

Background info for our “Dharma Breeze” OLLI class (Spring 2026)

Nobuo Haneda (1946-) was born in Nagano, Japan.

Since Haneda loved Leo Tolstoy, the author of War and Peace, when he was a high school student, he majored in Russian at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

When he was a senior in college, he read Shuichi Maida's commentary on Goethe's Faust, in which Maida discussed the German story from a Buddhist perspective.

Having been deeply impressed by Maida's Buddhist ideas, he decided to study Buddhism.

When he visited Maida at his house, he learned that the teacher had passed away two years before.

He then participated in the publication project of the Complete Works of Shuichi Maida (13 volumes) that lasted three years.

Although Haneda could not meet Maida when he was alive, he was moved to witness the deep respect and dedication that Maida's students had for their teacher.

In 1971 when the publication project was over, twenty-five-year old Haneda came to the United States and studied under the Rev. Gyomay Kubose and the Rev. Gyoko Saito at the Buddhist Temple of Chicago.

(These two Shin Buddhist ministers and Shuichi Maida were students of the Rev. Haya Akegarasu (1877-1954), an eminent Shin Buddhist teacher.)

Two years later, Haneda entered the graduate school at the University of Wisconsin.

He received a Ph.D. in Buddhist studies: his thesis was on the Pure Land thought of Shan-tao (613-181), a Chinese Pure Land master.

He taught at the Otani University in Kyoto, Japan, and the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California.

He also worked for the Numata Center of Buddhist Translation and Research in Berkeley, California.

Haneda is the translator of *Heard by Me: Essays on My Buddhist Teacher* by Shuichi Maida and *December Fan: The Buddhist Essays of Manshi Kiyozawa*.

He is the author of the *Dharma Breeze: Essays on Shin Buddhism*.

He is currently director of the Maida Center of Buddhism located in Berkeley, California.

The center is designed for studying and sharing Shin Buddhism in the USA.

It holds regular study classes and seminars.

It publishes English translations of the works of modern Shin Buddhist teachers such as Kiyozawa, Akegarasu, and Maida.

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Shuichi Maida (1906-1967) was born in the city of Kanazawa in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan.

When young, his teachers regarded him as a scientific genius.

But when he was eighteen, he attended a three-day Buddhist lecture by the Rev. Haya Akegarasu (1877-1954), an eminent Shin Buddhist teacher.

Maida was so deeply impressed by Akegarasu that he lost interest in science and started to read books on religion and philosophy.

Maida considered this meeting with Akegarasu the most important event of his life.

Maida entered the University of Kyoto and majored in Western philosophy.

He studied under Dr. Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945), probably the most eminent philosopher in modern Japan, who interpreted Buddhist (particularly Zen) ideas by using Western philosophical concepts.

Maida became an English teacher at a high school in Kanazawa, his hometown.

Then at age thirty-one he became a professor at the Teachers' College in Nagano, where he taught Buddhist philosophy.

Having taught at the teachers' college for six years, he returned to Kanazawa and became dean at the Women's Teachers' College there in 1943.

It was when the Second World War was at its peak.

When the war ended in August 1945 some of Maida's students at the Teachers' College in Nagano, who had returned home from their military services, asked Maida to come back to Nagano and teach them Buddhism.

In January 1946 the forty-year-old Maida abruptly quit his job at the college in Kanazawa and went back to Nagano.

He lived the most dynamic and creative life.

Without any concern for fame or wealth he engaged in various activities, such as studying with small study groups consisting of several people, holding annual retreats, and publishing a monthly journal.

He did not receive any Buddhist ordination and had no official affiliation with any sectarian establishment.

He was a prolific writer, producing more than ten thousand pages during the last twenty years of his life.

Maida says that his first love was Shakyamuni Buddha.

He says that he studied various Eastern and Western thinkers because they all enabled him to understand what Shakyamuni taught.

His final work is entitled the Face to Face with Shakyamuni.

It is Maida's commentary on the Sutta-Nipata, one of the earliest Buddhist texts that are said to contain the original teachings of Shakyamuni.

In this commentary Maida expressed his joy of having met Shakyamuni and Rev. Akegarasu who, he says, most clearly showed him who Shakyamuni was.

The Maida Center of Buddhism in Berkeley, California, founded in 1997, is named after him; its purpose is to promote Shin Buddhism study and translations of his works, funded partly by his student Yukimasa Tada.

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The Evil Person: Essays on Shin Buddhism

Shuichi Maida

Here is a (previously) hidden gem. The greatest little book of living Buddhism you've never heard of. Published in English for the first time in 1989, and now reprinted in 2016 with only minor changes, this work consists of a brilliant introduction by the translator, Nobuo Haneda, and twenty short essays by Suichi Maida (1906-1967).

Maida was a prolific writer and teacher deeply grounded in the long tradition of Mahayana Buddhism. His focus was on the Shin (Pure Land) and Zen schools—and according to Maida, "If a person says that Shin Buddhism and Zen are different, he is a fool." Although the translator Haneda had never met Maida personally when the teacher was alive, he is one of the foremost students of Maida. Maida was a student of Haya Akegarasu (1877-1954); Akegarasu was a student of Buddhist innovator Manshi Kiyozawa (1863-1903). All have roots traceable back to Shinran Shonin, Chinese and Japanese Pure Land masters, and Shakyamuni himself. This modern lineage, or flowering, of Kiyozawa-Akegarasu-Maida, is not known outside the Japanese Shin Buddhist community, an unfortunate situation that should now be corrected.

The title, "The Evil Person," refers to a self-awareness, both devastating and liberating, that is realized only through our encounter with the wisdom-light of the Buddha. If we spiritual seekers catch an honest glimpse into our greed, selfishness, pride, self-love, and essential fraudulence—if we can stomach such an honest self-appraisal—then simultaneously and paradoxically we may also become aware of that true self that embodies Nothingness (Mu). And so we are free. We are always free! And we rediscover that freedom by confessing how 'evil' (ordinary) we are beneath our fake humility. Saints, this does not apply to you, move on. Evil persons, welcome home!

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