “Genro” Koudela in June 1979. Koudela had left his native Vienna after World War II, eventually emigrating to the United States in 1954 where he settled as a portraitist in Philadelphia. In the early 1970s he met David Steindl-Rast, who, as a disciple of Suzuki Shunryū 鈴木俊隆 (1904–1971), was practicing Sōtō Zen in the Benedictine Mount Saviour Monastery in Pine City, New York. During one of his retreats, Koudela met the visiting Sasaki Jōshū alongside his student German Gisela Midwer (Gesshin 月心, 1931–1999). The latter invited him to a *sesshin* in Sasaki’s Mount Baldy Zen Center, where he donned the monk’s robe in April 1973.

His father’s declining health saw Koudela return to Austria, quickly taking the reins of the Austrian Zen community (Prochaska and Prochaska 1994: 9–20). Sasaki and Midwer were to become frequent guests of the newly formed BodhidharmaZendo (formally incorporated as Verein zur Förderung des Zen-Buddhismus, or Association for the Promotion of Zen Buddhism, in December 1980), which consequently became the Austrian rendezvous point for the Japanese and international Rinzai community (Erber 1989: 29–32). His responsibilities for both the BodhidharmaZendo and the ÖBR as its president (1986–2002) aside, Koudela was frequently invited for *sesshin* abroad. In 1993, for example, he became *oshō* of the Oslo Zazenkai (presently, Rinzai Zen Senter Oslo). For more than two decades, Koudela was the lynchpin of Austrian Zen. To this day, his approach is echoed by many of his former disciples who have gone on to form their own small-scale Zen circles throughout Austria since the 1980s. Koudela passed away in 2010 due to lung cancer and was succeeded by American William Ekeson (Kigen 希玄), a fellow *oshō* (since 1999) of the

Sasaki lineage. Today, BodhidharmaZendo has some 200 registered members with around one quarter practicing weekly.¹⁶

Especially from the 1990s, the surging number of international Zen retreat offerings by diverse teachers in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, stimulated the formation or transplantation of new traditions (see Fujii, this volume). Practitioners could easily switch between *oshō/rōshi*, giving way to a growing hybridisation within the Zen spectrum. For example, in the late 1990s, first in the context of Zen management seminars, Daishin Zen 大心禪 was introduced to Austria. Daishin Zen was co-founded by Hinnerk Polenski (b. 1959) in Germany as a blending of Hōkōji 方広寺 Rinzai Zen and Karlfried Graf Dürckheim's (1896–1988) Zen-inspired Initiation Therapy (*Initiatische Therapie*). For many years, Fleur Sakura Wöss (Nenge Mishō 拈華微笑) represented this tradition in Austria before affiliating herself with New York-based Shizuno Eidō, converting her *dōjō* 道場 into the Zen Meditationszentrum Mishoan—presently located in Vienna's ninth district with some forty members—and now pursuing her own idiosyncratic Zen way.¹⁷

In all Austrian federal states, there are multiple individuals providing Zen training, many of them renting rooms in gyms and existing pan-Buddhist facilities, or using their private flats. Others, like Wöss, maintain fully-fledged *dōjō*. The field is diverse and highly dynamic. One can barely keep track of the changing portfolio of Zen offerings. Overall, the early Rinzai influence on Austrian Zen, crystallising most resonantly in Vienna, has left a lasting imprint on the Zen community to this day.

However, the Rinzai impact is increasingly challenged by the Sōtō tradition, which gained an organisational foothold in the late 1980s. Similar to Rinzai, Austrian Sōtō manifests in a wide range of groups and teachers. Well-known groups include Mushoju (Mushojū 無所住) Zen Dojo Wien, Daimanji (大満寺) Dojo (Zen Dojo Baden), Zen Gruppe Wien, Puregg Phönixwolke Sangha, and Daijishi (大慈悲) Soto Zen Sangha. The former three relate themselves to the France-based Association Zen Internationale (AZI, 1970) and its founder Deshimaru Taisen 弟子丸泰仙 (1914–1982), one of the key exponents of Zen propagation in Europe. Mushoju (formally registered since 2003 as Zen Dojo Wien. Verein zur Förderung der Zen-Praxis und des Buddhismus in der Tradition des Soto-Zen) is led by Richard Fürst (Kaihō 開法), a disciple (like the

16 Erber (1989: 30) gives membership figures for 1982, 1985, and 1989, which are 42, 89, and 65 practitioners, respectively.

17 The Daishin tradition still operates, albeit with a largely reduced outreach, in Vienna and Salzburg. With Wöss severing formal ties, the Daishin tradition also lost its ÖBR membership status.

Daimanji founder Helmut David) of the Deshimaru disciple and later AZI head Swiss Michel Bovay (1944–2009).

The Puregg Phönixwolke Sangha seeks to carry on the lineage of another crucial Zen propagator, namely Otagawa Kōbun, as transmitted by Vanja Palmers and David Steindl-Rast. The core group has affiliates in Vienna (Sitzgruppe Puregg), Innsbruck (Kannon-Do), and Bregenz (Zazen-Gruppe Bregenz). Daijishi represents the Vienna-based Austrian chapter of the internationally active Sanshin Zen Community (szc) headquartered in Bloomington, Indiana in the United States. The szc was founded in 1996 by Okumura Shōhaku 奥村正博 (b. 1948), a chief disciple of the Antaiji 安泰寺 abbot Uchiyama Kōshō 内山興正 (1912–1998). Uchiyama resumed the lineage of his predecessor Sawaki Kōdō 澤木興道 (1880–1965), who was also formative for Deshimaru. Okumura's designated successor, Hoko Kamegis, ordained the present head of Austrian Daijishi Andreas Hagn (b. 1964). Hagn was previously a disciple in the Sōtō lineage of the American Richard Dudley Baker (b. 1936), who, like Steindl-Rast, is a disciple of Suzuki Shunryū.

While there is no standalone Ōbaku-related group in Austria, practice within the Sanbō tradition is offered by Zendo Rosinagasse in Vienna since 2007. Its founder, Christoph Singer, is a direct disciple of the German Benedictine Zen master Willigis Jäger (b. 1925). After initial training under Enomiya-Lassalle, Jäger became disciple of Yamada Kōun 山田耕雲 (1907–1989), the head of the Sanbō tradition and successor of its founder Yasutani Hakuun 安谷白雲 (1885–1973).

Moreover, two partly overlapping areas can be found at the periphery of the Austrian Zen domain. On the one hand, there are offerings that focus on specific traditional Zen-inspired arts by highlighting their meditational aspects—*kyūdō* 弓道, *kadō* 華道, *chadō* 茶道, *iaidō* 居合道, *shodō* 書道. On the other hand, there are offerings that pursue alternative cross-traditional approaches towards Zen or promote idiosyncratic Zen derivatives (e.g., *Zen Vipassanā*, *Zen Yoga*, *MBCT*, *Embodimentwerk*).

4 Pure Land Buddhism

Japanese Pure Land teachings (Jōdokyō 淨土教) in Austria's past and present are largely within the purview of the Jōdo Shinshū 淨土真宗 tradition.¹⁸ For

18 On Jōdo Shinshū in the UK and Germany, see also Matsunaga; and Nottelmann-Feil in Part II of this special issue.

decades, it was not Vienna but the city of Salzburg that represented the hub of Austrian Shin Buddhism; its chief advocate for more than half a century being Friedrich Fenzl (Myōshin 妙心) (cf. Zotz 2007). Fenzl's first contact with Buddhism occurred in 1949 at the Salzburg University library, where he stumbled upon Friedrich Zimmermann's (1852–1917; Subhādra Bickshu) *Buddhistischer Katechismus* (Buddhist Catechism, 1888). Upon becoming a BGW member in 1956, he came to learn more about the Shin tradition, initially mentored by the Honganji-ha sympathiser Franz Zouzelka. A reinforcement of his commitment towards Shin was triggered by an encounter in Berlin in 1960 with the German Karl Erdmann Harry Pieper (1907–1978), a former Arya Maitreya Mandala member who became Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha adherent in 1954, subsequently serving as its European representative. Fenzl became a devoted Shin Buddhist under the guidance of Pieper and was appointed by him as secretary for foreign affairs two years later. At the time, he made some humble attempts to form a Shin Buddhist prison chaplaincy in Austria. From 1965 he collaborated on the publication of the German-language Shin Buddhist journal *Mahāyāna*, which ran in nearly twenty issues until 1974. In 1981, he resumed his editing activities with *Amida* and later *Rundbriefe* (Fenzl n.d.: 5–6).

From September 1968 until early 1970, Fenzl resided in Kyoto intensifying his Shin studies, which he carried out at Ryūkoku 龍谷 University, which is affiliated with the Honganji-ha. A crucial subject in his intellectual engagement ever since has been the area of Shin social ethics. Back in Austria, Fenzl resumed his teaching, writing, and overall networking, establishing the inter-traditional Buddhistische Arbeitskreis Salzburg (Buddhist Working Group of Salzburg) in September 1975, which was formally incorporated in June 1977 as Buddhistische Gemeinschaft Salzburg (Buddhist Community of Salzburg).¹⁹ A year earlier, he was made executive board member of the Buddhist Union of Europe. In August 1980, he founded the Buddhistische Gemeinschaft Jōdo Shinshū in Österreich (Buddhist Community of Jōdo Shinshū in Austria), whose inaugural address was delivered by Ōtani Kōshō (Fenzl 1980). Fenzl's administrative enthusiasm led to the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies convening its European Shinshu Conference three times in Austria (1982, 1990, 1994).²⁰ Moreover, in 1993, the Buddhistische Gemeinschaft Salzburg hosted the European Buddhist Union annual general meeting in Hallein. Yet despite Fenzl's organi-

19 While the inaugural speech was given by Hungerleider on a general topic (*Was der Buddha wirklich lehrte*), Fenzl's keynote addressed the history and arts of Japanese Buddhism (*Geschichte und Kunst des japanischen Buddhismus*).

20 For the 1982 event, see Fenzl 1982. The *Shin Buddhist: Magazine of Shin Buddhists* No. 1 (1993) and No. 3 (1995) reported on the latter two conferences.

sational achievements, his immediate Shin Buddhist circle remained marginal at all times. For example, in 1975, the entire German-speaking Shin Buddhist community comprised some twenty devotees, a figure never reached by the Austrian Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha during its existence.

Whereas Fenzl's death in 2014 concluded the official presence of Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha in Austria, two Shinshū Ōtani-ha faithful—Dieter Pasching and his partner Komatsu Yuka 小松由佳—launched their activities in Vienna the same year. Their Hoju Group (Hōjukai 宝樹会) was established in January 2017 alongside the electronic bilingual (German/Japanese) *Sakura Journal* (*Sakura tsūshin* さくら通信). While a student at Kurashiki Sakuyō くらしき作陽 University, Komatsu was introduced to Shin Buddhism by one of her professors, Okamoto Hideo 岡本英夫 (b. 1947). A graduate of Ōtani University, Okamoto is presently head priest (*jūshoku* 住職) of Tokusenji 徳泉寺 in Hamada, Shimane Prefecture. He regularly travels to Europe, lecturing in Vienna and Bratislava. The Hoju Group follows his particular Shinshū Ōtani-ha approach. Meetings are held irregularly, usually joined by a dozen or so people.

Also indebted to Shin Buddhism is the Senkōbō tradition practiced by the Senkozan Sanghe Nembutsu Do Dharmagruppe, which operates a temple in Gramastetten/Linz (Upper Austria) as well as a *dōjō* in Vienna (and until recently in Bodingsbach/Lunz am See). Senkōbō Buddhism is an idiosyncratic combination of *zazen* 座禪 and *nenbutsu* 念仏 while also involving, among others, a focus on Naikan practice. It was the Naikan connection which introduced the later Austrian adherents, all of them being Naikan guides, to this small one-temple tradition. Hence, Senkōbō priests (*oshō*) are also providers (qua interviewers or *mensetsusha* 面接者) of stand-alone Naikan.

The Senkōbō tradition was brought to Austria by Josef Hartl (Yokō 与光, 1961–2005) in 1994. His wife Helga Hartl-Margreiter (Nyoren 如蓮, b. 1948) took refuge a year later and was eventually ordained in 2005.²¹ Authorised by their *rōshi* 老師 and Senkōbō founder Usami Shūe, they established the first Senkōbō temple in 1997 in Bodingsbach/Lunz am See (Lower Austria) alongside a *dōjō* in Vienna, then incorporated as an association and became an ÖBR affiliate in 2000. In 2008, Ernst Stockinger (Shishin 至心) received ordination and opened a Senkōbō temple in Gramastetten/Linz. Following Hartl-Margreiter's retirement as the head of Austrian Senkōbō in 2017, Stockinger assumed the vacant position a year later. During its heyday, from the early 2000s to the mid-2010s, Senkōbō Buddhism had a few dozen practitioners.

21 Prior to her Senkōbō career, Hartl-Margreiter received Zen training under Koudela in the BodhidharmaZendo.

Not all Naikan guides in Austria belong to the Senkōbō tradition, but almost all are Buddhists, like the Naikan founder Yoshimoto Ishin 吉本伊信 (1916–1988) himself. Raised in a Shin-Buddhist environment in Yamatokōriyama 大和郡山, Nara Prefecture, he later turned to a Jōdo Shinshū Honganji-ha-derived esoteric group called Taikan-an 諦観庵 in Fuse, Osaka. Taikan-an stressed an ascetic salvational practice, *mishirabe* 身調べ, which became the source of Yoshimoto's own development, that is, *naikanhō* 内観法 (Introspection Method). He devised Naikan to enable ordinary people to achieve salvational insights (or have at least a positive psychological impact) similar to that offered through successful *mishirabe*, but without the ascetic obstacles. Hence, Naikan is commonly labelled a form of Japanese psychotherapy.²² He affiliated his later Yamatokōriyama-based Naikan *dōjō* with Shinshū Kibeha 真宗木辺派 in 1955, from which he obtained ordination five years earlier (Pokorny 2016).

Naikan was slowly introduced to Europe (France and Germany) in the 1970s. The first publicly accessible one-week seminar was conducted in Scheibbs in 1980 under the Yoshimoto disciple Ishii Akira 石井光 (b. 1946), Naikan's chief international propagator. The event was organised by Franz Ritter, who had met Ishii during a Zen journey in Japan two years before. Ritter went on to become the first European Naikan guide in 1985; a year later (June 1986), he established the Neue Welt Institut in Purkersdorf near Vienna, the first Naikan centre in Austria and Europe (Pokorny forthcoming). Further centres were opened in 1990 by Roland Dick (b. 1946) in Saalfelden, Salzburg (Naikan-Zentrum Salzburg), in 1992 by Hartl and Hartl-Margreiter in Vienna (Naikanhaus), in 2005 by Johanna Schuh (b. 1968) in Vienna (Insightvoice Naikan Center Vienna), in 2007 by Stockinger in Gramastetten/Linz (Naikan Zentrum Oberösterreich), as well as by Joseph Badegruber (b. 1955) in Kirschlag bei Linz (Bildungshaus Breitenstein), thus rendering the Austrian Naikan community the largest outside Japan.

In 1994, the Second International Naikan Congress was brought to Vienna (the first one was held in 1991 in Tokyo) due to the efforts of Ritter, who acted as the European representative of the International Naikan Association.²³ The Congress attracted some media attention, and it was in particular in reference to Naikan's successful application within the Japanese penal system that

22 Whereas in Japan Naikan in its application is oft-times explicitly stripped of its religious undertones and origins, the Austrian Naikan guides commonly clearly (and proudly) recognise its Buddhist context. However, its denominational provenance (i.e., Shin Buddhism) is deemed less important.

23 The Sixth International Naikan Congress in 2006 was hosted in Austria as well (Breitenau in Lower Austria).

had Austrian Naikan gain additional traction. That is to say, the correctional applicability of Naikan piqued the interest of the head of the Gerasdorf youth detention centre (Lower Austria), where Naikan was offered by Ritter and Hartl between 1995 and 2011.²⁴ In its forty years of history in Austria, Naikan (in a variety of forms) has been experienced by a few thousand individuals. Notwithstanding its outreach, Naikan is still relatively little known even among Buddhists, Japanophiles, or psychotherapists.²⁵

Representing Jōdoshū 浄土宗 in Austria is the Vienna-based Amida Tao Sangha Zentrum under the lead of Alfred Müller and its two tiny spin-offs in Neudörfel and Liezen. It is affiliated to Endō Ryōkyū's 遠藤暁及 (b. 1956) internationally active Tao Sanga タオサンガ with its parent temple, the Jōdoshū Wadaji 浄土宗和田寺, in Kyoto. Endō, a well-known *shiatsu* master, assigns his self-devised healing programmes a Jōdoshū (Chinzeiha 鎮西派) identity, which he places within the tradition of the early twentieth-century Illuminism (*kōmyōshugi* 光明主義) reform movement by Yamazaki Bennei 山崎弁栄 (1859–1920). While the *nenbutsu* is given increasing practical prominence, the *shiatsu* school character of the Amida Tao Sangha Zentrum remains central.

5 Nichirenism

In terms of adherents, Austrian Nichirenism is largely tantamount to Sōka Gakkai (1930), whose first missionary, Nakamura Yoshio, arrived in October 1969 (Pokorny 2014). Already ten years earlier (June 1959), the Vienna-based Austrian Catholic News Agency *Kathpress* had issued a negative report about Sōka Gakkai, triggered by the rising visibility (and continued political success) of the movement in Japan. Several more (harshly) critical articles were released in the national media during the 1960s. In contrast, however, the overall European presence of the movement at that time was virtually nil, save for a few individuals based in France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom respectively.²⁶

Emically, it was a journey across Europe by the then president Ikeda Daisaku 池田大作 (b. 1928)—which also brought him and his entourage to Vienna in October 1961—that gave momentum to *kōsen rufu* 広宣流布, that is, the

24 Likewise, from early 1999 to late 2000, Hartl and Schuh offered Naikan at the Favoriten correctional facility in Vienna.

25 A brief emic account of Austrian Naikan as well as vignettes of its chief protagonists can, for example, be found in Kaspari, Lendawitsch, and Ritter (2015).

26 On Sōka Gakkai in Italy, see also Stortini in this volume.

spread of Nichiren Buddhism in Europe. Nakamura, who had joined Sōka Gakkai in February 1962 and eventually came to serve as chapter chief (*shibuchō* 支部長) overseeing some 300 members, left Tokyo in early June 1969 as a missionary originally bound for Switzerland. Yet, visa problems forced him to relocate to Vienna, where he was to pioneer the Austrian Sōka Gakkai instead, which was formerly called Österreichische Nichiren Shoshu (Austrian Nichiren Shoshu) until the 1991 split. Initially, the Vienna-based chapter was predominantly a rallying point for Japanese expat co-religionists. By late 1974, the group was comprised of fifteen adult members. Having settled amid the local environment, the strictly ethnic orientation loosened. A first non-Japanese adherent joined in early 1975. By May 1981, shortly before Ikeda's second sojourn to Austria in late June, already two thirds of the formally altogether thirty-seven (of which half were considered active) followers were non-Japanese.

Its small size notwithstanding, Nakamura's sustained Japanese and newly furnished European Sōka Gakkai networks provided heightened visibility to the Austrian movement within the wider Sōka Gakkai community. Apparently, this was the very reason for Ikeda's decision to include Vienna in his itinerary in 1981, virtually at the last minute. Starting in the 1980s, Austrian Sōka Gakkai activities reached out to the public, noticeably for the first time through the world touring (1982–1988) exhibition "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" in 1983, which was hosted in the Vienna United Nations headquarters.²⁷ In June 1991, a few months prior to the excommunication of the Japanese parent organisation by its clerical umbrella movement Nichiren Shōshū 日蓮正宗 in November, the Austrian chapter was incorporated as an association, namely the Österreich Soka Gakkai International—Verein zur Förderung von Frieden, Kultur und Erziehung (Austria Soka Gakkai International—Association for the Promotion of Peace, Culture, and Education). In 1995, the Austrian headquarters moved into a new and representative (Shinanomachi-funded)²⁸ centre-cum-mansion, the Villa Windisch-Grätz, located on the outskirts of Vienna in the fourteenth district.

The next decisive step was the successful membership application to the ÖBR, approved in June 2001 following heated debates within the ÖBR Sangharat (Sangha Council). On the one hand, the key point of criticism raised was that Sōka Gakkai apparently centred on a cult of personality pertaining to its third president (and head of Soka Gakkai International) Ikeda. On the other

27 Since 1981, Sōka Gakkai is accredited within various United Nations organisations. Sōka Gakkai thus maintains a United Nations presence also in Austria.

28 That is, the area in Tokyo where the Sōka Gakkai Headquarters complex is based.

hand, despite its long-time presence, Austrian Sōka Gakkai previously barely engaged with other Buddhist actors in the country. The controversy among the Sangharat members was ultimately resolved, partly owing to a positive expert opinion solicited from a well-known Austrian scholar of religion.

In 2013, Nakamura retired and was succeeded by the long-term adherent (since 1986) and freelance photographer Lawrence “Larry” Williams (b. 1956). At the time, the Austrian movement reported 853 members, which makes it the biggest single Buddhist community in Austria. A watershed event marked the aforementioned excommunication, for it sent ripples through the global movement, also engendering a schism among Austrian Sōka Gakkai-affiliated Nichirenists. As elsewhere, a group of Nichiren Shōshū loyalists dissented from Sōka Gakkai, later (2000) formally incorporating their own association—Nichiren Shoshu Austria—under the lead of Elisabeth Wilkens. The group, which remained small-scale with only a handful of practitioners, is presently largely defunct.

Another neo-Nichirenist lay movement occasionally receiving some public attention is Risshō Kōseikai 立正佼成会. Although it does not maintain a local branch—there are merely a few scattered expat followers—its well-known engagement in interfaith dialogue initiatives also connects it to Vienna. That is to say, the founder’s granddaughter and designated president Niwano Kōshō 庭野光祥 (b. 1968) is a member of the Vienna-based KAICIID (King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue) board of directors, representing Buddhism.

The second (much smaller) pillar of Austrian Nichirenism is Nipponzan Myōhōji, represented by Masunaga Gyōsei, who was personally appointed to this role by its founder, Fujii Nichidatsu. Coming from Scandinavia in March 1982, several Nipponzan Myōhōji members travelled to Vienna in order to participate in a peace march. Upon recommendation by the ÖBU, two monks of the Nipponzan Myōhōji party were directed to a local businesswoman named Elisabeth Lindmayer (b. 1946), who shared with them her vision to build a stupa in Vienna. The monks were delighted and sought Fujii’s approval. Being in Europe at the time, Fujii came for a brief visit and gave permission for the project, whose foundation was laid on the Nagasaki atomic bombing commemoration day on August 9, 1982.

The Peace Pagoda (*heiwa bussharitō* 平和仏舎利塔) initiative at Handelskai received wide support by Austria’s then political elite, notably, Federal President Rudolf Kirchschläger (1915–2000), with whom Fujii met prior to the inaugural event; Chancellor Bruno Kreisky (1911–1990); and Minister of Education (and later Vienna Mayor) Helmut Zilk (1927–2008). Since its opening in September 1983 in the presence of Fujii and some two thousand spectators

(Lyon 1983), it serves as the key Buddhist landmark in the country.²⁹ A temple replacing the adjacent hut and offering space for some fifty adherents was built in 1992. Events of Nipponzan Myōhōji's ritual calendar variously attract between 20 to 300 people or more, particularly when the Peace Pagoda serves as annual venue for the pan-Buddhist Vienna Vesak festival. The daily chanting (*odaimoku* お題目) practice (5:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.) forms the heart of the loose community centring on Masunaga, irregularly attended by between a handful and two dozen predominantly non-Asian adherents. Once a year, on 6 August (i.e., the day of the Hiroshima nuclear bomb drop), Masunaga and several of the lay members participate in a peace march across Vienna's city centre as a group by holding up a Nipponzan Myōhōji banner.

6 Concluding Remarks

Japanese Buddhism was and remains a vital part of both the Buddhist and the general religious landscape in Austria. Taking the various institutionalised strands together, Japanese Buddhism presently holds the largest share of organised Buddhism in Austria, with an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 practitioners. More notably, the sum of non-Buddhist actors within the local Japanese religious cosmos is eclipsed by the Buddhist one. Likewise, of the four East Asian “dhyāna traditions,” it is Zen which clearly outpaces Sōn, Chán, and Thiền in visibility and membership.³⁰

Significantly, central figures of post-World War II Buddhism in Austria largely hailed from a Japanese Buddhist background—Presidents Hungerleider (p. 1955–1976) and Koudela (p. 1986–2002), the Scheibbs and *Bodhi Baum* pioneer Ritter, and Fenzl, who spearheaded Buddhism in the west of Austria. They and many others contributed significantly to give Austrian Buddhism a saliently Japanese Buddhist guise in the public consciousness.

A striking feature of Austro-Japanese Buddhism is its denominational variety, specifically within the Zen gamut. Nichirenism, in terms of adherents, is chiefly the preserve of Sōka Gakkai, though Nipponzan Myōhōji at least

29 Admittedly, however, the Nichirenist context of the Peace Pagoda is virtually unknown even among ÖBR representatives.

30 With a few exceptions such as Thích Nhất Hạnh's (b. 1926) Plum Village school and various Shàolín training centres, Thiền and Chán largely cater to a diasporic clientele. A case in point is Fóguāngshān 佛光山, which maintains the biggest edifice of all Buddhist groups in the county (Chadwin and Pokorny 2021). In contrast, ethnic practitioners are rarely found in Sōn and Zen in Austria.

enjoys primacy concerning the material dimension thanks to its Peace Pagoda. Pure Land Buddhism today is the domain of the hybrid Senkōbō and (de-Buddhisised) Naikan, with both Jōdoshū and Shinshū Ōtani-ha hesitantly emerging. In contrast, Zen appears in rich colours, resembling the general appearance of the overall tradition in Europe. The main reason for this lies in “retreat internationalisation” and, subsequently, “retreat tourism,” which to some extent “denominationally homogenised” the Western European Zen map. Regional particularities obviously remain, and no one individual Zen provider and offering are alike. But key dharma lineages and related self-identities have been spreading and are therefore marshalled across Western Europe by the various *rōshis*, *oshōs*, etc.

Yet, in Austria, inter- or intra-denominational (let alone interfaith) activities of Japanese Buddhist stakeholders are a rare exception. Whereas Zen dharma lineages may effectively be shifted—which, as the brief vignettes of some protagonists in this paper demonstrate, occurs at least once in many Zen biographies—“dharma lineage loyalties” and individualistic trajectories are ordinarily keenly upheld in day-to-day *dōjō* life, rendering the need for collaborations and exchange from an emic perspective rather insignificant. However, these observations open up another subject, namely the psychology of (Japanese) Buddhism in Austria (and its oft-times inter- and intra-denominational silent conflictual expressions)—a subject that deserves its own study.

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