Tolstoyan Teaching and the Ittoen Socio-Religious Movement [一燈園]

The Unknown Letter from Nishida Tenko [西田天香] to L. N. Tolstoy

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1

In Yamashina (Kyoto), to this day, there exists a colony of the religious group Ittoen [一燈園]. The founder of this colony and of the teaching of the same name, Nishida Tenko [西田天香], was a very popular figure in the 1920s–30s and immediately after the war; however, this name is now forgotten. Not being a numerous group, the members of Ittoen and those sympathetic to this movement are little noticeable against the background of other sects, especially after the death of the founder and leader of the movement, Nishida Tenko (1872–1968).

For me, the reason to pay attention to this group and its creator was a recent discovery. Working in the archive of the State L. N. Tolstoy Museum in Moscow with letters from people in the circle of the first graduates of Doshisha,[1] I discovered a letter to Tolstoy written in Japanese which previously had not attracted researchers' attention, and whose sender had not been identified.

Preserved in the State L. N. Tolstoy Museum (GMT) under shelfmark N38/C.39 and signed with the name Nishida Ichitarō [西田一太郎], the letter was sent from Hokkaido in the autumn of 1901. Written in a clear hand in ink on thick ruled paper, the letter has been preserved together with its envelope, on which the date 29 October 1901 is written in English. The letter is addressed to Saint Petersburg, to Count Tolstoy. In Japanese the address is written as: 露西亜聖彼得堡トルストイ伯様 ("To Count Tolstoy, Saint Petersburg, Russia"); in English and in Russian (with graphic errors) this is duplicated. Evidently, the sender did not know that Tolstoy's permanent place of residence at that time was the Yasnaya Polyana estate, or else did not imagine where it was.

The letter reached Petersburg on 26 November 1901, when L. N. Tolstoy was undergoing treatment in Crimea. On the envelope there are two notes in Russian made by the Petersburg postal authorities: "Count Lev Tolstoy. Yasnaya Polyana"; and in the corner, in another hand: "Crimea. Koreiz postal station. Countess Panina's dacha. Gaspra." Probably the postal clerks first intended to forward the letter to Yasnaya Polyana, but then learned that Tolstoy was in Crimea and sent the letter on to Gaspra.

Judging by the postmarks, on 1 December 1901 the letter was already in Simferopol, and on 3 December in Koreiz. If one recalls that Tolstoy arrived in Crimea in a grave condition and was ill throughout the autumn and winter of 1901–1902, it is unsurprising that the letter remained unanswered. Because of a succession of illnesses that did not leave him until the summer of 1902, Tolstoy replied only to those letters that were most important to him. It is likely that even if Tolstoy had been given a translation of Nishida Tenko's Japanese letter, no reply would have followed at

that time. Perhaps it is precisely because the letter remained unknown to Tolstoy that in Russia it was never mentioned anywhere.[2]

Knowing that the founder of the Ittoen group, Nishida, bore from birth the name Ichitarō [一太郎], and that in the 1890s he participated in the development of Hokkaido (Kurisawa), I supposed that he had written the letter. Although there is no return address on the envelope, at the end of the letter, before the signature, the author indicates his place of residence, and it is precisely Kurisawa, Kiyomappu,[3] several dozen kilometres north of modern Sapporo.

In my opinion, the contents of the letter and the handwriting likewise indicate that it was written by Nishida Tenko. Valuable comparative material for me was the recently published diary of Nishida Tenko, *Tenkakōdō Roku* [天華香洞録], kept from 1904 to 1926.[4] In this diary—whose title may be translated as "Notes from the Cave Fragrant with the Scent of Heavenly Flowers"—in addition to a number of notes on Tolstoy similar in content and style to the discovered letter (we shall speak of this later), there is the following entry, made after Tolstoy's death, in March 1911:

"Once I wrote the old man a letter; I thought he would be very glad that in the East there were people like me who knew of him. Yet I immediately thought differently. I thought that rather than rejoicing at such a thing, the old man's greater and true joy should be that we meet in God. When I came to think this, I no longer took up the brush. Such a thing is known only to the old man and to me."[5]

Thus, Nishida Tenko proves to have been one of L. N. Tolstoy's many correspondents. In itself, this is not so surprising: thousands of people wrote to Tolstoy, and many wrote from Japan as well.[6]

Something else is surprising: the letter was written in 1901, whereas Nishida's formation as a religious leader—stimulated, by his own admission, by Tolstoy's work *What I Believe*—belongs to spring 1904. Yet Tolstoy's work *What I Believe* was translated and published in Japan only in 1903, two years later than Nishida wrote his letter to Tolstoy.[7]

This raises a number of questions: how did Nishida know about Tolstoy and his teaching in 1901? What exactly was known to him, and why did he write his letter precisely in the autumn of 1901? How does this relate to Tenko's repeated claims about the birth of his movement under the influence of Tolstoy's work *What I Believe*? And to what extent can one speak of traces of Tolstoyanism in the original religious current of Ittoen? Evidently, we cannot now answer all the questions, and this article is devoted rather to an attempt to formulate the problem correctly.

2

The figure of the original thinker and religious activist Nishida Tenko has only recently become a subject of scholarly study in Japan.[8] A commented edition of Nishida Tenko's written legacy likewise began only recently: until the last decade, publication of Nishida's writings was part of the proselytising activity of the Ittoen group, which has its own museum-archive Kōsoin [香倉院], a research centre, and a publishing house. Through the efforts of a committee on Nishida's legacy, which included university scholars, the already-mentioned diary *Tenkakōdō Roku* was published for the centenary of the movement's founding. In part thanks to this publication, a relatively objective view of Nishida Tenko's biography and the history of the religious group he founded has become possible.

Nishida Ichitarō was born on 18 March 1872 in the town of Nagahama on the shores of Lake Biwa. His father kept an inn; his mother is unknown. His father's elderly and childless wife accepted the child who had been born to another woman. At that time, the family already had an adopted daughter, who in 1876 was married off, and the son-in-law was made heir to the family business. The daughter born of that marriage was destined from birth to be Ichitarō's wife (this marriage was concluded in 1892). Later, the family did not support Nishida in his religious searching, and in 1912 he remarried, taking one of his followers as his wife. The children of the first marriage—two sons—followed their father, and today the group is led by Nishida Tenko's grandson.

The castle town of Nagahama is famous for its mercantile traditions. Nishida, coming from the trading estate, received a respectable education. He studied in the municipal primary and middle school opened after the Meiji reforms, attended a Confucian mentor with whom he studied the works of Ninomiya Sontoku, and learned English from a Protestant missionary.[9]

Nishida Ichitarō preferred to replace army service with social work in the development of Hokkaido, to which he first set out in 1893. Despite his youth, Nishida found support among business people from his home town, obtained a loan, and organised in Hokkaido the lease of a tract of land of about 8,000 hectares. Leading a group of a hundred peasant colonists, he arrived with them in Kurisawa and established the production and processing of hemp, which was purchased for military needs—the war with China was being fought in 1894–1895.

After the war, demand for hemp sharply declined and the company was threatened with bankruptcy. The contradictions between the interests of the peasant colonists and the leaseholders of the land—the Nagahama merchants—Nishida took so much to heart that he cut off the middle toe on his foot, a traditional gesture expressing despair combined with purity of intent.

Against the displeasure of senior family members, in 1899 Nishida left business and turned to religion. In 1900–1901, Nishida, who from birth belonged to the Buddhist sect Jōdo Shinshū, drew close in Hokkaido to a small group of supporters of the neo-Buddhist teaching Muharabakyō [阿吽鉢囉婆教], and began travelling to that sect's meetings in temples in Kyoto and its environs. Around that time Nishida took the name Tenko [天香] and noticed the phrase *Tenkakōdō* [天華香洞], which he later made the name of his prayer meetings and diary: "Cave fragrant with the scent of heavenly flowers."[10]

In the autumn of 1903, Nishida became acquainted with Tolstoy's book *What I Believe*,[11] and in April 1904 experienced a moment of illumination during meditation in a Buddhist temple in his home town of Nagahama, after which his new life began. Here is a quotation from Nishida's most famous book *Life in Repentance* [懺悔の生活], which in 1921 sold almost one hundred thousand copies and is a collection of outlines of Nishida's public speeches:[12]

"... I felt on my own skin the bitterness of that truth that people—even such close ones as blood brothers—survive in this world by devouring one another. I shut myself in a room of an inn in the Kiyamachi quarter of Kyoto and for two days did not put a crumb in my mouth. My fellow townsman and friend Sugimoto, a sensible and serious man, sent me Tolstoy's book *My Religion*. Evidently, at that time, this was the most fitting reading for me, and I read without stopping. Right at the very end, in the section 'Confession', I ran into these words: 'If you want to live—die.' This 'die' sounded so simple, so unadorned, that I was shaken. These were not words of consolation, like: 'He who resolves to die is born anew.' And this is not at all what is in the proverb: 'If you

knew where the ford was, that is where you would have thrown yourself into the water.' It was simply said that to live by suppressing other people means death for all the suppressed, for the whole. And if the whole will live, is this not your most cherished wish, even if you yourself die? For both you and other people are like nothing more than bubbles of foam that have accidentally formed on the surface of water; and attachment to foam occurs because we do not know the water—that is, the whole. Death does not mean disappearance. ... One should entrust one's fate to the heavens, and if one cannot manage to feed oneself—one will simply return to the one whole. 'Die' means 'free yourself from illusions'. As soon as this thought shines upon you, the whole will become you. ... And then, without any effort, I felt that I lightly flew out into the vast world, encountered my undivided 'I', and returned to eternally existing and true being."[13]

In L. N. Tolstoy we do not find the quotation to which Nishida refers ("If you want to live—die"), and there is nothing similar in Katō's Japanese translation either.[14] However, in *What I Believe* several times there is mention of the need to "renounce the phantom of life" (e.g.: "To be a participant in this life, a person must renounce his own will in order to fulfil the will of the Father of life who gave it to the Son of Man";[15] "The whole teaching of Christ is that his disciples, having understood the phantom nature of personal life, renounce it and transfer it into the life of all humanity, into the life of the Son of Man";[16] "Whether I will have more troubles, whether I will die sooner, in fulfilling the teaching of Christ, does not frighten me. That can frighten the one who does not see how senseless and ruinous his personal solitary life is, and who thinks that he will not die. ... My life and death will serve the salvation and life of all—and this is what Christ taught."[17])

From the very beginning, Nishida's views were eclectic and included elements of Zen Buddhism (Rinzai), Taoism, Christianity, and Tolstoyanism. However, more important to him than doctrine was immediate practice of a "new way of life", consisting in a total refusal of property. Likening a person to a nursing infant who comes into the world having nothing, yet each time receives its mother's milk by crying and thus calling her attention, Nishida said that one should not struggle for existence, but should live by accepting only what is bestowed. Nishida wandered from house to house, offering help in the dirtiest work and asking for nothing in return, accepting only what was necessary for sustaining life. This is the essence of his teaching: to have nothing; to do for people everything within one's power, asking no reward; to accept alms gratefully; however hard it may be, to live with a sense of gratitude for existing; and to seek the causes of human miseries only in a person's moral imperfection.

Nishida's philosophy was formulated in Buddhist terms, but with him these acquired a new meaning. By "repentance" (*zange*) Tenko called the responsibility consciously laid upon oneself for the evil committed in the world, and practices for overcoming that psychological state. The main means of repentance is unpaid labour for the benefit of people, called by the Buddhist term *takuhatsu* [托鉢], which originally meant a monk's going out into the world with an alms-bowl. The term *rokuman gyōgan* [六万行願], meaning the undertaking of a pilgrimage or good deeds in fulfilment of a vow, for members of Ittoen came to mean the cleaning of toilets.

At first, only a small group of women followed Nishida—no more than ten. Members of the movement did menial work in private homes, cared for patients in tuberculosis clinics, and cleaned temple grounds.

After, in 1906, Nishida began correspondence with the Waseda University philosopher and philologist Tsunashima Ryōsen [綱島梁川, 1873–1907] and interested him in his views, Nishida's

connections expanded significantly. Before his early death in 1907, Tsunashima managed to introduce Nishida to the writer Tokutomi Roka, a passionate admirer of Tolstoy, and to other Japanese Tolstoyans among the intelligentsia. However, the emphasis on agriculture characteristic of Tolstoyan colonies was not adopted by Nishida's group.

In 1913, the geisha Fujita Tama [藤田玉], patronised by Nishida's childhood friend, the wealthy entrepreneur from Nagahama Shimogō Dempē [下郷伝平], gave the group shelter in a house specially rented by her on the grounds of the temple Reikandji [霊鑑寺] in the Shishigatani district of Kyoto. The need for a permanent refuge was motivated by the fact that sick members of the group needed rest and a roof over their heads. All the colony's inhabitants, including Nishida himself, lived very cramped lives: one and a half tatami per person.

The name Ittoen [一燈園] was borrowed from Tsunashima Ryōsen and goes back to the saying: "Donate even one lantern for the sake of your faith." In Tsunashima, the point is the good of giving, even if it is only a bowl of clean water before the altar, only a paper lantern. For Nishida, however, the very image of a lamp is important, because "Light" for him is both deified nature, and the life-giving radiant substance filling the universe, and something primordially existing—God.

After the house in Shishigatani appeared, the group gained more and more people; many came only for a time; there were not a few students and artists. The young writer Kurata Hyakuzō (1891–1943), who spent almost half a year with the group in 1915, made his name by publishing in 1917 the play *The Monk and His Disciple* [出家とその弟子]. The play's hero is the religious teacher Shinran [親鸞, 1173–1262], but its content is inspired by the experience of living in the Ittoen colony and by Nishida Tenko's personality. In 1919, the play was staged by artists sympathetic to the movement. In time, a theatre called "Suwaraji" was created on the colony grounds.[18]

In 1918, the religious group's ritual finally took shape, and the "Prayer to the Light" was written, which to this day is repeated daily during the morning service. At present, the prayer is proclaimed by the colony's inhabitants in a special prayer hall, where incense is burned on the altar dais before a round window onto the garden, symbolising unity with nature.

An important stage in the religious group's life was the start in 1919 of a regular ritual practice of cleaning toilets, and also the publication in 1921 of the already-mentioned book *Zange no seikatsu* [懺悔の生活] and, from 1922, the journal *Hikari* ("Light"). The toilet-cleaning expeditions—*rokuman gyōgan* [六万行願]—were conceived after the creation of the League of Nations: Tenko decided to clean toilets, placing himself on the lowest social rung as a sign of repentance for the sins of the world. Thus, *rokuman gyōgan* is an active prayer for peace throughout the world.

Very soon, a sect that had arisen as a brotherhood of the poor began to acquire supporters in all layers of society; wealthy donors appeared. Tenko began to be invited everywhere to give lectures, and invitations followed beyond Japan—to Manchuria, Korea, Hawaii, Java. The imperial policy which Nishida passionately criticised in his diaries from the period of the Russo–Japanese War, and earlier in the letter to Tolstoy, used Nishida himself and his idea of unquestioning and unpaid service to society in the colonisation of Manchuria. At the invitation of the South Manchurian Railway Company's management, Nishida visited Manchuria in 1925, and in 1929 Ittoen members organised a branch colony there.

In 1928, a compatriot from Nagahama sympathetic to Nishida's work, the well-to-do merchant Nishikawa Shōroku [西川庄六], provided the colonists with a plot of land in Yamashina. The area of 10 hectares (later increased to 30 hectares), given the name Kōsenrin [光泉林], meaning "light-bearing grove", began to be built up with houses and cultivated with agricultural crops. Particularly interesting are the recollections of A. L. Tolstaya, the writer's daughter, who visited the Ittoen colony precisely at this time, 4–5 May 1930.[19] On the occasion of her visit in 1930, Nishida gave a speech on Tolstoy's influence on his teaching, devoted chiefly to praising Tolstoy's final departure, because that act accorded with Nishida's own idea of the ideal of a "life on the road".[20]

From the end of the 1920s, the foundational principle of renouncing property gradually began to conflict with the actual practice of Ittoen, because the Yamashina colony was officially registered as a financial foundation; to this day it owns an experimental breeding station, a publishing house, a nursery and schools (primary and middle), the "Suwaraji" theatre, and a museum. All property is considered to have been provided to the religious group for temporary use—"donated to the Light"—and the true home of the colony's members is still considered to be the road. Life in wanderings and privation is called *rotō* [路頭]. Thus, the Ittoen colony is conceived only as a place for fulfilling the ritual labour obligations of *takuhatsu*. However, this labour now serves the needs of the colony's ageing population rather than society as a whole.

As a ritual that symbolically resolves this contradiction, on New Year's Eve, the colony's inhabitants stage the calling of their leader from the "house on the road" to service in Ittoen. The leader's departure is always purely ritual and symbolises a refusal to acknowledge the real state of affairs (a settled and highly hierarchical colony life), nostalgia for the ideal of a life without property, without a roof over one's head, in unpaid service to people.

In the toilet-cleaning expeditions carried out since 1919, the participants are now mainly trainees sent to Ittoen by various firms for short-term courses in work ethics, *chitoku* [知徳], that is, "wisdom and truth"; this practice has been carried out since 1941. At present, the permanent residents of Ittoen are mostly elderly people, mainly those born in the community in the 1930s–40s; the young, even pupils of the colony's educational institutions, go out into the wider world.

After the end of the Second World War and until his death in 1968 at the age of 96, Nishida Tenko conducted wide public activity of a pacifist character; he was even a member of the lower house of parliament (where he mostly cleaned toilets, since his bill on national repentance for unleashing the war did not pass).

3

So, let us return to the question of the connection between Tolstoyan teaching and the birth of the Ittoen socio-religious movement. Nishida Tenko always spoke of the great role of Tolstoyan teaching in forming his life philosophy. Abundant mentions of Tolstoy in the diary *Tenkakōdō Roku*, especially in the first three volumes with entries from 1904–1911, show that at that time Nishida's interest in Tolstoy was indeed very great.[21] Nishida compares Tolstoy with Christ and the Buddha,[22] with Laozi,[23] supports Tolstoy's pacifist position in the Russo–Japanese War, especially analysing in detail the well-known article "Bethink Yourselves",[24] reflects on Tolstoy's views on civilisation[25] and on love.[26]

The letter from Nishida to Tolstoy discovered by us in the GMT is valuable in that it reveals the author's interest in Tolstoyanism in an earlier period as well, in the autumn of 1901. It seems that the letter preserved in the GMT, written by a young Japanese man from Hokkaido, Nishida Ichitarō, is of interest not only as a clarifying touch in his later biography as the founder of a new religion, but also as a document illustrating the character and degree of Tolstoyan influence on Japanese social thought at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Despite the fact that the theme "Tolstoy and Japan" has been addressed in many major works and has a long history, there appears still to be much that remains unclear.[27] In particular, analysis of publications about Tolstoy in mass media intended for a broad readership could yield interesting results.

Although I did not manage to connect directly the writing of Nishida's letter on 28 October 1901 with any specific publication about Tolstoy in the Japanese press of the time,[28] a connection between the letter and newspaper polemics about the situation in Manchuria can clearly be traced. Japanese newspapers in October 1901 devoted much space to discussion of the new treaty concluded between Russia and China, which was perceived as a threat to Japanese interests.[29] The theme of Russia, in the context of the imperialist partition of territories and Christian-socialist views on the problems of war and peace, was actively discussed in the pages of the most widely read Tokyo newspaper *Yorozu Chōhō* [万朝報], where at that time leading articles by Uchimura Kanzō [内村鑑三], Kōtoku Shūsui [幸徳秋水], and Sakai Toshihiko [堺利彦] appeared almost daily. As is well known, all of them sharply raised social problems, more or less gravitated towards socialism, criticised the course towards war with Russia, and when *Yorozu Chōhō* nonetheless supported warlike sentiments in 1903, they left the editorial staff. In the letter of the young Nishida one can discern echoes of the anti-war rhetoric of *Yorozu Chōhō*'s leading articles of 1898–1901.

Here we shall analyse Nishida's letter to Tolstoy, looking at this document from today's perspective and relying on what we now know of Nishida Tenko's views and activity and of his group Ittoen. The period from 1900 to 1903 is the least documented in Nishida's biography, and it is precisely in this period that the letter to L. N. Tolstoy was written. The letter is highly emotional, full of sincere reverence towards the addressee. The elevated tone and a certain lack of coherence, and the repetitions, show the spontaneity of the decision to write to Tolstoy. Yet many features of Nishida's worldview, which determined the paths of his religious searching, already appear in this letter.

After brief greetings, Nishida writes about himself thus:

"I am one of the subjects of the Japanese state; this year is the thirtieth in my life. One day, suddenly, I sensed that our whole people had lost faith, and that all this civilisation stands on one leg. Not only does every Western state now follow an imperial path that brings enslavement—they even shout, 'Civilisation, civilisation!' I see how, in this, people who have become savage devour one another in the bloody banquet of the Ashura demon.

Unable to restrain the urge to seek the Way, I immersed myself in the teaching of the Buddha; I became acquainted with the Christian Gospel. Questions of good and evil are more important to me than considerations of profit; I rely not on the power of wealth, but on the power of faith. Wishing to reach the essence amid myriads of laws of what is, I am now in Hokkaido, an agricultural land. No small impulse was given me by the words of philosophers and poets such as Socrates, Luther, Milton, Cromwell, Carlyle. They bind Heaven and Earth into one; looking from the centre of constancy, they reveal particles of the light that fills the universe. These people are truly the teachers of such as your humble servant. Though they say that formerly in our country there were not a few such people, now there are none."[30]

As can be seen from the letter, Nishida is most troubled by the problem of maintaining harmony in relations between individual people and between states, and for him the search for a solution lies exclusively in the plane of ethics and religion. He declares the chief misfortune of Japan at the beginning of the century to be "the loss of faith", and without this Nishida cannot conceive "civilisation". Much space in the letter is devoted to criticism of international imperialism and colonial policy; Japan's adoption of Western influence without strengthening religious foundations is condemned; and the author expresses a resolve to take the latter task upon himself. The letter repeatedly raises the theme of opposition between nature and culture and condemns war.

"You rightly explain that civilisation is doomed to oppose nature; but if people quarrel with one another and take from one another (property), then this is not true civilisation. When the policy of a state becomes the newest imperialism, in the morning it seizes foreign ports, and by evening it raises the sword over weak countries. And it is said that all this is for guarantees of peace and security. Your teaching is sufficient to shame to death those petty, dot-like politicians, but such as they are not so sensitive as to die of shame. In any case, such as they are are far from God's Gospel. I am deeply convinced that peace throughout the world cannot be achieved by the sword, but must certainly be achieved by faith."[31]

Apparently, Nishida writes to Tolstoy not because he is Tolstoy's follower. He is not yet so well acquainted with Tolstoy's teaching, and he says so himself:

"Although I cannot directly encounter Your Excellency's voice and presence, from newspapers and other communications I am able to hear Your Excellency's words; and even to your fragmentary words and phrases I was not careless, for Your Excellency's words are imperishable, rare to be seen now, and will not perish so long as Heaven and Earth endure."[32]

Nishida sought answers to his questions in various sources; and at that stage, in 1901, Tolstoy interested him above all as a contemporary who "lives as befits a saint" and to whom one can address oneself directly in a letter. It is curious that in the letter the names of all Western authors besides Tolstoy are put in quotation marks, as if they were titles of works rather than persons.

For Nishida, both Eastern and Western wisdom are embodiments of a single divine principle, "Light". This later became the foundation of Ittoen teaching. The following quotation from the letter confirms Nishida's understanding of the universality of truth:

"Though as citizens we are of different countries, on the Way there is no such distance: we make the whole universe one family and the six directions one body, and together with Your Excellency we pray that we may welcome the God of peace."[33]

Apparently, what was extraordinarily important for Nishida was the very example of the Russian writer who created his own religious teaching, attractive to many people throughout the world. Nishida believed in himself sufficiently that already in 1901 he could write to Tolstoy:

"My voice will not be heard throughout the whole world, even if my tongue rots and my lips burn; and yet I believe that my conviction will certainly penetrate through."[34]

He seems already at that time to have seen himself as a religious teacher.

It appears that Nishida became acquainted, through newspaper and magazine publications of the 1890s, with certain sides of Tolstoy's teaching; but being a person of a more emotional than

intellectual cast, he felt Tolstoy more than he understood him. Nishida did not, for example, take an interest in Tolstoy's five ethical principles or in the teaching of non-resistance to evil by violence. Already in 1901, Nishida wrote to Tolstoy about what he later reflected on in the diary for 1904–1911: about peace; about the opposition between nature and civilisation; about the unity of all that exists, permeated by a divine principle called "Light"; and about the primacy of faith. What attracted him in Tolstoy was what seemed consonant with directions traditionally known in Japan: Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism.[35]

Most so-called "new religions" of Japan—and Ittoen teaching may be included among them—are syncretic and combine elements of earlier religious teachings; they are committed to pacifism, emphasise the necessity of individual moral self-perfection, and regard all that exists as a single interconnected whole.[36] What distinguishes Ittoen is the founder's and charismatic leader's insistence on Tolstoy's influence. But is it really so fruitful to seek echoes of Tolstoyanism in Nishida Tenko's life-teaching? It seems more promising to connect the birth and metamorphoses of the Ittoen movement with transformations in Japan's intellectual atmosphere in the first half of the twentieth century.

Appendix

Translation of Nishida Ichitarō's letter to L. N. Tolstoy[37]

Your Excellency, Count Tolstoy!

It is said that when one follows the Way, the seasons succeed one another in their proper order, and none is preferred above another. Yet the time when autumn frost causes grasses and leaves to wither often deeply affects the human mind.

I am a subject of the Japanese state, and this year marks my thirtieth year of life. One day, I suddenly felt that our entire people had lost their faith, and that our whole civilization now stands on a single leg. Not only do Western nations now tread the imperial path of subjugation, but they loudly proclaim: "Civilization! Civilization!" I see how, amid this, men have grown savage and devour one another in the bloody feast of the demon Ashura.

Unable to suppress my yearning to seek the Way, I immersed myself in the teachings of the Buddha and studied the Christian Gospel. Questions of good and evil matter far more to me than considerations of profit; I rely not on the power of wealth, but on the power of faith. Seeking the essence within the myriad laws of existence, I now reside in the agricultural region of Hokkaido. Great inspiration has come to me from the words of philosophers and poets such as Socrates, Luther, Milton, Cromwell, and Carlyle—those who bind Heaven and Earth together, whose vision springs from the centre of constancy and through whom glimmers of the light pervading the universe are revealed. Truly, such men are teachers for one such as myself. Though it is said that our land once had many such individuals, they are now nowhere to be found.

All this morning, I have been ceaselessly thinking of Your Excellency, and I have gathered the courage to write this letter to inquire: How do you fare? Though I cannot see or hear you directly,

from newspapers and other news sources I have learned of your teachings. I treat even your individual words and phrases with the utmost seriousness, for what you speak of will endure as long as Heaven and Earth exist—and such truth is rarely encountered today.

Your Excellency lives as a true saint should, preaching to your spiritual children the virtue of husbandry. You rightly explain that civilization is doomed when it opposes nature; and when people quarrel with one another and seize each other's possessions, that is no true civilization. When a nation adopts the newest imperialism as its policy, by morning it seizes foreign ports, and by evening raises its sword over weaker countries—all the while claiming it does so for the sake of peace and security. Your teachings could shame these petty politicians—small as mere dots—unto death, yet they are not sensitive enough to die of shame. In any case, such men are far removed from the Gospel of God.

I am profoundly convinced that world peace cannot be achieved by the sword, but must be attained through faith. If humanity ceases warring against itself, the blessings of civilization will abundantly fill all the myriad manifestations that nature provides. Through labour in harmony with nature, humankind will lack nothing.

Yet, contrary to this truth, people repeatedly commit follies—year after year perfecting weapons, building warships, and glaring at one another with envy. O twentieth century! This twentieth century will ultimately become the realm of the demon Ashura.

My voice may never be heard throughout the world, even if my tongue burns and my lips char—but my convictions will surely spread among people; of this I am certain!

Count, Your Excellency: though your deeds may not be visible to the whole world, your teachings have filled the universe, and there is no person who has not heard of them.

When I sit in my room facing west in meditation, the moment I think of you, you always appear beside me and show me the path. Fools believe they can see your face and hear your teachings only when near you—but no, even standing close to Your Excellency, they cannot truly understand you! Only I clearly see you in every aspect of the cosmos—Your Excellency surely understands what I mean. Though we are citizens of different lands, on the true Way there are no barriers; the entire universe is our home, and all beings are one. I pray together with you to the divine being who loves peace.

From my heart, I humbly offer prayers for your health. And if fortune smiles upon me and your hand should touch this letter, I earnestly beg you to send me a reply.

Hokkaido, Ishikari, Sorachi County, Kurisawa Village, Kiyomappu.
Nishida Ichitaro
To His Excellency Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy

Notes (translated in full)

1. See: Melnikova, I. V., "Japanese Pilgrims to L. N. Tolstoy", *Questions of Japan Studies*, no. 2: Materials of the scholarly conference dedicated to the 110th anniversary of the founding

of the Department of Japan Studies of Saint Petersburg University. Saint Petersburg, 2008.02, pp. 181–193.

2. A. I. Shifman, who worked on the topic of Tolstoy's correspondence with Eastern countries and worked extensively in the GMT, did not mention Nishida Tenko's letter.

3. In Japanese, the sender's address in Nishida Ichitarō's letter is written as: 日本北海道 石狩國 空知郡 栗澤村 字清真布 ("Japan, Hokkaido; Ishikari Province; Sorachi District; Kurisawa Village; aza Kiyomappu").

4. Nishida Tenko [西田天香], *Tenkakōdō Roku* [天華香洞録], complete in 7 volumes (Kyoto: Ittoen Life—Centenary Commemoration, "Tenkakōdō Roku Publication Committee", 2004).

5. Given the importance of the testimony, we reproduce it in the original language.
Translation:
"I once wrote a letter to the old man, thinking that it would make him greatly glad to be told that in the East there exists one who knows of him. Yet immediately I thought differently again. When I considered that the old man's true joy, rather than rejoicing in such a thing, ought to be of a higher order—that we meet one another in God—I no longer took up the brush. Such a thing is known only to the old man and to me."
(*Tenkakōdō Roku*, vol. 3, p. 507.)

6. See: Shifman, A. I., *Leo Tolstoy and the East*, 2nd ed., revised and expanded. Moscow: Nauka, Main Editorial Board of Oriental Literature, 1971.

7. The first Japanese translator of Tolstoy's treatise *What I Believe*, Katō Naoshi, changed the title: the work appeared under the title *My Religion* [我宗教]. See: *My Religion* [我宗教], by Tolstoy, translated by Katō Naoshi (Tokyo: Bunmeidō, 1903).

8. We refer to the extensive bibliography on the subject contained in the new book by Miyata Masaaki: Miyata Masaaki [宮田昌明], *Nishida Tenko: This Heart, This Body, This Way of Life* [西田天香：この心 この身 このくらし] (Kyoto: Minerva Shobō, 2008), pp. 309–324. It should be noted that outside Japan, scholars of religion drew attention to the Ittoen group comparatively long ago; see, for example: Winston Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society: Paradigms of Structure and Change*. State University of New York Press, 1992.

9. Apparently this missionary was Samuel Bartlett (1865–1937), who first lived in Japan in 1887–1890 and preached at the Protestant church in Nagahama; later he repeatedly and for long periods served as a missionary in Japan, and in 1922–1935 he was a professor at Doshisha University and pastor of the university church. See: Miyata, ibid., p. 3.

10. See: Miyata, ibid., p. 14.

11. In Nishida's diary entry for April 1904 it says: "This happened when I was 32 years old, in the autumn (autumn 1903—IM). Just one Tolstoy book from far-off Russia, *What I Believe*, turned my life over, carried me from this shore of endless rebirths to the opposite shore of enlightenment." (*Tenkakōdō Roku*, vol. 1, p. 32.)

12. The book *Life in Repentance* is less a systematic exposition of Tenko's worldview than a fictionalised autobiography, because the founder of Ittoen preferred practice to theory; this was part of his credo.

13. Nishida Tenko [西田天香], *Life in Repentance* [懺悔の生活] (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1995), pp. 81–82.

14. Japanese researchers also point this out; in particular, Miyata writes that Nishida expressed his perception of Tolstoy's Christianity in Zen terminology, and that the formula "If you want to live—die" is also more Zen-Buddhist than Christian. See: Miyata, ibid., pp. 20–23.

15. L. N. Tolstoy: *Complete Collected Works*, first series: Works, under the general editorship of V. G. Chertkov. Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint (a division of Kraus-Thomson Organization), 1972. Vol. 23, p. 390.

16. Ibid., p. 398.

17. Ibid., p. 402.

18. See: *Fifty Years of the Suwaraji Theatre Garden: Footprints* [すわらじ劇園五十年の足跡], ed. Tamai Tōji and others (Kyoto: Suwaraji Theatre Garden, 1981). Also see the official website: http://www.swa-raj.com.

19. See: A. L. Tolstaya, *Daughter*. Moscow, 1992. See also in Japanese: Alexandra Tolstaya [アレクサンドラ・トルスタヤ], *Fairyland Japan: Tolstoy's Daughter Who Crossed the Sea* [お伽の国日本：海を渡つたトルストイの娘] (Tokyo: Gunzōsha, 2007).

20. See: Nishida Tenko [西田天香], "Tolstoy and the Ittoen Way of Life" [トルストイと一灯園生活], *Kōyū* [光友], December 2000, no. 702, pp. 26–37.

21. In the first volume of *Tenkakōdō Roku*, consisting of 612 pages, Tolstoy's name is mentioned on fifty pages. In the second volume, the number of such mentions is already half that. In entries made after 1911, Tolstoy's name is mentioned only three times.

22. Nishida Tenko [西田天香], *Tenkakōdō Roku* [天華香洞録], vol. 2 (Kyoto: Ittoen Life—Centenary Commemoration, "Tenkakōdō Roku Publication Committee", 2004), p. 253.

23. Ibid., p. 407.

24. *Tenkakōdō Roku*, vol. 1, pp. 191–193.

25. *Tenkakōdō Roku*, vol. 2, p. 219.

26. *Tenkakōdō Roku*, vol. 3, p. 90.

27. See: Hokkyo Kazuhiko [法橋和彦], "Tolstoy in Japan" [日本におけるトルストイ], pp. 1–20, in *Tolstoy Complete Works: Monthly Bulletin* [トルストイ全集月報] (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1972–78); Yanagi Tomiko [柳富子], *Tolstoy and Japan* [トルストイと日本] (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1998); Yashima Masahiko [八島雅彦], "The Original

Image of Tolstoy in Japan" [日本におけるトルストイの原像], in *Into the Forest of Russian Literature: A Comprehensive Study of Comparative Culture* [ロシア文学の森へ: 比較文化の総合研究] (Tokyo: Nada Publishing Centre, 2001), pp. 488–504; Abe Gunji [阿部軍治], *Tokutomi Roka and Tolstoy: Traces of Japan–Russia Cultural Exchange* [徳富蘆花とトルストイ: 日露文化交流の足跡] (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 2008); Abe Gunji [阿部軍治], *The Shirakaba Group and Tolstoy: Focusing on Mushanokōji Saneatsu, Arishima Takeo, and Shiga Naoya* [白樺派とトルストイ: 武者小路実篤・有島武郎・志賀直哉を中心に] (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 2008).

28. Analysing all the media available to Nishida in the relevant period is not currently possible, because computer databases have been created only for the materials of the newspaper *Yomiuri*. In *Yomiuri*, there was reporting both on Tolstoy's excommunication from the church in April 1901 ("Tolstoy's Expulsion from the Religious Community" [トルストイの宗門追放], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, morning edition, Meiji 34 (1901) April 4, p. 4) and on his recovery after the severe illness of 1901–1902 ("Tolstoy Recovers His Strength" [トルストイが元気回復], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, morning edition, Meiji 35 (1902) May 1, p. 5). However, in the autumn of 1901 neither this nor the other newspapers I consulted (*Asahi Shimbun*, *Yorozu Chōhō*) printed serious materials about Tolstoy. It is also doubtful that the occasion for the letter was the very short item in the "From All Over the World" section of *Yorozu Chōhō* devoted to Tolstoy's attitude to illness and health, even though it was printed on the same day, 28 October 1901, on which the letter to Tolstoy was written ("Tolstoy and Health" [トルストイと健康], *Yorozu Chōhō* [万朝報], no. 2990, Meiji 34 (1901) October 28, p. 2).

29. See, for example, an article by Katayama devoted to analysing this polemic and giving an overview of the literature on the topic: Katayama Yoshitaka [片山慶隆], "The Formation of Japanese Mass Media Arguments for Opening War Against Russia" [日本のマス・メディアによる対露開戦論の形成], *Hitotsubashi Journal of Law* [一橋法学], vol. 7, no. 1 (March 2008), pp. 59–88.

30. We reproduce this quotation in the original language, preserving the author's style.
Translation:
"I am a subject of the Japanese state, and this year I am about to complete my thirtieth year. Once, I felt that our people are all without faith and that its civilisation is one-legged; and moreover that the 'imperialism' held by the nations of Europe and America at present, while crying only 'civilisation, civilisation', is everywhere in the highest degree a battlefield of carnage in which utterly savage mankind devours one another—a realm of Asura.
"My longing to seek the Way cannot be restrained: I have bathed in the teaching of Śākyamuni and have encountered the Gospel of Christ; placing the question of right and wrong before the question of profit and loss, relying not on the power of wealth but on the power of faith, wishing to reach the utmost essence of the myriad laws, I am now in an agricultural land called Hokkaido. It is not a little that I have been stimulated and encouraged by the maxim-like words of philosophers and poets: 'Socrates', 'Luther', 'Milton', 'Cromwell', 'Carlyle'—all these are people who have revealed one portion of the light that fills the universe, binding heaven and earth as they sit, from an unmoving

standpoint at the centre; truly, they are the predecessors of such as I. Though they say our country was not poor in such people in former times, now indeed there are none."

31. The original reads thus. **Translation:**
"You have rightly declared that civilisation must compete with nature, and that for mankind to make mutual contention and mutual seizure its affair is not true civilisation. This is enough to shame to death those 'bean-eyed' politicians who make present-day imperialism their national policy, seizing ports in the morning and brandishing the sword over weak countries in the evening, while publicly declaring that they guarantee peace. Yet such as they have perhaps no feeling left strong enough to die of shame—because they are far from God's Gospel. I deeply believe that the peace of the world cannot be achieved by the sword, but must be achieved by conviction."

32. The original reads thus. **Translation:**
"Though I have not yet had contact with Your Excellency's living voice and presence, time and again, by newspapers and other communications, I am able to hear Your Excellency's words; and even a fragmentary word or phrase I have not treated carelessly, because Your Excellency's words are imperishable maxims—rare in the present day—and maxims which, together with heaven and earth, will endure long and not perish."

33. The original reads thus. **Translation:**
"As citizens, we are of different countries; yet in the Way there is no such separation. Making the universe one family and the six directions one body, together with Your Excellency I pray that we may welcome the God of peace."

34. The original reads thus. **Translation:**
"Though my voice will not be heard throughout the whole world, even if it comes to my tongue rotting and my lips burning, still I believe that my conviction will certainly penetrate through."

35. Note that Tolstoy's acquaintance with Eastern philosophy was partly mediated through the Japanese trainee in Russia Konishi Masutarō [小西増太郎], whose son in turn became a follower of the Ittoen movement. It was Konishi Masutarō who invited Tolstoy's younger daughter to Japan. On Konishi, see for example: Ōta Ken'ichi [太田健一], *Konishi Masutarō, Tolstoy, Nozaki Takekichirō: The Trajectory of a Friendship* [小西増太郎・トルストイ・野崎武吉郎：交情の軌跡] (Okayama: Kibito Shuppan, 2007).

36. See: Robert Kisala, *Prophets of Peace: Pacifism and Cultural Identity in Japan's New Religions*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1999, pp. 3–7.

37. I take this opportunity to express deep gratitude to my senior colleague Professor Isahaya Yūichi for invaluable help in translating the letter into Russian.