

Ringing the Dharma Bell : Transcending the Boundaries for a Global Buddhism

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It is my absolute honor to acknowledge the 30th anniversary of the Yokohama Zenkoji Scholarship Foundation's International Buddhist Study Scholarship. Back in 1998 when I received the scholarship, I was a graduate student at Harvard University trying to find a way to fund my studies in Japan for a research project on the history of Soto Zen Buddhism.

What the scholarship and the personal support and mentorship from Kuroda Roshi and the Yokohama Zenkoji family allowed me to do was live in Japan and travel to temple archives at Eiheiji and Sojiji as well as learn from the foremost Japanese scholars at Komazawa University. The research from that period was not only released in the form of my Ph.D. dissertation, but was the basis for my first book *The Other Side of Zen: Soto Zen Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan* that came out from Princeton University Press.

It was one of the most meaningful period of learning in my life and the basis of my current career in the American academic world, including professorships at the University of California, Berkeley (where I held an endowed chair in Japanese Buddhism and served as director of Berkeley's Center for Japanese Studies) and the University of Southern California, where I direct a center on

Japanese religions and culture and where I served as the first ordained Buddhist priest to chair a religious studies department in the United States.

None of this would have been possible without the scholarship that provided the financial support for my graduate studies and without the personal encouragement of Kuroda Roshi. During my time in Japan, I often visited Yokohama Zenkoji. Typically, after some sumptuous Japanese cuisine and drinks, there would come a moment in the proceedings when Kuroda Roshi would say “DAN KAN” in a loud voice, playing on the sound of my name “Duncan” to evoke an explosion, which he interpreted as the sound and vision of making an enormous impact on the world.

That Kuroda Roshi believed in me, well before I had confidence in my abilities to make a difference in the world. That is something that counts for more than a simple grant or scholarship from an ordinary foundation. His vision for the International Buddhist Study Scholarship was to create a dynamic exchange between the best of Japanese Buddhism and global Buddhism. In the 21st century, when the values of Buddhism are increasingly necessary to build a tolerant, pluralistic, and sustainable world, Yokohama Zenkoji represented from 30 years ago a truly visionary hub of hope for creating the world we want.

The true value of a scholarship lies not only in the short-term results of one year’s research, but in the long-term current of books, academic careers, and institution-building that transforms our world. Yokohama Zenkoji’s scholarship has accomplished that goal multifold in its 30 years.

We should also acknowledge the hard work of the current abbot of Yokohama Zenkoji to continue the legacy of his father as well as create his own legacy to transform the world through Buddhism. Let us continue transmitting the Dharma to create a Buddha land in our own lives and in our fragile and interconnected world.