

The Relationship between the Psychology of Religion and Buddhist Psychology

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Abstract: The psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology have deep historical connections. However, there has been a lack of discourse between these fields of study. Therefore this paper focuses on the relationship between the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology as well as the history and research trends of each field. Recently, studies on the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology have attracted attention based on the concepts of “spirituality” and “mindfulness.” Moreover, there have been a number of psychotherapeutic techniques developed that are based on mindfulness meditation. The relationship between the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology is complex and often the subject of confusion. The complexity results from the fact that Buddhism could be seen as an alternative to psychology in the analysis of the mind; and moreover, Buddhism also contains aspects of psychotherapy that bring peace of mind.

Key words: psychology of religion, Buddhist psychology, spirituality, mindfulness.

Studies on the psychology of religion began at almost the same time that the field of psychology itself was established as a science by prominent psychologists, such as Wilhelm Wundt, William James, Stanley Hall, Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, and Gordon Allport, in the 18th century. However, after some initial studies during this period, research on the psychology of religion decreased dramatically and there were very few notable studies for many years, in part due to the development of J. B. Watson’s theories on behaviorism.

An important event in terms of Buddhist psychology was William James’ invitation to the monk Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), known as Father Dharmapala of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), to speak to one of James’ classes when Dharmapala was in attendance at Harvard University in December 1903. James said

to Dharmapala: “Take my chair, and I shall sit with my students. You are better equipped to lecture on psychology than I am.” Dharmapala outlined some elements of Buddhist doctrine, after which James turned to his students and remarked, “This is the psychology everybody will be studying 25 years from now” (Guruge, 1965, p. 681). However, James’ prediction did not come to pass in such an immediate fashion.

Nevertheless, in recent years, studies on the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology have attracted attention, particularly in terms of the concepts of “spirituality” and “mindfulness.” For example, the name of American Psychological Association (APA) division 36, “Psychology of Religion,” was renamed “The Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality” in 2012. Even in non-religious areas of psychological study, there is attention

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being paid to these ideas. For example, the January 2015 issue of *Developmental Psychology* was a special edition entitled “Mindfulness and Compassion in Human Development.”

Moreover, since the late 1980s, a number of psychotherapies mainly or partly making use of mindfulness meditation have been developed; these are discussed in more detail later in the article. Mindfulness meditation is originally a technique unique to Theravāda Buddhism (Southern Buddhism) and was used to attain peace of mind. Until the 1970s, Zen Buddhism was the main interest of study in the United States and Europe among persons interested in Oriental thinking and techniques related to psychology. After this initial inquiry into Zen and its relationship to psychology, which further included studies on the physiological psychology of Zen, attention began to be focused on mindfulness meditation. In those days, few studies had addressed this topic.

Even when looking at events solely in Japanese Buddhist psychology, one can see remarkable developments in the research environment in recent years. One is the foundation of the Japanese Association for the Study of Buddhism and Psychology in 2008, and in line with this, the encyclopedia *Keywords for Buddhism and psychology* was published (Inoue, Kasai, & Kato, 2012). Another important development was the establishment of the Japanese Association of Mindfulness in 2013. These events show a trend in letting research develop as an evidence-based approach independent from study based in a particular religious or sectarian area. However, so far, there has been less interchange or discussion between the fields of psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology. Therefore this article focuses on the relationship between the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology, taking into account the histories and research trends of both fields.

Beginnings of the Psychology of Religion

The term “psychology of religion” was first used in the book, *The psychology of religion*:

An empirical study of the growth of religious consciousness by Edwin Diller Starbuck, a student of William James and Stanley Hall (Starbuck, 1899). In this book, Starbuck presented results from questionnaire surveys he conducted of religious phenomena in which he asked respondents about their age of conversion, their motivation for conversion, and their mental and physical conditions at the time they adopted a new religion. The results were summarized in 13 figures and 32 tables. This book contributed greatly to the field, as it demonstrated that it was possible to quantify religious feelings and experiences through questionnaires using psychological methods.

In contrast, William James used documents, such as biographies, autobiographies, and diaries, recording religious experiences; he also found information on this topic from books, letters, magazines and press clippings. James then detailed these religious phenomena, adding some of his own mystical experiences in his book, *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature* (James, 1902). This book of qualitative research and Starbuck’s volume of quantitative reporting represent two of the most remarkable studies on the psychology of religion in terms of scale and quality.

Moreover, Stanley Hall’s books, *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relations to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime and religion and education* (Hall, 1904) and *Jesus, the Christ, in the light of psychology* (Hall, 1917), also contributed greatly to the field during this period.

In this way, the study of psychology of religion originated with studies examining individual personality before and after conversion, the development of religious faith, and attitudes towards Christianity. However, modern research on the psychology of religion has mainly concerned topics connected to Buddhism, in particular mindfulness meditation, discussed later in this article. The percentage of Buddhist worshippers in the United States is estimated to be approximately 3,000,000 people, a 15-fold increase over the past 30 years (Tanaka, 2010). Reasons for a shift in emphasis in the psychology of religion from

primarily focusing on Christianity to including Buddhism and other religions range from increased interest in Asian thought and practice to criticism of materialism in the United States. Moreover, the increase in mindfulness practice may reflect a desire among individuals not to be constrained by privatized religion.

Differences between the Psychology of Religion in the Field of the Study of Religion and the Study of Psychology

The study of the psychology of religion, in fact, is an interdisciplinary field consisting of the study of religion and the study of psychology. Unfortunately, both approaches have had little interaction with one another. Some reasons for the lack of dialogue between these two areas are firstly, that both approaches may have a common goal, but their methods are different. One factor here is that the results of psychological studies on religion using experimental or questionnaire methods are often very technical, so a limited number of people can understand and adopt results found in research using psychological methodology. Another reason is that there is a gap or estrangement between the contribution to psychology of religion by psychologists and the

expectations for psychologists to reveal human factors from other academic fields. Psychologists can often only reveal scientific aspects of human nature through experiments using psychological methodology to elucidate a cause and effect relationship or employ a survey to show correlations between various psychological phenomena. Therefore, conclusions based on quantitative data are considered to be significant in psychological research. In contrast to traditional psychological study, in the psychology of religion, this call for strict methodology does not pose the same problems. Research done on the psychology of religion seeks to gain a greater understanding of the human factors in religious phenomena, and not focus on social, cultural, geographical, or historical factors (see Figure 1). Therefore, in the psychology of religion, religious scholars are not bound by specific research methods, as psychologists. What is popular in the understanding and interpreting of human factors in natural religious phenomena are the theories and principles taken from the psychoanalytical approach, the psychopathological approach, and the qualitative psychological approach. Specifically, the object relational approach and the Jungian approach have led to some

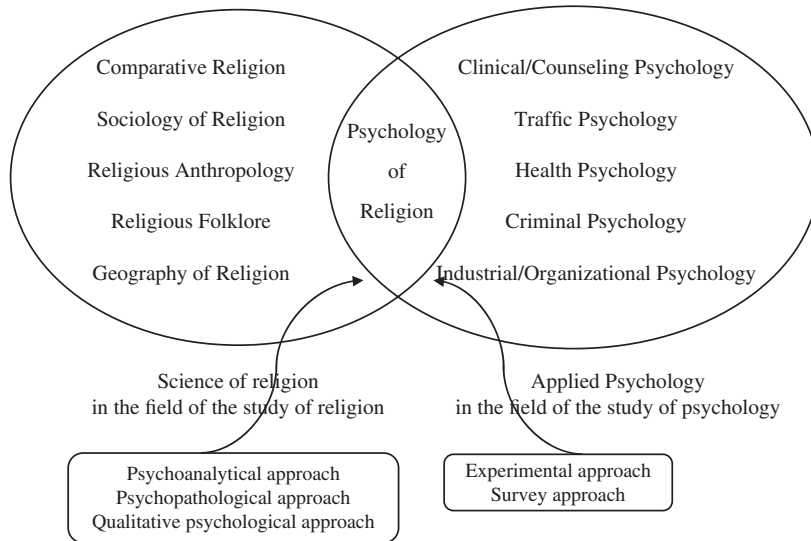


Figure 1 Psychology of religion in the fields related to religion and psychology.

original views on psychology and spirituality (Jones, 1991; Pargament, 2013, pp. 147–168; Spiegelman & Miyuki, 1985).

Sugiyama (2001) summarized Japanese research on the psychology of religion. She describes both the psychology of religion in religious studies and the study of religion in psychology. Her work examines the background of religious circumstances and contains a detailed review and list of books and journal articles concerning psychology and religion in each era. Sugiyama noted that the main problems of the study on psychology of religion are found in both the research itself and the researchers. In both cases these were seen to be problems with methodology. Kaneko (2001a) recounts the methodology of psychology of religion in detail; the author insists that a combination of both laboratory experiments and quasi-experimental research is desirable and notes the lack of theoretical background and the questionable validity of data as reasons for a lag in the study on the psychology of religion. Imada (1947), Matsumoto (1979) and Kaneko (2001b) have all written books outlining the psychology of religion. The difference between the psychology of religion in religious studies and the study of psychology was previously documented in Matsumoto (1979). Kaneko (2001b) is a more recent book outlining the psychology of religion. The author looks at both similarities and differences in religion and spirituality, the main subject of debate being whether spirituality and religion are the same thing or essentially different issues. Although this debate is not settled, Kaneko states it is necessary to make a clear definition of spirituality and there is greater need for social contribution in this area. The *APA Handbook of psychology, religion, and spirituality* is widely circulated, and the problems with the psychology of religion have been well documented (Pargament, 2013). However, there have only been a few articles published on Buddhism covering areas such as Zen, the Jodo-Shin sect, the Nichiren school, the Tendai sect and the Shingon esoteric sect (Pargament, 2013). For example, Wuff (1996) stated the classic and contemporary views of

the psychology of religion, examining the work of psychologists as well as social scientists, philosophers and clergy; however, there is no analysis of Buddhism in his work.

Development of the Psychology of Religion in Terms of the Keywords “Spirituality” and “Mindfulness”

Recently the keywords “spirituality” and “mindfulness” have become common in the study of the psychology of religion. In January 1998, the following draft amendment of the definition of “health” was submitted to the 101st World Health Organization Executive Board meeting. The results were 22 votes of agreement, 0 objections, and 8 votes of abstentions. “Health is a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 1999). It should be noted that the words “dynamic” and “spiritual” in the definition above were added to the text during the Executive Board meeting.

Additionally the 36th division of the APA, which covers issues of religion and psychology and became an official part of the APA in 1976, has undergone numerous name changes. It was first called “The American Catholic Psychological Association” in 1949 when it was created as a separate group. It was renamed as “Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues” in 1970, then “Psychology of Religion” in 1993, and finally in 2012, “The Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality” (Piedmont, 2013). Here we can see the key term “spirituality” has become an essential part of recent views on the psychology of religion.

The trends of the psychotherapies using mindfulness meditation. The term “mindfulness” has gained common usage in the field of the psychology of religion. Beginning in the late 1980s, some new psychotherapeutic techniques using “mindfulness” meditation were developed. Ron Kurtz (1934–2011) developed Hakomi therapy in the early 1980s. This might be the first type of psychotherapy that applied

mindfulness meditation in conjunction with Buddhism with Loving Presence and therapeutic physical exercise.

A landmark in psychotherapy using the concept of mindfulness is Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in 1979, which was developed at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). This book will be remembered as the publication that first introduced the concept called "mindfulness" to cognitive behavior therapy. MBSR began as an alternative medicine for chronic pain and during its first decade of use achieved reduction of various symptoms, which has been documented in clinical research. MBSR contains 8 weeks of Buddhist mindfulness meditation; however, the program uses a scientific approach and therefore is regarded as evidence-based cognitive behavior therapy. Clients still continued daily meditation after finishing the 8 weeks program. Therefore the MBSR program became not simply an application of meditation technique for therapy but rather a part of these individuals' lifestyle. Because the three important symbols of Buddhism—Buddha, teachings of Buddha and Buddhist monks—do not appear in this practice, clients may not feel a religious connection on this program. However, according to an instructor, clients maintaining a daily meditation practice may constitute the modern face of Buddhism. That is, this is a practice of engaged Buddhism for members of society who do not choose to become monks. This is reflected in the Forward to the book by Thich Nhat Hanh, who used the term "engaged Buddhism" for the first time.

The action mechanism of mindfulness is complex and paradoxical. The second wave of cognitive behavior therapy aims to change cognitions of irrational beliefs like "there is no excuse for failure" or "don't do it unless it is perfect." However, changing one's cognition in this manner often means remembering a past trauma and causing a rehearsal of that memory, which may cause an unconscious automatic reaction when remembering tragedy. In this case, the psychological treatment

is a detriment as it reinforces negative feelings. In contrast, mindfulness thinking seeks to create a feeling of well-being without evaluation and acts to free individuals from automatic thought. As a result, it has been said that mindfulness is the keyword of the next generation of psychotherapy, as it lacks the above adverse effects.

Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams and John D. Teasdale studied mindfulness meditation under Kabat-Zinn and subsequently developed Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) in 1987 (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). This program is effective in prevention of reoccurring depression.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), developed by Marsha M. Linehan, uses techniques from both mindfulness meditation and psychoanalytical therapy (Linehan, 1987). Similarly, Mark Epstein integrated the use of Buddhism and psychoanalysis in coping with trauma in his book *Thoughts without a thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist perspective* (Epstein, 1995). Osamu Ando sought to combine Buddhism and transpersonal psychiatry (Ando, 1993), and also indicated that Buddhism could be used as psychotherapy (Ando, 2003). David Brazier first looked at these topics in his book *Zen therapy* (D. Brazier, 1995). Subsequently he combined psychotherapy, early Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and Jodo-shin (pure land) Buddhism and founded the Amida Trust as a charity group in England, and the activities of this group have reached Spain, Canada and Korea. In the same vein, Caroline Brazier published a book entitled *Buddhist psychology: Liberate your mind, embrace life* (C. Brazier, 2003).

In 1999, Steven C. Hayes developed Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT), based on behavior therapy and applied behavior analysis. Later, Hayes and his colleges published *Mindfulness and acceptance: Expanding the cognitive-behavioral tradition* (Hayes, Follente, & Linehan, 2011).

These modern psychotherapies using mindfulness meditation are known as the third wave of cognitive behavior therapies, following the second wave of cognitive behavior therapy, which did not include mindfulness,

and the first wave of behavior therapy, which applied respondent and operant conditioning. The third wave of cognitive behavior therapy has a common point of watching one's feelings plainly and not adding any evaluation by using mindfulness.

However, psychotherapy integrating early Buddhist concepts or other Oriental thinking and practices does not have a deep history in Asia. Zen therapies based on the study of Zen psychology by Yoshiharu Akishige (1904–1979) and Koji Sato (1905–1971) were put forward, but were not widely adopted in Japan. Buddhist counseling originated by Toshio Kikawa urging persons not to depend on denomination as well as Jodo-Shin (Pure Land) counseling developed by Gisho Saiko (1925–2004) were both advocated but gained only slight popularity. The most popular method of psychotherapy based on Buddhism has been Naikan therapy, which uses introspection applying Jodo-Shin Buddhism and was developed by Ishin Yoshimoto (1916–1988). Naikan therapy is used by counselors in correctional institutions, educators looking to address attendance problems, doctors and psychologists specializing in alcohol dependence, as well as by individuals who desire deeper introspection.

Masatake Morita's (1874–1938) Morita therapy has been said to be influenced by Zen Buddhism (Kora & Sato, 1958). His pupil, Usa Shinichi (1927–), subsequently combined Morita therapy and Zen Buddhist concepts (Usa, 2004). Currently, Morita therapy is also popular in China as can be seen from the establishment of the China Congress of Morita Therapy and the Morita Foundation (Wen, 1997).

Buddhist Psychology

Buddhist psychology has a very long history. Its beginnings date back to the classification of the mind as 五蘊 pañcak-khandha in the Pāli language: the five aggregates (色 rūpa: body or physical phenomenon; 受 vedanā: sensation; 想 saññā: perception; 行 saṅkhāra: mental fashionings; and 識 viññāna: consciousness)

were laid down by Gautama Buddha about 2,500 years ago. At least since the era of sectional Buddhism (Abhidharma Buddhism), this Buddhist psychology has been the subject of professional study by monks. This ancient Buddhist psychology is still learned and practiced primarily in Theravāda Buddhism.

The middle era of Mahayanist Buddhism, which took place from about the 3rd to 5th century BC, was a period when another ancient Buddhist psychology, known as Vijñānavāda (consciousness-only doctrine Buddhism), gained popularity. The concept of 阿賴耶識 ālaya-vijñāna in this type of Buddhist teaching is often compared to the idea of the unconscious in psychoanalysis.

In contrast, modern psychological studies on Buddhism, which represent a new type of Buddhist psychology, began at almost the same time as psychology itself began to be studied in Japan. Yujiro Motora (1858–1912) is considered to be the first modern psychologist in Japan, and he also studied under Stanley Hall. Motora had a chance to experience Zen meditation under the Zen master Shaku Soen (1860–1919) at the Engaku-ji Temple of the Rinzai Zen sect in Kamakura. Thereafter he described his personal experience of this Zen practice through the psychological method of introspection developed by Wundt in his *Sanzen niishi* [A diary of practicing Zen meditation] (Kato, 2014; Motora, 1895). This text detailed the process in which one gains a small enlightenment in Zen meditation with a koan, which in the Rinzai Zen sect is a riddle with no solution. Later Motora presented “An essay on Eastern philosophy (Idea of ego in Eastern philosophy)” at the 5th International Congress of Psychology in Rome, Italy (Motora, 1905).

Tomosada Iritani (1887–1957), who was a government official in the Ministry of Education, and later a professor at Komazawa University, a school run by the Soto Zen sect, was the first person to conduct an investigation on enlightenment in Zen Buddhism using a questionnaire in a fashion similar to that done by Starbuck (1899). Iritani (1920) investigated the mental and physical conditions of respondents

before they stated they reached enlightenment and then surveyed physical and psychological changes, including different intellectual, emotional and expressed aspects, in the respondents after they reached enlightenment. His methods comprised a questionnaire given to 43 out of 345 Zen practitioners and interviews with 15 Zen monks at the local temples; additionally, he included an interpretation of Buddhist sermons, Zen sayings, and Zen speeches in order to present a greater understanding of enlightenment for ancient and modern Zen monks and a detailed picture of practice in a Zen meditation hall.

The first attempt to apply a physiological approach, including respiratory movement and whole body exercise, to Zen meditation was made by Noboru Ohtsuka (1905–1989) under the direction of professor Ryo Kuroda (1890–1947) at Keijō Imperial University (now Seoul University in Korea; Kuroda, 1937, pp. 57–113). More recently, Tomio Hirai (1927–1993) and his teacher Akira Kasamatsu conducted a famous study using electroencephalographic measurement during Zen meditation (Hirai, 1960; Kasamatsu & Hirai, 1963), and this research was initially based on a hypothesis by the psycholinguist Kanae Sakuma (1888–1970). Hirai also considered Zen to be a method for psychotherapy (Hirai, 1975). Taniguchi (1992) conducted an overview of psychophysiological approaches to meditation in Japan. Taniguchi insists that it is necessary to pursue long-term change in order to measure the effect of ascetic practices. Chihara (1989) revealed an underestimation of time in looking at Zen meditation, insisting that we should consider the body rhythm, the influence of the circadian rhythm in the physiological measurement, during Zen meditation. Unfortunately, these findings have not been incorporated into the study of mindfulness. Finally, as of the year 2000, there were more than 707 books and journal articles, excluding abstracts of the presentations at annual psychological conferences, published on the subject of Zen psychology (Kato, 2002). An article by Kato (2005) presents a detailed overview of this research on Zen psychology.

Thus, we can see that scientific psychological studies on Buddhism have focused almost exclusively on Zen Buddhism.

Buddhist psychology or other oriental philosophies by modern philosophers and psychologists.

In addition, there have been a number of modern philosophers and psychologists devoted to early Buddhist psychology or other oriental philosophies. Enryo Inoue (1858–1919) is one such philosopher; he published a large number of books in the fields of basic and applied psychology on a variety of topics, including dreams, sleep and hypnosis, altered states of consciousness, optical illusions, mnemonics, heredity, intelligence, personality, parapsychology and psychotherapy (Toyo University, Inoue Enryo Memorial Center, 1999). However, Inoue was concerned not only with these concepts taken from Western psychology but was also interested in the subject of oriental psychology, writing two books, *Oriental psychology* (Inoue, 1894) and *Buddhist psychology* (Inoue, 1897), as well as an article entitled “Psychology of Zen-sect” (Inoue, 1893) on this topic. In *Oriental psychology* (Inoue, 1894), he argued that this type of psychology is a comparative study of the theories of different philosophies, such as Sāṃkhya (one of the six schools of classical Indian philosophy that created the idea of dualism), Vaiśeṣika (one of the six schools of classical Indian philosophy that sought to explain the real world through natural philosophy) and Buddhism. However, in this book, in terms of Buddhist thought, he only described Abhidharma-kośa-Abhidharma Buddhism developed by 世親 Vasubandhu (c. 320–c. 400).

Subsequently, Ryo Kuroda, an animal psychologist, planned a trilogy of books on oriental psychology: *Vijñānavāda psychology* (consciousness-only school), *History of Chinese psychological thoughts* and *Zen psychology* (Kuroda, 1944; Ohtsuka, 1948, pp. 450–457). However the third book, *Zen psychology*, was never completed.

Koji Sato (1905–1971) began the publication of the journal, *Psychologia: An International*

Journal of Psychology in the Orient in 1957 with the aim of providing a channel between the East and the West in cooperation with Asian psychologists (Sato, 1957). Jerome S. Bruner (1915–), a “New Look” psychologist, Erich S. Fromm (1900–1980), a Neo-Freudian, and Wolfgang Metzger (1899–1979), a Gestalt psychologist, contributed to this journal. A conversation and letter between Carl G. Jung (1875–1961) and Shin-ichi Hisamatsu (1889–1980), a Buddhist philosopher, were also included (Bruner, 1959; Fromm, 1959,1967; Jung, 1960; Jung & Hisamatsu, 1968; Metzger, Murphy, Nuttin, & Russell, 1971).

In 1972, Yoshiharu Akishige (1904–1979) commented on Asian psychology at the 20th International Congress of Psychology in Tokyo, Japan (Akishige, 1973). He spoke about Persian psychology, Hindu psychology, Chinese psychology, and Zen psychology.

Seiour Kitamura (1908–2005) investigated holistic psychology, Vijñānavāda psychology (consciousness-only school), karma and selflessness (Kitamura, 2001).

The Relationship between the Psychology of Religion and Buddhist Psychology

Belzen and Hood (2006) indicated the relationship between the psychology of religion and general psychology. They also outlined three types of research. The first type limits itself to using or adapting standard research methods (such as questionnaires, scales, tests, and experiments). The second type includes research methods from a broader social-scientific range generally used in sociology and anthropology (such as interviews, observation, ethnographies, and biographical analysis). The third type relies on data and insights from other disciplines (such as history, theology, literature, and cultural studies).

Specifically in the psychology of religion, the study of religion is, in a wide sense, divided into four groups as shown in Figure 2 (Kishimoto, 1961, p. 8, Figure 2 adapted by the author). Kishimoto also referred to the study of religion in a narrow sense (Figure 2, lower right). Figure 2 shows this concept of

the study of religion as a science. The study of religion as a science in a narrow sense means viewing religion through a scientific perspective and includes not only the psychology of religion but also comparative religion, the sociology of religion, religious anthropology, religious folklore, the geography of religion, the ecology of religion, and so on.

In this classification, ancient Buddhist psychology as handed down by Guatama Buddha and his followers is located in the same position as Christian theology (Figure 2, upper left). But because Buddhist psychology involves analyzing the mind itself, as mentioned above, ancient Buddhist psychology will involve a part of the philosophy of religion (Figure 2, lower left). Modern psychological studies on Buddhism are located in the lower right position of Figure 2. Moreover, Kasai (2011) regards Buddhist psychology as a movement focusing on the interchange between Buddhism and psychology and psychotherapy, similar to the psychology and religion movement outlined by Homans (1987). Therefore, the third course of Buddhist psychology will be an interchange between Buddhism and psychology and psychotherapy, such as in socially engaged Buddhism presented by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk. In short, there are three types of Buddhist psychology. First, ancient and middle Mahayana Buddhist psychology by Guatama Buddha and his monks; second, modern psychological studies on Buddhism; and third, the movement involving an interchange of research and practice between Buddhists and psychologists or psychotherapists. This last

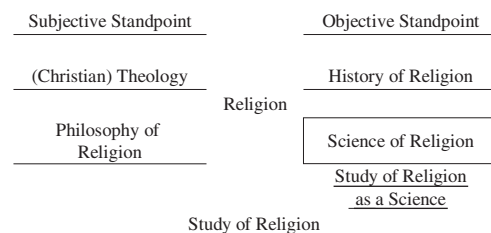


Figure 2 Classification of the study of religion as a science (Kishimoto, 1961, p. 8, this figure adapted by the author).

type calls for a contribution to society through psychology, psychotherapy, and Buddhism. I would rather the recent movement and social contribution involving the interchange of Buddhism and psychology or psychotherapy be called “Buddhism-based psychology” to distinguish it from the ancient and middle Mahayana Buddhist psychology (see Figure 3). The clinical application and social support of mindfulness must be involved in Buddhist-based psychology. The efforts of supporting people in this, the psychological aspect from each sect of Buddhism, will define what should be known as Buddhist-based psychology.

At a minimum, mindfulness meditation in early Buddhism has begun to have a great influence on the field of the psychology of religion, which is now unable to be ignored and is gaining wider recognition. Similarly, mindfulness meditation has even been used recently in company training and has begun to have a large influence on daily life (Hanh, 2015). As for the study of religious techniques, such as mindfulness, there need not be an emphasis on faith, doctrine, and religious background. We can see that in the future, spirituality will play a much larger part in the psychology of

religion in such moves as The American Catholic Psychological Association being renamed as The Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality. Originally, meditation itself has carried a psychological element, as it employs first-person psychology through introspection. That is why meditation has become not only a simple effective clinical technique but also may influence psychological methodology in future. However, the basic use of meditation techniques, without a deeper religious connection, may have a limit. To lose the religious context may indicate this type of meditation has a small effect on those who practice it and the increase in meditation is a boom that will soon subside. Therefore, quantitative or empirical approaches should be used to investigate mindfulness meditation in order to assess the motivations behind individuals using this technique. At the same time, it is desirable to perform measurements examining the effectiveness of spiritual practice on the cognitive style and subjective well-being for persons in different religious sects without regard to technique. To do this, it is necessary to present and publish data collected from studies on each religion or each sect in English

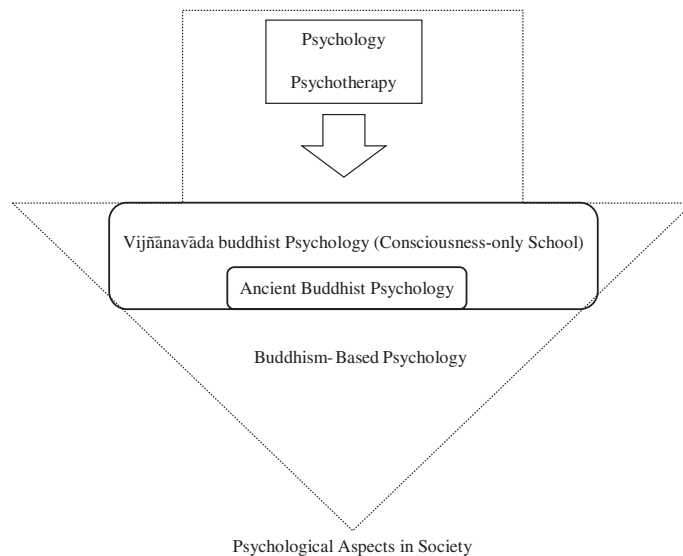


Figure 3 Classification of the study of Buddhism-based psychology.

so that this information can be shared across different countries. Dudley-Grant, Bankart, and Dockett (2003) raised the possibility that Buddhism contributes to alleviation of suffering at the individual, community, and global levels after events such as the 9/11 attacks in New York, and proposed that this could have a positive effect on Buddhist practice.

Figure 4 shows the relationship between psychology of religion, Buddhist psychology and psychological study of mindfulness meditation. If Buddhism in itself has a function that allows for self-analysis and brings peace of mind, Buddhism could be seen as a type of alternative psychology, such as first-person psychology, which employs introspection. Furthermore, it could be said that Buddhism carries aspects of self-psychotherapy. For these reasons, the relationship between the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology is complex and subject to confusion.

Research Organization on the Psychology of Religion and Buddhist Psychology

There is not yet an independent society for the psychology of religion in Japan, whereas in the APA, there is a formally dependent and functionally independent division called “The Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality.” However, a dependent group

known as the “Society for the Study of Psychology of Religion” was established within the Japanese Psychological Association in 2003, and workshops or open calls for participant symposiums have been performed at annual conferences since that time. In fact, there are some societies for the study of religion, oriental thought, and Buddhism elsewhere in Japan. The Japanese Psychological Association (established in 1927), the Japan Association of Applied Psychology (1931), the Japanese Association for Humanistic Psychology (1982), the Japan Transpersonal Association (1996), and the Japan Association for Transpersonal Psychology/Psychiatry (1998) do not have formal objections to presentations on the study of the psychology of religion or Buddhist psychology.

In terms of specialized groups devoted to the study of religious aspects of psychology, both the Japanese Society of the Transnational Network for the Study of Physical, Psychological and Spiritual Well-being (1989) and the Association for Oriental Philosophy and Psychotherapy (1999) were active or still are in this area. Above all, the former functions as a network between researchers who are involved in the study or practice of oriental religion or philosophy as individuals in both foreign and domestic locales. The foundation of such societies or groups, their

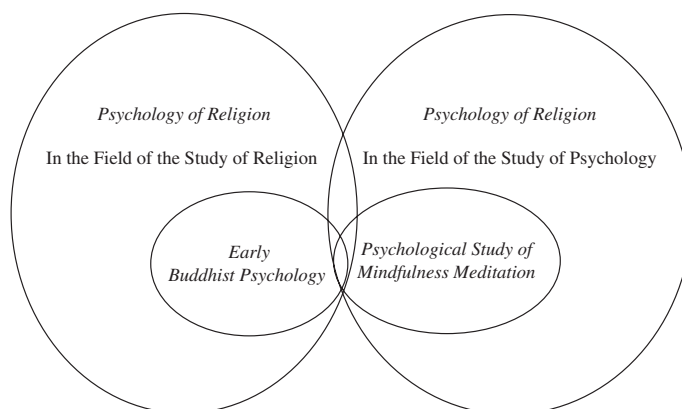


Figure 4 The relationship between psychology of religion, Buddhist psychology and psychological study of mindfulness meditation.

Table 1 Societies or groups, conferences and publications

Year founded	Society and conference	Publications and special issues in other journals
1905	Yujiro Motora, "An essay on Eastern philosophy: Idea of ego in Eastern philosophy," 5th International Congress of Psychology, Rome, Italy	
1957	Erich Fromm, Daisetsu Suzuki, & Richard De Martino "Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis," Cuernavaca, Mexico	Koji Sato, Publication of "Psychologia: An International Journal of Psychology in the Orient", Kyoto University
1958	Zen philosopher Shinichi Hisamatsu of Kyoto University pays a personal visit to Carl G. Jung in Zürich, Switzerland	
1959		Special Issues in <i>Psychologia</i> : Psychotherapies in East and West
1960		"Psychology and the self"
1961		"The problem of unconsciousness"
		"Self"
1977		Akishige, Y. (Ed.). <i>Psychology of Zen I. Psychological studies on Zen I.</i> Komazawa University. Tokyo: Maruzen. Akishige, Y. (Ed.). <i>Psychology of Zen II. Psychological studies on Zen II.</i> Komazawa University. Tokyo: Maruzen.
1979	Jon Kabat-Zinn's mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program was developed at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center	
1989	Shoji Nakamura and Yutaka Haruki, the foundation of the Japanese Society of the Transnational Network for the Study of Physical, Psychological and Spiritual Well-being and yearly workshop or symposium at the Annual Convention of the Japanese Psychological Association	
1992		Special Issue: "Eastern techniques for mental and physical health around the world" and "Eastern approaches to mental and physical health," in <i>Japanese Health Psychology</i> , 1(1) "Psychology of Oriental practice," in <i>Japanese Psychological Review</i> , 35
1998	"Gathering to regard the point of contact between Buddhism, Psychology and Psychotherapy," Kofuku-ji, Nara, Japan	
1999	Kouzo Shimosaka, the foundation of the Association for Oriental Philosophy and Psychotherapy Polly Young-Eisendrath and Shoji Muramoto, the "Zen Buddhism and	

Table 1 Continued

Year founded	Society and conference	Publications and special issues in other journals
2002	psychotherapy conference," Myoshin-ji in Kyoto and Rinsoin in Shizuoka, Japan	Special Issue: Psychological approach to Buddhism. In <i>Japanese Journal of Transpersonal Psychology/Psychiatry</i>
2003	The foundation of the Society for the Study of Psychology of Religion and yearly workshop or symposium at the Annual Convention of the Japanese Psychological Association	
2005		Special Issue: "New currents of Zen and Modern Psychology I," in <i>Japanese Journal of Transpersonal Psychology/Psychiatry</i>
2006	Dale Mathers, Melvin E. Miller and Osamu Ando, the "Kyoto 2006 conference on self and no-self in psychotherapy and Buddhism," Hanazono University, Kyoto, Japan	
2007		Special Issue: "New currents of Zen and Modern Psychology II," in <i>Japanese Journal of Transpersonal Psychology/Psychiatry</i>
2008	Vimala Inoue, Moriya Okano and Kenneth Tanaka, general meeting for the establishment of "Japanese Association of Buddhism and Psychology," Musashino University, Tokyo, Japan	
2010		<i>Journal of the Japanese Association for the Study of Buddhism and Psychology</i> in the Japanese Association for the Study of Buddhism and Psychology The book of <i>Keywords for Buddhism and psychology</i>
2014	Fusako Koshikawa, the foundation of the "Japanese Association of Mindfulness," Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan	

main academic conferences, and any publications or special issues are shown in Table 1.

One reason for the delay in establishing religion associations in Japan as compared to the United States may be because the primary religions in Japan are Shinto and Buddhism. However, this fact has led to a variety of

associations on Oriental thought and spiritual technique in Japan. Additionally, since many sects of Buddhism have existed and thrived simultaneously in Japan, each sect has made efforts to help people in their own way. However, there has not been a movement toward original elements of Buddhism, such as

mindfulness. Meanwhile, since the establishment of the Japanese Association of Mindfulness, this organization has seemed to focus on applying meditation as a clinical technique and excluding the characteristics of faith and religious rituals. On the other hand, the Japanese Association for the Study of Buddhism and Psychology appears to focus on combining the psychological and religious in the various sects.

One positive aspect of the establishment of societies or groups exclusively devoted to the study of the psychology of religion or Buddhist psychology is that these groups help promote a deeper discussion of issues related to both religion and psychology. However, there are also some drawbacks. One problem is that an increase in the number of these organizations may force researchers to belong to many societies in order to follow the trends of each group; this may prove to be time-consuming and a financial burden. Additionally, a larger number of specialized societies may inhibit sharing of the knowledge if no efforts are made to promote intentional interchanges. Multiple groups might also result in the needless duplication or overlap of study and research activities. One solution would be to make an umbrella design in the Japanese Psychological Association for integrating these groups.

Conclusion

The study of the psychological aspects of religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism, began at the end of the 19th century; this type of research was known as either the psychology of religion or Buddhist psychology, depending on the area of focus, and used psychology, which was at the time a new scientific methodology. Because research on the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology developed separately, there was not a great deal of interchange between these fields. If researchers in these domains had been familiar with the research trends in both fields, each of these areas of study might have developed more quickly. Similarly, because Buddhism itself has a psychological element,

Buddhist practitioners and psychologists might have areas in common that would benefit from interchange of ideas. It is assumed, as Akishige (1973) noted, that future psychological research will examine oriental religions and practices, such as Persian psychology, Hindu psychology, Confucian psychology, and Taoist psychology. Therefore, interchange between societies or groups studying both the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology will greatly help members of these groups gain greater understanding of their own areas of focus. This type of interchange should comprise exchange of information, collaboration at symposiums, as well as knowledge sharing through encyclopedias, dictionaries, bibliographies or reviews. Moreover this type of interchange will allow researchers to systematize or visualize a comprehensive picture of research in each domain. The relationship between the psychology of religion and Buddhist psychology is complex, and as noted above, can also be the subject of confusion. Moreover, Buddhism might be considered an alternative form of psychological analysis, such as first-person psychology, as Buddhism has elements of psychotherapy that allow it to bring us peace of mind.

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