LECTURE> John LoBreglio on "Japanese Buddhist Perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and Early Twentieth-Century Imperialism", Otani University

Discussion published by Takami Inoue on Friday, July 3, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

You are cordially invited to the following public lecture by John LoBreglio (Oxford Brookes University) at the Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute of Otani University in Kyoto.

Date & Time: Tuesday, July 14, 2015, 16:20-17:50
Place: Multimedia Seminar Room, 3rd Floor of Korukan, Otani University, Kyoto. (A small reception will be held at Big Valley Cafe on campus from 18:00)
Speaker: John LoBreglio (Senior Lecturer, Oxford Brookes University)

Theme: Japanese Buddhist Perspectives on the Paris Peace Conference and Early Twentieth-Century Imperialism

Abstract: Many Japanese Buddhist intellectuals and leaders, both lay and priestly, joined in the global intoxication with Wilsonian idealism and held out hope that the Peace Conference of 1919 would be the venue in which delegates drafted the blueprint for a new international order no longer based upon the acute economic and political competition, and fragile balance of powers, that culminated in the First World War. This window of optimism, as we know, closed all too quickly. My talk will discuss the reasons it did so for many Japanese Buddhists and will seek to demonstrate three things. First, unlike the simplistic and, predominantly negative, portrayal of early twentieth-century Japanese Buddhism as “conservative” and supportive of Japanese imperialism, many of its leading figures supported an internationalism undergirded by universal principles. Second, far from being peripheral to the Japanese experience, the decisions taken at the Peace Conference were carefully monitored and had profound repercussions in the years following the conference. Lastly, perspectives on the Peace Conference from outside the Anglo-American arena, such as that of Japanese Buddhists, provide fodder for a reevaluation of one of the great and ongoing debates of the past century, namely, whether, or to what extent, the decisions made in Paris in 1919 gave rise to the ensuing international troubles of the 1920s and 1930s and led ultimately to the Second World War.

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Takami Inoue
Otani University