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James KETELAAR, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, xiv + 1990, 285 pp. Glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth \$35.00; ISBN 0-691-05599-8.

When I wrote the work that became "Japan's Ignored Cultural Revolution: The Separation of Shinto and Buddhist Divinities in Meiji (*shimbutsu bunri*) and a Case Study: Tōnoimine" (GRAPARD 1984), I hoped that historians would pick up from where I had left off in my article. The article had been considerably reduced in size and scope and was therefore unable to do justice to its subject. It was thus an appeal for longer and deeper analyses of the complexities that animated Japan's modernization, through a reevaluation of its past and of the relations that were to obtain between "religion" and "state." The book under consideration seems to have accepted this challenge – even though it makes no reference to my article – and offers a fascinating and compelling treatment of some of the issues at hand. So let me set aside my bruised ego and assert, at the outset, my conclusion: with this book, the academic study (in the United States) of Japan's modern religious history has come of age.

Several reasons impel me to make this assertion. First is the fact that the overall argument rests on a methodological ground that has clear, consistent boundaries (more on those boundaries later). Second is the fact that the clear-headed issues raised have implications for the academic study of religious

history that are immediately obvious to the attentive reader: we are served notice that our understanding of what "Buddhism" has been over the past one hundred years in Japan cannot remain the same. Whether we desire to formulate a cogent analysis of possible future trajectories, to consider possibilities for religious thought and action in Japan today, or to continue investigating the past, we will have to take this study into account. And third, while this study has its limitations, they are never limiting; rather, they allow us to problematize our approaches in a fruitful way. In other words, even though the author does not propose an agenda for future research, he has opened many avenues for further cogent debate.

This study consists of two interrelated parts. First is an analysis of the persecution of Buddhism that followed the separation of "Shinto" from "Buddhism" in Meiji Japan; this analysis suggests that a premodern state of affairs in the realm of the critique of religious narratives led to the denial of Buddhism as a dominant cultural and political operative and to its constitution as a persecutable other.

Second is an analysis of the ensuing and unavoidable re-constitution of Buddhism, this time in the form of "Buddhism as a religion," one capable of competing with the major religions of the West and thereby regaining, hopefully, a modicum of currency within Japanese culture itself. As the study makes abundantly clear, the statements made by the Japanese delegation to the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893, cannot be properly situated without the kind of background Ketelaar describes for us in a coherent and detailed manner thoroughly consistent with the complexity of the topic. Ketelaar demonstrates that the birth of Buddhism as a religion cannot be understood solely in the context of Japan's encounter with the West, but must also be set against the formidable conflicts inherent in the rise of the Japanese nation-state and its modern desire to control the religious components of culture and the production of ideological discourse. The boundaries of the author's argument are clear and involve a predominantly epistemological tack that emphasizes the production of narratives and a critique of traditional rules of rhetorical engagement among Japanese religious thinkers; this is initiated through a brilliant presentation of Tominaga Nakamoto's writings. This interpretive study is sensitive to the "inner" problematizations that resulted in the making of Buddhism into a persecutable other, and delineates the strategies used by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century priests to defend their decision to remain Buddhists.

One might criticize this project by pointing out that Buddhism was not only a cultural discourse but also a set of institutions and practices, predominantly economic and social in character, that simply could not be tolerated either by the new state or by the people who had been subject to them in the past, and that this was part of the reason it was made a scapegoat. Ketelaar avoids that issue, not because of an inability to deal with it but because it is not his main point; he stays on the side of those true and sincere believers who did exist in Japan at the time, and argues that a hard-line emphasis on institutions would "disallow for the possibility of there being any legitimate 'defenders of the dharma' (*gohōsha*)" (p. 10). In other words, the author is predominantly inter-

ested in “the conceptual terrain upon which the persecution of Buddhism was enacted.” This argument is plausible indeed, but only up to a point: while the conceptual terrain does reveal the existence and directions of certain discursive formations, it can also obfuscate other formations, and can often be used to hide the presence of discursive practices. Part of the premodern critique of Buddhism took place on the level of those practices. Ketelaar recognizes this issue and treats it, to some extent, in his analysis of Tsuji Zennosuke’s critique, but he leaves it unresolved. For example, while he clearly states, with regard to Hirata Atsutane, that “the pervasive nature of anti-Buddhist *ideas* during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Japan contributed to an environment conducive to the radical repositioning of religious *institutions within the social order*” [emphases mine], he does not clearly indicate the nature of the relationship between those two terms, and leaves us with the notion that it was the realm of ideas that caused the repositioning in question. However, when Hirata, “at his scatological best,” declared that “anyone who would believe that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the ground, or the essence, of the kami, would ‘eat horse shit thinking it was nutritious rice cakes’ ” (p. 36), then we must pay equal attention to the conceptual terrain that made that declaration possible or even legitimate.

Indeed, we are beginning to discover that the *honji suijaku* “doctrine” or “theory,” according to which native kami were regarded as local manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, not only served, on the conceptual level, as a hermeneutic reduction of local deities by a highly sophisticated philosophical system (Buddhism), but was also used, on the sociopolitical level, to legitimate the economic and administrative dominance of Buddhist temples over their associated “Shinto” shrines throughout Japan. What is more, we are discovering that the term *honji suijaku* itself was utilized to differentiate the respective social statuses of those associated with the temples and those associated with the shrines. The *shuto*, typically affiliated directly with Buddhist temples and indirectly with their associated Shinto shrines, had a higher social status than their counterparts, the *jinin*, who were directly associated with the Shinto shrines and indirectly with the temples. This difference in status was reflected by the use, in documents dating as far back as the eighteenth century, of *honji* for the *shuto*, and *suijaku* for the *jinin*. This usage was also contested, however, for we read that in some sites of cult *honji* and *suijaku* were on an equal level, while at others they were subject to a vertical hierarchy.

The point is this: any contestation, at the conceptual level, of the *honji suijaku* “theory” implied a contestation of a social and political character, and the stinging critique to which the “doctrine” was subjected during parts of the Edo period must be understood to lie beyond mere diatribe and to have had real, material components. Thus, if we do not include institutions, economic practices, sociological facts, and the administrative apparatus of “Buddhism” in the “conceptual terrain” on which the battles were fought, we run the danger of leaving the argument at too high, abstract, and “clean” a level, and of thus failing to appreciate fully the material nature of the fight. It is no wonder that the persecutors of Buddhism, from Toyotomi Hideyoshi to the Meiji hordes, attacked its material aspects.

This being said, Ketelaar is absolutely right when he declares that it would be wrong to reduce the traumatic events of Meiji to just a persecution of Buddhism alone. It is worth quoting the following lines:

There are two important qualifications to be made in presenting this seemingly inescapable elimination of a Buddhist presence from the social. First, the more severe restrictions—such as the confiscation of all temple properties . . . and the banning of privately performed ceremonies . . . which made the government the de facto leader of *all* ceremony throughout the entire country—*were equally placed upon all aspects of Shinto organizations as well.* (p. 69, emphasis in the original)

Here we are entering an arena of conceptualization of the problem that is most promising for future research: the role of the nation-state on the one hand, and on the other, the analysis of the “newly created systems of religious education, the construction of Buddhist and Shinto histories, and the postpersecution legislation of precise legal and political contours of all sectarian institutions” (p. 76). In the case of the nation-state, it seems to me that Ketelaar is correct in recognizing that Japan’s new political arrangements called for a separation of “religion” and “rule,” and that in this setup the state would have the upper hand: the rest of the world offered much evidence that theocracies were out of date, and it was obvious to the people in power at the turn of the century that neither Buddhism nor Shinto, even in their new configurations, could provide direction of any kind. They were, at any rate, to be manipulated and prevented from offering a stable and solid critique of the state’s policies.

Of course, there is a fundamental distinction between manipulation and legislation: the first must, by definition, hide the modalities of its operation in order to produce its desired effects, while the second must be grounded in a certain type of rationality—or, at least, a ground for “governmentality”—that is open to debate in a parliamentary type of organization. It strikes me, in this respect, that the new form of Buddhism that emerged in Japan at the turn of the century represented a minor attempt at grounding its self-definition in a rationality that people took to be universally accepted, if not demonstrable, and that the new histories of Buddhism emerging from Japanese academia at the time attempted to legitimate Buddhism within the limits of that rationality (and here I would argue that Inoue Enryō deserves a better position than that granted by Ketelaar).

However, religion within the limits of reason alone may be an empty dream, for all religious discourses are necessarily grounded in non-rationality—so long as they claim privileged knowledge concerning the great origins, access to a transcendental entity, and so on—which is precisely what Tominaga Nakamoto understood, although he could not, for various reasons, provide a theory of irrationality such as that derived today from Nietzsche. In other words, if religion is, even only in part, the institutionalization of private illusions (Tominaga: “The world arises in accordance with one’s heart,” p. 24), then the claim to rationality must fall apart. The same is true for nation-states,

and the twentieth century offers ample evidence of this. Nevertheless, one can find a rationality, at least in certain types of governments, that either knows its limits or provides for legislative discourse to control and define them. In the case of religion, orthodoxy is the tool used to legislate and control the production of discourse; and in Japan, yesterday as today, there is no such thing as orthodoxy and no such thing as heresy boards (even though there was a will to orthodoxy and the equivalent of excommunication, and even though there is a set of legitimating strategies in the realm of discourse). Hence, it might be argued, there is no religion. How then can there be heretics and martyrs? There is only raw political power, and it is only in connection to that political power that there are what seem to be heretics and martyrs—if that is the way we decide to anoint those who lost. But this implies that religious movements may opt to gain political power—which is precisely what one sees happening in some circles in Japan and elsewhere.

This book provides us with a solid set of questions concerning the nature of public and private narratives related to the interface between religion, politics, and education in modern Japan. It also provides a platform for critical discussion of the contemporary academic taxonomies under which some of us suffer, such as Shinto or Buddhology, and suggests excellent parameters within which we can critically look at Japanese (and foreign) literature on religious history or religious self-representation. It throws light on the formation of modern Japanese Buddhism as a phenomenon that might be understood in terms of conceptual rules that can be demonstrated and critically discussed. In other words, it lends some epistemological clarity to the subject, even if it fails to address the entire picture or to treat with equal depth of sentiment all the actors who were engaged in establishing otherness (of thought and purpose) as the negative measure of themselves and as something to be derided.

Buddhism, for example, had spent centuries defining, for the realm of shrines, what Shinto was supposed to be, what the kami were in the grand scheme of things, who the *jinin* were allowed to be and what they were allowed to do, and so on: how is that for constituting the “other” and for denying the right to self-definition? Just take a good long look at the size of Buddhist institutions on the grounds of shrines—Usa Hachiman, Hie/Hiei, and others—before Meiji. It is all indeed a conflict of interpretations, with lots of materiality at stake. But who would claim to accomplish a project so grand that it would show how many danced and what there was in their heads, and at the same time would be informed by a rigorous self-reflectiveness such as is found in this book?

Enough said. This is a remarkable book and I recommend it highly. Well researched and documented, incisive and critically charged, it is also very well written, even though there are many errors in diacritics, and a few errors in actual transcription (such as *gyūtdō tennō* for *gozu tennō*, note 16, p. 233). I will use it in my classes next quarter, and urge Princeton University Press to immediately produce a soft cover edition, so that it may become widely available to students of history, religions, and political science.

## REFERENCE

GRAPARD, Allan G.

- 1984 Japan's ignored cultural revolution: The separation of Shinto and Buddhist divinities in Meiji (*shimbutsu bunri*) and a case study: Tōnomine. *History of Religions* 22/3: 240–65.

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