

## Meiji Religious Policy, Sōtō Zen, and the Clerical Marriage Problem

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*One of the most significant legal changes for the Buddhist clergy in the wake of the Meiji Restoration was the decriminalization of clerical meat eating and marriage (nikujiki saitai). The end to state enforcement of the prohibition against marriage by the Buddhist clergy sparked a prolonged debate over that practice within the Buddhist world. This article examines the range of responses to the decriminalization measure by the Sōtō clergy and traces the spread of clerical marriage within the Sōtō denomination. Despite ongoing resistance to clerical marriage from the denomination's leadership, the majority of Sōtō clerics eventually married, forcing many institutional adaptations. The de facto acceptance of clerical marriage, however, failed to resolve the fundamental doctrinal issues concerning that practice, which remains problematic for some Sōtō clerics today.*

IN THE WAKE OF THE Meiji Restoration the leaders of the new government, together with a mixed group of Nativists, Shinto clerics, and even a few Buddhists, embarked on an ambitious program of restructuring state religious policy. While the early Meiji anti-Buddhist violence known as *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 had higher visibility, the effects of the quieter institutional changes and the redefinition of the relationship between religious institutions and the Japanese state proved to be an even more significant, persistent challenge to the leaders of the established Buddhist denominations. From the beginning of the Meiji era in 1868 until the promulgation of the constitution in 1889, government officials in charge of religious affairs ended many of the policies that had been put into effect by the Tokugawa regime, in short order eliminating all status privileges for the clergy, abolishing state enforcement of religious precepts, and dissolving

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many of the institutional arrangements that had governed relations between religious institutions and the state.

For the majority of Meiji Buddhist leaders, by far one of the most troubling legal shifts of the early Meiji years was the dissolution of state penalties for a variety of precept infractions. Although such government intervention in sangha affairs had frequently been resisted and circumvented by the Japanese Buddhist clergy, during the centuries of Tokugawa rule state enforcement of the precepts had become an assumed part of state-sangha relations. Despite the sporadic nature of the enforcement of regulations governing clerical behavior by Tokugawa and other domainal authorities, particularly sexual liaisons between clerics and women, severe penalties for infractions—ranging from public exposure (*sarashi* 晒し) to beheading (*gokumon* 獄門)—were occasionally exercised until the very end of the Edo era.<sup>1</sup>

One crucial law, promulgated in 1872, decriminalized a variety of clerical practices that had been illegal according to Bakufu regulations for much of the Edo period. The regulation, commonly referred to during the Meiji period as the *nikujiki saitai* 肉食妻帯 law, ended all penalties for clerics who violated state and clerical standards of deportment by eating meat, marrying, letting their hair grow, or abandoning clerical dress. Although many government officials viewed the regulation as an important component of an overall policy to modernize Japanese society by abolishing the old Edo status system (*mibun seido* 身分制度), the heads of almost every Buddhist denomination construed the measure as another attempt to destroy Buddhism by undermining their efforts to end the clerical corruption and laxity that had invited the recent violent persecution of Buddhism. The changes in government policies toward precept enforcement sparked a vitriolic debate among clerics, concerned laypeople, government officials, and the laity over the practice of *nikujiki saitai* and the role that the state should play in guaranteeing compliance with the Buddhist precepts. For the rest of the Meiji era the heads of established Buddhist denominations groped for some way to respond to the legal changes instituted by Meiji government leaders and to maintain order within their denominations.

The multiple shocks of anti-Buddhist violence, institutional restructuring, and the encounter with a range of Western discourses concerning religion and the state catalyzed a wide range of responses within the Buddhist world. Some clerics, for example Shaku Unshō

<sup>1</sup> On the variety of punishments to which clerics were subjected for such crimes as fornication (*nyobon* 女犯) see KEIMU KYŌKAI 1943, 1, p. 594.

釈雲照 (1827–1909) of the Shingonshū and Fukuda Gyōkai 福田行誠 (1809–1888) of Jōdoshū, advocated a Buddhist fundamentalism that called for a return to what they believed were the teachings and practices of the founders of their respective denominations. At the opposite end of the spectrum, other prominent Buddhist intellectuals—for example, Ōuchi Seiran 大内青巒 (1845–1918), Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911), and Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919)—advocated varying degrees of reformulation of Buddhist ideas and practices in order to create a modern Buddhism that was more accessible and relevant to the Japanese as they wrestled with the problems of state formation, social disruption, and competition with the Western powers.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay I examine various responses of the Sōtō clergy to policies of the Meiji government that altered state enforcement of the religious precepts governing meat eating, clerical marriage, tonsure, and clerical garb. In keeping with the parameters of this special volume on Zen during the Meiji period, I concentrate on how the changes in laws governing clerical deportment directly affected the Sōtō denomination during the Meiji era. Nonetheless, it is crucial to remember that the Sōtō clergy did not respond in isolation to this crisis and that the debate over *nikujiki saitai* did not end with the death of the Meiji Emperor in 1911.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most striking features of the response to the institutional changes of the Meiji period is the pan-sectarian cooperation by Buddhist leaders. Official Sōtō policies with regard to the problem of clerical marriage were formulated against a backdrop of cooperation and exchange with the other Buddhist denominations that were wrestling with the implications of the new legislative landscape. The coordination of resistance to the new laws concerning clerical deportment was facilitated by a host of technological and legal changes during the late-nineteenth century. More rapid means of communication, the proliferation of new journals and newspapers, and greater tolerance of open debate facilitated interchange between different Buddhist groups and made the struggle over *nikujiki saitai* highly visible. To a large extent the heads of the various denominations coordinated their efforts to hinder the spread of clerical marriage and to pressure the government to reinstitute penalties for precept infraction. The Sōtō response must be understood in light of this broad pan-sectarian cooperation. In many respects the Sōtō response was prototypical of

<sup>2</sup> For a concise summary of the range of responses to the changes instituted by the Meiji government see DAVIS 1992, pp. 161–68.

<sup>3</sup> The most extensive general studies on the *nikujiki saitai* problem in Japanese are found in IKEDA 1994 and HIKITA 1991.

the wider official Buddhist response to the *nikujiki saitai* problem.

Like leaders from most other Buddhist denominations, the clerics in charge of creating a unified sect law for the Sōtō denomination took a prominent role in opposing the decriminalization of *nikujiki saitai* and the spread of clerical marriage among the rank-and-file Sōtō clergy. Despite official resistance, however, even at the start of the Meiji period the Sōtō clergy were far from unified in their acceptance of the official conception of clerical practice and sectarian identity. Despite the Sōtō leaders' opposition to clerical marriage, there appear to have been significant fractures both within the elite ranks of the denomination and among the rank-and-file clergy. That the promulgation of the law decriminalizing *nikujiki saitai* was the suggestion of the prominent ex-Sōtō cleric, Ōtori Sessō 鴻雪爪 (1814–1904), is a clear indication of the wide range of opinion within the Sōtō denomination.

Most important, in addition to the small number of vocal advocates of *nikujiki saitai* within the Sōtō denomination, there was also a significant number of nameless clerics who, during the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa eras, ignored the condemnation of Sōtō leaders and married. It was the swelling ranks of this group of clerics and their families, rather than the doctrinal arguments of marriage advocates, that forced the leaders to soften their opposition and tacitly allow clerical marriage. Ultimately, however, because the Sōtō leadership only tacitly accepted clerical marriage, rather than actively affirming it, the tension between the official ideals of the Sōtō denomination and the life and practice of the Sōtō clergy continues to trouble Sōtō clerics to the present day.

#### *Ōtori Sessō and the Promulgation of the Nikujiki Saitai Law*

The adoption of the *nikujiki saitai* law was the result of the intersection of numerous concerns among the Meiji leaders in charge of religious affairs, including the desire to disestablish Buddhism, to modernize the clergy, and to end all special legal treatment that had been afforded the clergy by the Edo status system. Although the dissolution of various status perquisites was vigorously opposed by many Buddhist leaders, the moves undertaken by the Meiji officials were not totally bereft of support from within Buddhist circles. Having taken to heart much of the criticism leveled at the Buddhist clergy by Nativists, Shintoists, and others during the Bakumatsu period, and convinced that the anti-Buddhist violence was a direct result of the clergy's spiritual torpor, some of these Buddhist reformers supported and even helped formulate the state policy that stripped the clergy of many of

their status privileges. By abolishing the network of status-based prerequisites and regulations governing clerical life, these Buddhists believed that the clergy would be better able to incorporate themselves into national reform efforts and focus on matters essential to the survival of Buddhism and Japan's success in the global arena.

Ōtori Sessō, a Sōtō cleric for fifty-two years, was one of the most influential Buddhist collaborators with the Meiji officials in charge of setting state religious policy.<sup>4</sup> According to contemporaneous accounts by Ōtori's disciples, government ministers, and Sōtō clerics, Ōtori held much of the responsibility for the promulgation of the *nikujiki saitai* law and the incorporation of the Buddhist clergy into the state proselytization efforts that culminated in the formation of the *kyōdōshoku* 教導職 (doctrinal instructors) system for spreading state doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

Ōtori was not a brilliant doctrinal scholar or an eloquent apologist for Buddhism on a par with such better-known Meiji Buddhists as Ōuchi Seiran, Shimaji Mokurai, or Inoue Enryō. Nonetheless, Ōtori's name is liberally sprinkled through official documents concerning the formation of the fledgling government's religious policy. Even at the height of the suppression of Buddhism he remained the confidant of such leading Meiji political figures as Ohara Tesshin 小原鉄心 (1817–1872). For much of his life Ōtori exerted considerable influence within Sōtō politics as well, playing a prominent role in the high-level negotiations aimed at ending the ongoing disputes between the Eihei-ji and Sōji-ji factions of the Sōtō denomination. Ōtori was prominent enough in both Sōtō and government circles to be nominated as one of the five candidates to fill the newly created post of *kanchō* (管長 chief abbot) of the Sōtō school in 1872, although eventually he withdrew from the election, choosing to devote his energies to the development of a pan-sectarian state religious policy. Even after Ōtori left the Sōtō clergy to serve as a minister in the Ministry of Doctrine (Kyōbushō 教部省), his disciples remained prominent members of the establishment, contributing to the compilation of the *Tōjō zaike shushōgi* 洞上在家修証義, one of the proto-texts that developed into the centerpiece of modern Sōtō teaching, the *Shushōgi* (IKEDA, 1990, p. 342). In addition, one of Ōtori's leading disciples, Aokage Sekkō 青蔭雪鴻 (1832–1885), became the abbot (*kanshu* 管首) of Eihei-ji in 1883.

<sup>4</sup> For information about Ōtori see ŌTORI 1903; HATTORI 1938; KOBAYASHI 1936; and ŌTORI 1936. An interview conducted with Ōtori is recorded in SHIDANKAI 1972, 7, pp. 173–89. The interview with Ōtori was originally published in the 17 September 1896 edition of the journal. For studies of Ōtori, in particular his involvement in the adoption of the *nikujiki saitai* law, see IKEDA 1994, pp. 31–48; JAFFE 1991; and JAFFE 1995, pp. 89–133.

<sup>5</sup> See KETELAAR 1990, pp. 98–135 for a discussion of the *kyōdōshoku* system.

Drafted into the government religious bureaucracy in 1872, Ōtori served in the Sain 佐院 and later in the Ministry of Doctrine, all the while working vigorously to ameliorate the anti-Buddhist tenor of state religious policy, arguing that such hostility was detrimental to the national interests. Although Ōtori's entrance into the government bureaucracy entailed his return to lay life, Ōtori was placed in a position to advocate a shift in government religious policy from the suppression of Buddhism to the incorporation of the Buddhist clergy into the *kyōdōshoku* system.<sup>6</sup> The aim of this plan was to employ Buddhist clerics along with Shinto clerics, popular preachers, entertainers, and others to disseminate state doctrine, thereby combatting the spread of Christianity and bolstering support for the new government.

In addition to acting as an advocate for Buddhism, Ōtori played an important role in the administration of Shinto affairs, working to bring an end to the Pantheon Dispute (*saijin ronsō* 祭神論争) and, following a period of government service, acting as the head priest of the Kotohira Shrine at Toranomom in Tokyo and then as the second *kanchō* of the sectarian Shinto denomination, Ontake-kyō 御岳教.<sup>7</sup> Ōtori's career shifts from Sōtō cleric to government minister, shrine priest, and finally *kanchō* of Ontake-kyō demonstrate the fluidity of the boundaries between such new early Meiji creations as the entirely separate entities "Buddhism" and "Shinto." It also suggests that for clerics like Ōtori, being a *kyōdōshoku*—that is, a proselytizer for the central government, and helping to create an "Imperial Way" (*kōdō* 皇道) that would draw on Buddhism and Confucianism as well as Shinto—took precedence over their affiliation with a particular denomination.

<sup>6</sup> I am not certain whether all Buddhist clerics who held government office were forced to return to lay life, but according to Ōtori's own account, "I received an order from the court to return to lay life and at the same time I was instructed to serve in the Sain. The intent of this order was to allow me to argue for my memorial on the legislative level. Although the order was irksome, I took up the post because it was an imperial command." Hattori claims that Ōtori was initially reluctant to comply, but when Kido, Iwakura, and Etō Shinpei—who argued that this would be the most effective way to ensure the adoption of his suggested reforms—arranged for the Sain to order him to leave the clergy, he finally assented. SHIDANKAI 1972, p. 185. See also, NIHON SHISEKI KYŌKAI 1973, p. 296; HATTORI 1938, pp. 64–65.

<sup>7</sup> For more on the Pantheon Dispute see HARDACRE 1989, pp. 48–51. The dispute began when Senge Takatomi (1845–1914), chief priest (Daigūji 大宮司), submitted a petition to the government requesting that Ōkuninushi no Mikoto 大国主命, main deity of Izumo Shrine, be acknowledged as having dominion over the underworld. Senge urged the worship of Ōkuninushi no Mikoto alongside the other four deities that had been enshrined at the Office of Shinto Affairs (Shinto Jimukyoku 神道事務局). The Ise faction viewed this effort as an attempt to wrest control over the Great Promulgation Campaign from them. See KOKUSHI DAJITEN HENSHŪ INKAI 1979–1997, vol. 6, p. 171. A detailed description of the dispute is found in FUJII 1974. See also, TOKOYO 1885, pp. 401ff; NAKAJIMA 1972.

The second son of Miyaji Nagamitsu 宮地長光, a wealthy farmer in Higo (present-day Kumamoto in Kyūshū), Ōtori was ordained at the age of six by Tetsuran Mutei 鉄籃無底 (d. 1843), a Sōtō monk in the dharma lineage of Manzan Dōhaku 卍山道白 (1635–1714) and an acquaintance of the Miyaji family. After sixteen years of study under Mutei, Ōtori went on a pilgrimage during which he studied with the illustrious Sōtō scholar-monk Kōsen Mujaku 黄泉無著 (1775–1838), serving as his personal attendant (*jisha* 侍者) for several years.<sup>8</sup> Ōtori received transmission (*shihō* 嗣法) from Mutei in 1838.<sup>9</sup> Soon after his recognition as a full-fledged Sōtō cleric, Ōtori began a series of abbeys at the clan temples (*bodaiji* 菩提寺) of influential domain lords. From the abbacy of Zenshō-ji 全昌寺, the temple of the Toda family who ruled Ōgaki domain, he moved to Kōken-ji 孝顯寺, the clan temple of Matsudaira Yoshinaga 松平慶永 (1828–1890), the lord of Fukui domain, and finally, in 1867, to Seiryō-ji 清涼寺 in Hikone, the temple of the Ii 伊井 family. During that twenty-year period, Ōtori moved in an intellectual circle that included such anti-Bakufu figures as Ohara Tesshin, the Confucian and political economist Fujimori Kōan 藤森弘庵 (1799–1862), and the Confucian scholar Yokoi Shōnan 横井小楠 (1809–1869). Through his close friend Ohara, Ōtori was introduced to such future government leaders as Etō Shinpei 江藤新平 (1834–1874), Kido Takayoshi 木戸孝允 (1833–1877), Ōkubo Toshimichi 大久保利通 (1830–1878), and Iwakura Tomomi 岩倉具視 (1825–1883).

One of Ōtori's primary concerns during the late-Bakumatsu and the early Meiji periods was the hostility to Buddhism among the leaders of the Restoration. While accepting the consensus among government leaders that the Buddhist clergy were largely corrupt and indolent, Ōtori advocated a policy that would reform and utilize the Buddhist clergy in the national interest. Beginning in 1868 Ōtori attempted to use his influence among Meiji leaders to soften the state's anti-Buddhist policies. Ōtori argued persuasively that if the Buddhist clergy were reformed, the revitalized clergy would be an asset in the new government's anti-Christian proselytization campaign.

To this end, shortly after the promulgation of the five articles of the Imperial Oath (*Gokajō no seimon* 五箇条の誓文) on Meiji 1.3.14, Ōtori submitted a petition to the court concerning the role of the Buddhist clergy in the new nation (KOKUSHI DAJITEN HENSHŪ IINKAI 1979–1997, vol. 5, p. 582). In the petition, Ōtori called on the government to

<sup>8</sup> For a brief biography of Kōsen see NIHON BUKKYŌ JINMEI JITEN HENSAN IINKAI 1992, p. 256.

<sup>9</sup> KOKUSHI DAJITEN HENSHŪ IINKAI 1979–1997, vol. 9, p. 27. The story of Ōtori's stay at Kōsen's temple is found in ŌTORI 1903, vol. 1, pp. 2r–3r.

mobilize the Buddhist clergy as a bulwark against Christian missionary influence. Ōtori warned that Christianity could, as it had at the start of the Edo period, become a threat to Japan's stability. In order to counteract the growing influence of Christianity at a time when the Japanese government was encountering increasing pressure from the Western powers to end the Edo-period laws that banned Christianity in Japan, Ōtori advocated the formation of a national teaching based on the three main traditions in Japan—Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism (SHIDANKAI 1972, p. 183). Echoing critiques that were commonplace in Bakumatsu anti-Buddhist literature, Ōtori complained that the Buddhists had grown overly concerned with the “disposal of corpses and managing the household registry,” at the expense of such central concerns for the nation as clerical education and morality. According to Ōtori the Buddhist leadership had failed to “awaken to the spirit of the times” and had weakened Buddhism by “taking rules that cannot be followed and forcing them on people who are incapable of following them” (ŌTORI 1903, 2, pp. 71–81).

In a second petition that was submitted in late 1871 Ōtori reiterated his calls for the incorporation of the Buddhist clergy into state proselytization efforts and made more explicit suggestions for reforming the Buddhist clergy. Ōtori proposed a number of measures that echoed the Imperial Oath's injunctions to “break the shackles of former evil practice (*rōshū* 陋習) and base our actions on the principles of international law” and to “seek knowledge throughout the world and thus invigorate the foundations of this imperial nation.”<sup>10</sup> Ōtori noted that the Buddhist clergy had erected rules that violated human nature (*ninjō* 人情) and called on the Buddhists to teach in a more “humble and kinder fashion.” He also called for efforts to eliminate clerical corruption and even requested that the state send some clerics to the West to study.<sup>11</sup>

In both petitions, Ōtori claimed that the new foreign intrusion into Japan and the Restoration had brought the dawn of a new age. The increased contact with the West, he believed, would make the continuation of the ban against Christianity impossible. Rather than try to uphold the outdated ban, Ōtori argued that the government must strive to inculcate the people with indigenous Japanese teachings. Ōtori later explained that although both Confucianism and Buddhism originally were imported traditions, through the long expanse of Japanese history they had, along with Shinto, supported the ruling

<sup>10</sup> BREEN 1996, p. 410. The Five Articles of the Charter Oath delineated the basic principles underlying Restoration government policy.

<sup>11</sup> The memorial is contained in YASUMARU and MIYACHI 1988, p. 30.



authorities like the interdependent legs of a tripod. It was the presence of these three teachings that had enabled Japan to maintain its sovereignty into the Meiji period because the tripartite national religion had penetrated into the very marrow of the Japanese people and had taught them the proper relationship between lord and vassal (*kunshin* 君臣). Further, according to Ōtori, the very success of the three Japanese traditions had brought about their stagnation—the *pax Tokugawa* allowed teachers of every stripe to become indolent.<sup>12</sup> Ōtori, using language redolent with Buddhist connotations and also evocative of the Meiji push for modernization, accused the clergy of being ignorant about the eschatological disposition of the age (*ji* 時) and human spiritual capacity (*ki* 機). As a result, Buddhist leaders forced the clergy to follow religious regulations that they were no longer capable of following.

The appeal to the *Zeitgeist* as the basis for clerical reform must also have resonated with many in the Meiji leadership who conceived of their main task as the modernization of a backwards nation. In Ōtori's petition, as in much of the Bakumatsu and early Meiji Buddhist apologetic *gohō* 護法 (defense of the Dharma) literature, emphasis was not placed on the soteriological efficacy of Buddhism. Rather, Ōtori argued that it was the ability of the Buddhist clergy to act as educators and proselytizers that made them important to the nation. If strict adherence to outdated codes of behavior prevented the clergy from serving the government, then those rules must be changed. Ōtori's defense of Buddhism was pragmatic, grounded in the potential ability of Buddhism to support the state.

Shortly after submitting his second petition Ōtori was placed in a position from which he could effect his ideas for reforming the Buddhist clergy. On Meiji 5/3/14, when Etō Shinpei became head of the Ministry of Doctrine, which was to orchestrate a new proselytization campaign employing both the Shinto and the Buddhist clergy, Etō selected Ōtori as one of the ministers to serve in the new government body. As the only Buddhist cleric in the ministry, Ōtori was to act as the bureau's expert on Buddhist affairs (MATONO 1968, p. 632). This marked for Ōtori the opportunity to realize his vision for Buddhism in the new nation. "At last the gist of my petitions had been enacted," he later reflected. "Finally a Great Teaching Academy (Daikyō-in 大教院) uniting the two teachings of Shinto and Buddhism was established" (SHIDANKAI 1972, pp. 185–86).

Ministry of Doctrine officials quickly adopted measures to create a

<sup>12</sup> Ōtori's own retrospective interpretation of his memorial is found in SHIDANKAI, 1972, 7, pp. 183–84.

corps of Doctrinal Instructors and a nationwide system of academies (*kyōin* 教院) for the promulgation of state doctrine. While attempting to standardize state doctrine, the ministers also moved to modernize the clergy by ending practices they deemed superstitious or outmoded, for example, the prohibition against women entering the sacred precincts of certain Shinto shrines and Buddhist monasteries. For another, Ōtori proposed the decriminalization of *nikujiki saitai*.

According to several secondary accounts of the event Ōtori recommended the lifting of the ban on *nikujiki saitai* to Etō, who in turn brought the suggestion to the secretary of the Ministry of Doctrine (*kyōbukei* 教部卿), Ōgimachi Sanjō Sanenaru 正親町三条実愛 (1820–1909).<sup>13</sup> According to a biography of Etō, Ōtori recommended that the prohibition against *nikujiki saitai* be terminated because, contrary to the original intent of the law, it had only led to more corruption among the clergy. Ōtori's biographer and disciple, Hattori, similarly wrote that Ōtori proposed the decriminalization measure because the clergy no longer adhered to the ban on clerical marriage and meat eating. Rather than preventing fornication, marriage, and meat eating, the law had made criminals of the Buddhist clergy, which prevented them from participating effectively in the government effort to inculcate state teachings among the populace. After a brief discussion within the ministry, the ban on clerical marriage was officially lifted by the Grand Council of State (Dajōkan 太政官) on Meiji 5/4/25. In one of the first acts by the new ministry, the following regulation, promulgated by the Grand Council of State, was adopted.

From now on Buddhist clerics shall be free to eat meat, marry, grow their hair, and so on. Furthermore, there will be no penalty if they wear ordinary clothing when not engaged in religious activities.<sup>14</sup>

Less than a year later a second Grand Council of State edict extended the decriminalization of *nikujiki saitai* to Buddhist nuns. The second measure, which took into account the changes in household registration procedures for the clergy, stated that “from now on nuns may freely grow their hair, eat meat, marry, and return to lay life. Furthermore, those who return to lay life should notify the ward registrar after reentering a household registry” (DATÉ 1981, p. 636).

<sup>13</sup> These accounts are found in HATTORI 1938, pp. 62–64; and MATONO 1968, p. 632.

<sup>14</sup> 今自僧侶肉食妻帯蓄髮等可為勝手事 但法用ノ外ハ人民一般の服ヲ着用不苦候事 (*Ima yori sōryo nikujiki saitai chikuhatsu nado katte tarubeki koto. Tadashi hōyō no hoka wa jinmin ippan no fuku o chakuyō kurushikarazaru sōrō koto.*) See DATÉ 1981, p. 621.

*Sōtō Resistance to the Nikujiki Saitai Decriminalization*

The rapidity and strength of the official Buddhist response to the *nikujiki saitai* law surprised ministry officials. Meetings were held by clerics throughout Japan to protest the decriminalization, and a group of representatives went to Tokyo to protest directly at the Ministry of Doctrine. After hearing of the uproar over the measure, Ōgimachi Sanjō met with Fukuba Bisei 福羽美静 (1831–1907) and other members of the ministry to discuss the problem and then recommended to Etō that the law be repealed. Etō, however, refused to take such a step, fearing that it would set a bad precedent for other unpopular measures adopted by the new government. “Though we have not yet issued many laws, already we hear voices of protest,” Etō replied. “If we were to repeal the law immediately, this would diminish the authority of the government. Even if the law were in error we could not repeal it. We have even less cause to change the law when, as in this instance, it is correct” (MATONO 1968, p. 634).

According to an eyewitness account by Kuroda Kiyotsuna 黒田清綱 (1830–1917), assistant minister (*Shō* 少輔) at the Ministry of Doctrine, a delegation of clerics visited the ministry and was met by Ōgimachi Sanjō, Ōtori, and a third official, Takagi Hidenori 高木秀臣. On spotting Ōtori, the clerics screamed at him, “You corrupt priest (*maisū* 売僧)!” An uproar ensued, but Takagi finally interceded to explain the government’s rationale for decriminalizing *nikujiki saitai*, and order was restored. Takagi compared the new law to the regulation that had made voluntary the bearing of swords by the samurai. The Buddhist clergy were overly attached to form at the expense of true spiritual cultivation, Takagi remonstrated. Echoing Ōtori’s arguments, Takagi explained that the government was concerned because so many clerics ignored their duty to the state and neglected moral cultivation while busying themselves with trifles of demeanor. The government therefore desired the clergy to train themselves morally and, in accord with the age, to act humanely. The contingent of clerics thereupon left the ministry peacefully (MATONO 1968, p. 636).

Ironically, at the same time that centralized state control of Buddhist department was being abolished, unified Buddhist opposition to the decriminalization was being facilitated by Meiji policies that strengthened the control of the head temples over branch temples and transferred control of sectarian regulations to the office of *kanchō* (chief abbot/priest), which was established for each denomination.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The *kanchō* system was instituted by the Meiji government on Meiji 5.4.30 and was further developed during the early Meiji period. See KASHIWAHARA 1990, p. 51; DATÉ 1981, pp. 627, 634. For more on the *kanchō* system see IKEDA Eishun’s article in this volume.

In addition to conveying government directives to the clerics of their denomination, the *kanchō* were to be responsible for rectifying the regulations of the denomination and reforming clerical behavior.

The newly designated *kanchō* of almost every Buddhist denomination, including the Sōtō, viewed the *nikujiki saitai* law as an obstacle to fulfilling the government mandate that the *kanchō* rectify the sect law and the deportment of their subordinates. In response to the *nikujiki saitai* regulation, the head of the Sōtō establishment, like the *kanchō* of most Buddhist denominations, signed a petition, written by the head of the Daikyōin, Fukuda Gyōkai, calling for the immediate repeal of the new law. In the petition Fukuda complained that the lifting of the ban against eating meat and marriage would only serve to confuse the traditional distinction between lay and clergy and would make a mockery of parishioners who had given donations to the temple for the support of religious activities. In addition, the decriminalization of marriage would confuse the Buddhist clerical community by allowing married clerics to mix with celibate ones, thereby hindering the teaching of Buddhism. Finally, Fukuda predicted that the new law would make it difficult for sect leaders to control rank-and-file clerics, particularly the less self-controlled younger ones. Proselytizer-clerics who, because of their decadent behavior, failed to command the respect of the laity, noted Fukuda, would only make the realization of the Ministry of Doctrine's goals more difficult. Fukuda concluded the petition, which was submitted to the Meiji government in 1872, with the words: "If one modifies the precepts by making them voluntary, under the pretext that during the Last Age those who can uphold these [precepts] are few, one misunderstands the intent of the Buddha's teaching and vitiates the transmission of the teaching. This is something that all of the schools lament" (FUKUDA 1942, p. 453). Sōtō leaders were firm supporters of the movement to end the decriminalization measure. Not content with merely appealing to the Meiji bureaucracy for modification of the law, the Sōtō leadership also warned the clergy at branch temples to continue to adhere to the precepts that they had received at their ordinations. Although the Sōtō-sponsored *Zengaku daijiten* maintains that, following the promulgation of the *nikujiki saitai* law, "a notification of the intent of the law from Eihei-ji and Sōji-ji, the head temples of the school, was produced," in fact, just one month after the Grand Council of State edict was promulgated, the Sōtō leadership made a determined effort to limit the impact of the edict.<sup>16</sup> On Meiji 5.6.2 the leaders of the Sōtō head tem-

<sup>16</sup> ZENGAKU DAIJITEN HENSANJO 1985, p. 976. The variance between the account in the *Zengaku daijiten* and the actual official Sōtōshū response has been angrily noted by at least one Sōtōshū scholar. See TANAKA 1984, pp. 131, 136.

ples, Eihei-ji and Sōji-ji, sent a directive to all Sōtō clerics who were lecturing doctrinal instructors (*junkai kyōdōshoku* 巡廻教導職). The directive warned: “If one does not strictly adhere to the precepts, then it is difficult to practice the Buddhist teaching (*kyōhō* 教法). If the violence of human emotions is not constrained by the precepts, then one cannot distinguish right and wrong (*zōhi* 臧否).” The letter admonished all of the Sōtō *kyōdōshoku* to continue unfailingly to teach the rank-and-file clergy at the branch temples in accordance with the precepts of the Buddhas and Patriarchs.<sup>17</sup>

Just three days later, on Meiji 5/6/5, a more detailed and forceful statement was issued to all Sōtō branch temples. The new announcement claimed that the decriminalization measure issued by the Grand Council of State had been misconstrued—perhaps deliberately—by many clerics as a government order to marry. For this reason the Sōtō leadership intended to clarify the new law. The authors of the directive acknowledged the complaint of such critics as Ōtori that only a small minority of the Buddhist clergy maintained the discipline expected of a cleric, writing that, “of every ten monks, eight or nine of them feign liberation in public, but embrace fettering thoughts when out of view” (SFZ M 5/6/5). The authors claimed that the decriminalization measure was a government strategy for separating true disciples of the Buddha from the false by giving them the freedom to choose between adhering to or violating the precepts. The intent of the measure, the authors state, was not to abolish the precepts for the clergy, but to end government involvement in enforcing clerical rules. The Sōtō leaders advised their subordinates that

a decree now has entrusted the Buddhist precepts to the monks (the meaning of “voluntary” [*katte tarubeki* 勝手タルベキ] is that it is “entrusted” [*makaseru* 委]), so it is up to the clergy to ensure that the precepts are strictly followed. If at this time, disciples of the Buddha do not “return the light to illumine the source” (*ekō henshō* 回光返照), correct previous infractions of the rules, rouse themselves to protect and uphold the True Law, and repay their debt to the nation, then when will they?  
(SFZ M 5/6/5)

In urging all clerics to continue to obey the precepts—specifically, those concerning fornication and meat eating—the leadership of the Sōtō denomination did not go further than calling on each cleric to rely upon his own conscience. The Sōtō directive therefore did not contradict the letter of the *nikujiki saitai* decriminalization measure,

<sup>17</sup> SFZ M 5/6/2, cited in TANAKA 1984, p. 132. See also, MORIOKA 1986 p. 125; KURIYAMA 1917, p. 60.

which had rendered adherence to Buddhist behavioral norms voluntary. The authors of the directive interpreted the law in a manner that justified their continued control of clerical behavior. According to the Sōtō leadership's gloss on the new law, the government devolved control of Buddhist affairs to the sects but stopped short of advocating clerical marriage and other violations of sect law. According to the directive during the Edo period the Buddhist precepts had been conflated with secular law, a mistake that needed to be rectified. Ultimately standards of clerical behavior were rooted in the Buddhist precepts, not the secular law. Despite their clear opposition to the decriminalization measure, at this juncture the Sōtō leaders went no further than a cautious appeal to the clergy to adhere to the precepts and avoid sullyng the Buddhist teaching.<sup>18</sup>

Opponents to the relaxation of standards of clerical behavior within the Sōtō denomination attempted to sway the leaders of the Sōtō assembly and their fellow clerics to refrain from fornication, meat eating, and other inappropriate activities. One of the most vocal proponents of strict adherence to the precepts was the Miyagi Prefecture Sōtō cleric, Bokusan Kin'ei 穆山瑾英 (Nishiari 西有 1821–1910), who became *kanchō* of the Sōtō denomination in 1902. In a series of two letters to the Secretary at the Sōtō Denomination Assembly, dated 11 August and 16 November 1875, Nishiari attacked those like Ōtori Sessō who claimed that the precepts were no longer valid in the modern age and that the clergy had more important affairs to attend to than trifles of morality. Rather than calling on his fellow Sōtō clerics to modernize in order to revitalize support for Buddhism, he advocated a return to strict adherence to the precepts. According to Nishiari, the decline of the Buddhist dharma was not an ineluctable event; the precepts were no more difficult to follow in the Meiji era than they were in the time of Śākyamuni. The hard times that had befallen the clergy were of their own making. If the clergy were upright, responsible, and moral, they had nothing to fear. On the other hand, wrote Nishiari,

if ... we pass our days debauching ourselves, eating meat, marrying, drinking liquor, and doing other unspeakable things while rebuking the parishioners for their lack of faith; complaining about the changes at the court; not doing the work one should be doing; not practicing the way one should be

<sup>18</sup> The leaders of other denominations were not as timid as the authors of the Sōtō directive, however. Shortly after the promulgation of the decriminalization measure a joint directive was issued to the clergy of the Gozan temples that called for the expulsion of clerics who unrepentently flaunted the proscription against sexual activity. See SAKURAI 1954, p. 261. Whether the government tolerated such clear disregard of the decriminalization measure is unclear.

practicing and, ultimately, not training a single disciple, then the dharma's extinction is close at hand. Aah, this is an unbearable thing!

Reiterating the official Sōtō interpretation of the decriminalization measure, Nishiari wrote in his letter that fundamentally the Buddhist precepts were not the concern of the government and for this reason they had ended state enforcement of clerical regulations. Despite the relaxation of state regulations, however, the Sōtō clergy needed to remember that “eating meat is the cause of taking life; having a wife is the cause of deluded action” (NISHIARI 1875a). In a second letter published later that year and addressed to the Sōtō clerics at temples in Aomori Prefecture where Nishiari was living at the time, Nishiari more explicitly addressed how the clergy were to behave. Nishiari wrote that the only way to insure true peace of mind was to immerse one's body and mind in the sea of Buddhism. Mere worldly comfort—gained through marriage, liquor, eating meat, and using temple property for personal benefit—could not approach such solace. Nishiari urged his fellow clerics to devote themselves to diligently performing their duties, to work hard to rebuild their temples, and to devote funds to educating young clerics. He also warned them that because the Sōtō denomination was striving to rectify its practice it was imperative that “[clerics at] every temple shun all women and obediently obey the precepts of the Buddhas and Patriarchs.”<sup>19</sup>

The efforts of the Sōtō leadership did not end with vague calls for the clerics at branch temples to follow their consciences in matters of deportment. Action aimed at suppressing the spread of clerical marriage continued on the political front as well. Along with the heads of almost all other Buddhist denominations, the *kanchō* of the Sōtō denomination participated in the continuing campaign to spur government leaders to repeal or modify the decriminalization measures regarding clerical behavior. In September 1877 Fukuda Gyōkai submitted a second petition, once again signed by the *kanchō* of all the Buddhist denominations, including the Sōtō denomination, to the Sain. More urgent in tone than the first petition, Fukuda wrote that the decriminalization had served as the pretext for shameful behavior by dissolute clerics. Like the authors of the Sōtō directive, Fukuda argued that the *nikujiki saitai* regulation was not intended to override the rules of clerical deportment, but it was being interpreted in that manner by “those who are morally lax.” Without some sort of legislative

<sup>19</sup> NISHIARI 1875b. It is also likely that Nishiari, using the pseudonym Uan Dōnin 有安道人, wrote the 1879 anticlerical marriage tract *Dan sōryo saitai ron*. See UAN 1980 and n.d.

intervention, Fukuda concluded, it would be impossible to reestablish discipline in the Buddhist clerical ranks (FUKUDA 1942, pp. 456–57).

Unlike the previous petition calling for the government to reverse its position on *nikujiki saitai*, the second petition submitted by the *kanchō* moved government leaders to action. Sain members were now more receptive, primarily as a result of significant changes in state policy toward religious organizations in general. By the mid-1870s the attempt to orchestrate the proselytization effort through a joint Buddhist-Shinto organization, the Ministry of Doctrine, had proved a monumental failure. Unending, seemingly insoluble intrasectarian wrangling within various Shinto and Buddhist denominations led many in the Meiji government to reconsider direct state involvement in doctrinal matters and religious politics. In addition, as the nation prepared to draft its first constitution, Christians and such prominent Buddhists as Shimaji Mokurai made increasingly vocal calls for the dissolution of the Ministry of Doctrine, an end to the state-run proselytization effort, and at least limited freedom of religion.<sup>20</sup> In 1877, bowing to pressure from within and without, government leaders abolished the Ministry of Doctrine and assigned management of sectarian affairs to the Shrine and Temple Bureau (Shajikyoku 社寺局), an office within the Home Ministry (Naimushō 内務省). After the abolition of the Ministry of Doctrine, each denomination was to handle the matter of proselytization as it saw fit, and matters of sect law and discipline were to be handled solely by the sectarian establishments.

In the context of the changes in religious policy, officials at the Home Ministry were more accommodating to the requests of the Buddhist leadership concerning the *nikujiki saitai* problem and the lack of discipline among the rank-and-file clergy. In February 1878, several months after receiving Gyōkai's second petition, Home Ministry officials issued a terse amendment to the *nikujiki saitai* decriminalization in an attempt to mollify the coalition of leading clerics who opposed the measure. In order to clarify whether, as some clerics claimed, the decriminalization measure *required* that the Buddhist clergy marry, eat meat, and abandon traditional dress outside of religious functions, Home Ministry officials sent the following directive to the *kanchō* of the various denominations. "Edict Number 133, which states that the clergy are free to eat meat and marry, only serves to abolish the state law that had prohibited such activities. In no way

<sup>20</sup> Some examples of the sectarian disputes are the Pantheon Dispute, the Kōshō-ji 興正寺 secession movement in the Nishi Hongan-ji, and the fight between the Eihei-ji and Sōji-ji factions over control of Sōtōshū. On the general failure of the Kyōdōshoku and Daikyōin movement see HARDACRE 1989, pp. 42–59; KETELAAR 1990, pp. 125–30; and SAKAMOTO 1983, pp. 60–67.



does the law have anything to do with sectarian regulations” (DATÉ 1981, p. 720). The modification of the *nikujiki saitai* law clarified the separation between state law and sectarian concerns, allowing individual denominations to determine for their own followers what religious strictures they should follow. As part of the growing devolution of disciplinary powers to the individual religious organizations, in 1879 the Home Ministry officials issued another edict intended to strengthen the hand of the clerical leaders in enforcing discipline within their denominations. The new proclamation exhorted all clerics to abide by the regulations issued by their respective *kanchō* (HAGA 1985, p. 130).

The leaders of Sōtōshū, as well as those of almost every other denomination that sought to preserve precept adherence among the clergy, were quick to react to the Home Ministry directive. During the next several months, leaders of a number of Buddhist denominations, including the Sōtō, Nichiren, Jōdo, and Shingon, called on their subordinates to end all violations of the precepts. Just one month after officials at the Home Ministry issued the clarification of the government position on *nikujiki saitai*, the Sōtō leadership sent a strongly worded message to the clergy at all branch temples: in light of the new government regulation, from now on they should “make greater efforts to reflect on themselves and should take care not to violate any of the sectarian regulations (*shūki* 宗規)” (SFZ M 11/3/1).

In 1884 the leaders of the Sōtō denomination were given an even more powerful tool to resist the spread of clerical marriage among their clergy. On 11 July Meiji government leaders completely abolished the failed *kyōdōshoku* system and relinquished any remnants of direct central government control of what were now deemed internal sectarian affairs. Henceforth, the *kanchō* and the administrative bodies of each denomination were to be responsible for the discipline of their subordinates. Although the Home Ministry continued to exert some control over the Buddhist and Shinto denominations by requiring that each group draft and submit for approval by the Home Ministry a denomination-wide set of regulations (*shūsei* 宗制) and temple rules (*jihō* 寺法), Buddhist leaders were once again free to demand stringent adherence to rules they had decreed for the rank-and-file clergy.<sup>21</sup>

In response to the Home Ministry decree, the Sōtō leadership issued new regulations for the school in June 1885. The introduction

<sup>21</sup> MIYACHI 1988, pp. 481–82. *Shūsei* are the fundamental rules to be followed within a particular denomination. *Jihō* are the basic regulations to be followed at the individual temples of the denomination. In practice, however, the regulations issued by various denominations rarely distinguish the two types of statutes. See HASEYAMA 1956, pp. 157–61.

to the new Sōtō *shūsei* made clear that, with the abolition of the *kyōdōshoku* system by the Meiji government, the control of abbatial appointments, advancement and demotion, and other matters were no longer the direct concern of the state. Responsibility for all such concerns now was to be entrusted to the head temple, specifically the *kanchō*. The sectarian regulations had received the approval of the Home Ministry, and it was imperative that all clerics at the branch temple abide by those regulations. The Sōtōshū *shūsei* also stressed that the Sōtō leadership henceforth was free to disseminate sectarian teachings without any interference from the government (SŌTŌSHŪ SHŪMUKYOKU 1899, p. 1).

Taking advantage of the latest twist in government policy, the Sōtō leadership adopted a set of rules that contained one of the most stringent antimarriage regulations to be drafted since the promulgation of the *nikujiki saitai* decriminalization measure. The new rules stressed the implications of the limited separation of religion and the state in the following article, which dealt specifically with the problem of clerical marriage.

Women may not be lodged in temples. Although from an administrative perspective Proclamation 133 of 1872 states that the government will not prevent the marriage of Buddhist clerics, the Additional Proclamation of 1875 from the Home Ministry makes clear that this law has no bearing on sect law. Therefore, the sect law, as before, forbids the marriage of the clergy. The separation of religion and the state has now been demarcated. We are free from further government involvement and may conduct our affairs independently. The above sect law shall be adhered to strictly. The same applies to the lodging of men in convents.

(SŌTŌSHŪ SHŪMUKYOKU 1899, p. 21)

### *The Pro-Marriage Movement in the Sōtō Denomination*

Despite the hard-line attitude toward *nikujiki saitai* taken by the drafters of Sōtō sect law, it is clear that shortly after the decriminalization measure was promulgated, a number of Sōtō clerics were married. It appears that even as some leaders were promulgating stringent restrictions concerning clerical marriage, steps were being taken within the denomination to deal with the married clerics. Kumamoto Einin has pointed out that a document recently discovered at the Sōtō temple Myōō-ji 妙応寺 indicates that as early as 1873 some denominational leaders were forced to turn a blind eye towards those clerics who

chose to ignore sect law and marry. The document, which was signed by the abbots of Eihei-ji and Sōji-ji, states that the debate over the *nikujiki saitai* decriminalization measure would be heated and warns clerical leaders to respect the traditions of the various local temples and to not be overly rigid in their attempts to enforce sectarian discipline (KUMAMOTO 1996, p. 18).

Encouraged by the decriminalization measure of 1872, the number of married clerics in the Sōtō denomination grew rapidly, although it is unclear whether these clerics were covertly married prior to 1872 or had married after the promulgation of the law. As I have shown above, Ōtori and other decriminalization advocates first had argued for relaxation of the celibacy rule precisely because so many clerics were ignoring the stricture. There are no statistics for the number of clerical families within the Sōtō denomination during the Meiji period, but Kuruma Tatsu 来馬たつ (*née* Satomi 里見), a Sōtō temple wife who was married to Kuruma Takudō 来馬琢道 (1877–1964), estimated that by mid-Meiji forty to fifty percent of all Buddhist clerics were married, but many of the marriages remained covert because of parishioner disapproval.<sup>22</sup>

There is other indirect but significant evidence that marriage proved popular among the Sōtō clergy. The proposal of a two-tiered clerical ranking system during the 1880s and 1890s, for example, suggests that despite high-level opposition to clerical marriage enough clerics were married to require a systematic means for dealing with them. The proposal called for the formation of a clerical ranking system that would divide the Sōtō clergy into distinct celibate and married classes. Although I have uncovered little direct evidence concerning this proposal, references to the plan are found in several different Sōtō documents related to the clerical marriage debate.<sup>23</sup> The plan was probably modeled after similar systems that had been instituted in the Shingon and Tendai denominations in the 1870s. The leadership of the Shingon denomination, for example, had instituted a system of “pure” (*shōshū* 清衆) and “impure” (*zasshū* 雜衆) assemblies within the denomination in 1876 in order to cope with the influx of Shugendō clerics, many of whom were married, into Shingonshū when Meiji officials ordered the dissolution of all Shugendō denominations.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Kuriyama Taion 栗山泰音 (1860–1937)

<sup>22</sup> Kuruma’s article is cited in UCHINO 1990, pp. 328–29.

<sup>23</sup> The two-tiered system proposal within Sōtōshū is mentioned briefly in TAKITA 1925, p. 2. A more extensive, critical discussion of the proposal is found in KURIYAMA 1917, pp. 71–73.

<sup>24</sup> The edict calling for the dissolution is contained in DATÉ 1981, p. 622. A discussion of the debate over the two-tiered system in the Tendai, Shingon, and Sōtō denominations is found in JAFFE 1995, pp. 205–11.

writes that the Tendai-shū leadership had divided their clergy into unmarried clerics (*gedatsusō* 解脱僧) and married clerics (*gonjisō* 近事僧).<sup>25</sup>

According to Kuriyama Taion and Takita Chinsui 滝田枕水, during the late 1880s or early 1890s several Sōtō leaders—Takita specifically names Takiya Takushū 瀧谷琢宗 (1833–1897), a leading Sōtō scholar and abbot of Eihei-ji from 1885 to 1891—proposed forming two distinct clerical classes within the denomination: practitioners (*bendōshi* 弁道師), who would be “pure,” unmarried clerics, and proselytizers (*shōdōshi* 唱道師), who would be allowed to marry (TAKITA 1925, p. 2). As was the case in Shingonshū, only the “pure,” celibate clerics would be allowed to act as teachers for other clerics and to serve as abbots of the head temples. The lower-ranked “impure” clerics would function as proselytizers and would be allowed to marry and practice familial inheritance of their temples. The desire to implement the two-tiered system of clerical ranking is indicative of the awareness among some Sōtō leaders that the problem of marriage had deepened to the point that simple pronouncements banning the practice would not resolve the issue.

The proposed two-class system of clerical ranks was never adopted by the Sōtō denomination because of opposition to the plan by some high-ranking clerics. Kuriyama Taion vehemently opposed a two-tiered system because he believed it would eventually lead to the segregation of the two types of clerics and to discord within the school. Considering the experience of the Shingon and Tendai denominations, where implementation of two clerical classes had sparked complaints and petitions from the “impure” clerics who had been relegated to the lower echelons of their denominations, Kuriyama’s fears were probably well founded. It is also possible that Kuriyama, a partisan of the overwhelmingly larger Sōji-ji faction (which therefore may have had a higher proportion of married clerics), feared that such a policy would relegate more Sōji-ji temples to permanent second-class status and thus was another attempt by the Eihei-ji proponents to weaken the Sōji-ji faction. Whatever the reasons for his opposition, no doubt many others also opposed the plan, because it was never adopted by the Sōtō school (KURIYAMA 1917, pp. 71–73).

The failure of attempts by the Sōtō leadership to curtail the spread of marriage, even after the adoption of the strict ban on the practice in 1885, was obvious by the turn of the century. Writing in 1901 in *Wayūshi* 和融誌, the journal published by Sōtō-shū University (later Komazawa University), three journalists acknowledged that the problem of *nikujiki saitai* had not been resolved, despite the exhortations

<sup>25</sup> *Gonji* is a translation of the Sanskrit word for a Buddhist layman, *upāsaka*.

of the leaders of numerous denominations, including Sōtō-shū.

Ah, yet again the *nikujiki saitai* problem? It is a problem about which we and the reader are sick of hearing and talking. Truly it remains an unresolved problem in every school. Sooner or later, however, the *nikujiki saitai* problem will have to be resolved. Ultimately we will have only baseless, empty discussions so long as the problem remains unresolved, no matter how much we wish for the successful dissemination of the teaching and the renaissance of scholarship or hope for the prosperity of the [Sōtō] school.<sup>26</sup>

The authors noted that, almost one generation after the decriminalization of *nikujiki saitai* by Meiji officials, the issue continued to plague almost every Buddhist denomination. With the sons of the first cohort of legally (as far as the state was concerned) married clerics coming of age and in line to assume the abbacy of their families' temples, it is easy to see why *nikujiki saitai* became so pressing an issue at the turn of the century. By late Meiji, according to the editorial, numerous strategies for resolving the problem of clerical marriage were being circulated by the leaders of the Tendai, Sōtō, Shingon, Nichiren, and Jōdo denominations, but the problem had only worsened with the passage of time. The combination of the opposition to clerical marriage by the sectarian establishments in such denominations as Sōtōshū and the decriminalization of *nikujiki saitai* by the government was extremely volatile. The hard-line stance with regard to *nikujiki saitai* taken by the leaders of the Sōtō denomination and, perhaps, parishioner disapproval appear merely to have driven even more married clerics into a double life: in effect, the government's attempt to end covert marriage only made the phenomenon more prevalent. According to the *Wayūshi* editorial the decriminalization of clerical marriage ironically had multiplied the number of Buddhist clerics who spoke of the precepts in public while breaking them in private. The authors went on to describe the suffering of those in the clergy who must learn how to "eat meat while appearing not to eat meat and marry while appearing not to marry," and insisted that all the denominations that prohibited clerical marriage resolve the problem as soon as possible.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> "Nikujiki saitai mondai o kesseyo" 肉食妻帯問題を決せよ, *Wayūshi* 和融誌 58 (May 10, 1901), p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> See *Wayūshi* 58 (May 10, 1901), p. 2.

*Practical Problems: Temple Widows and Illegitimate Children*

In addition to the issue of clerical hypocrisy, a host of practical problems arose as more clerics, encouraged by changing social mores and the state decriminalization of *nikujiki saitai*, disobeyed their leaders by covertly marrying. By late Meiji the focus of the debate had shifted from a discussion of the legitimacy of marriage for the Buddhist clergy to an argument about how to deal with temple wives and children as practical concerns began to drive the debate over marriage. Although opposition to clerical marriage remained entrenched among those in control of the many denominations, the transformation of the debate demonstrates that by late Meiji clerical marriage was so widespread that the question of the validity of that practice was almost moot. The primary questions had become whether a married member of the clergy should be allowed to live on temple grounds with his family, what funds could be used to support that family, and whether familial inheritance of temples should be condoned. Even opponents began to argue against clerical marriage on practical rather than doctrinal grounds.

The exchange in the Buddhist press between an editor of *Shin Bukkyō* 新佛教, Sugimura Jūō 杉村縦横 (also known as Sugimura Kōtarō 杉村広太郎), and a Sōtō cleric, Kuruma Takudō, over an article by Sugimura attacking clerical marriage on practical grounds, was representative of this new phase in the debate. Sugimura began his criticism of clerical marriage with an anecdote concerning the dispossession of a temple family by the parishioners of their temple. The case cited by Sugimura involved the married abbot of a Zen temple, his wife, and their two children. Sometime after the birth of two children the cleric died from a sudden illness, leaving his widow and children to fend for themselves. For a time after the demise of the father the family had remained at the temple. When the parishioners subsequently selected a candidate renowned for his strict adherence to traditional standards of clerical deportment to succeed the deceased abbot, the potential successor refused the position, complaining, “How could I live in an impure temple like that?” (SUGIMURA 1901, p. 452). His response to their offer of the abbacy only confirmed for the parishioners that this cleric was the man for the job. In order to get the candidate to accept the abbacy, the parishioners banished the widow of the former abbot and her two children from the temple, leaving them homeless and without any means of support.

The fate of the temple wife and her children, according to Sugimura, was proof of the impracticality of clerical marriage. If a cleric was incapable of insuring the support of his family after his demise, then he

had no business marrying. Furthermore, if a cleric did not possess the financial means to support a wife during his lifetime, he also had no business marrying. Sugimura, like other opponents of clerical marriage, saw the emerging practices of clerical marriage and familial inheritance of temples as the perversion of the spirit underlying the temple system and, ultimately, Buddhism itself. According to Sugimura an essential characteristic of the Buddhist clergy was that they did not possess any private property; this in itself made it impossible for a cleric to support a family. Ideally, the temple in which a cleric lived and worked was different from an ordinary private home because it was built from resources provided by the parishioners and temporarily loaned to the cleric while he served the congregation. Although according to current custom an abbot frequently controlled a specific temple until his death, when he was succeeded by his own son or a favorite disciple, this marked a deviation from the intent of both the leaders at the head temples and the parishioners. According to Sugimura, strictly speaking, the temple was not the private property of the abbot and the income slated for support of specific temple activities should not be used to support the cleric's family. Sugimura wrote that clerics who were unable to support a family should not marry and that clerics who did have families should not live with the family on temple grounds. Clerics with families needed to find some private means—perhaps lecturing, teaching, and so on—to support their families. Ultimately, those clerics who want to marry have to abandon the “old Buddhism” (*kyū Bukkyō* 旧仏教); as long as they depended on that system for their food, clothing, and dwelling, clerical marriage would remain a sin (*zaiaku* 罪惡) (SUGIMURA 1901, pp. 452–55).

The practical objections to clerical marriage that were raised by Sugimura and others did not sway the increasingly vocal proponents of the practice. By the turn of the century several prominent Sōtō clerics became convinced that the continuing opposition to marriage was harming Buddhism and needed to be abolished. One of the most eloquent early Sōtō advocates for clerical marriage was Kuruma Takudō. Kuruma was himself the eldest son of a Sōtō cleric, Kuruma Ryūdō 来馬立道, who at the time of Takudō's birth in 1877, long before clerical marriage was accepted by the Sōtō leadership, was abbot of the temple Banryū-ji 万隆寺 in Tokyo. Kuruma was ordained at his father's temple at the age of six and he remained there until he entered middle school in 1889. Kuruma went on to study at the Sōtōshū Daigakurin 曹洞宗大学林 and eventually succeeded his father, becoming the abbot of Banryū-ji in 1900. Like his father, Kuruma Takudō married. In 1902 he was united with Satomi Tatsu in a Buddhist wedding ceremony that Kuruma devised and later disseminated

among Buddhists (KURUMA 1917, p. 1).

It was from his vantage as editor of several of the Buddhist journals in which the debate over marriage was being waged—*Wayūshi* and *Bukkyō* 佛教—and as the son of a cleric and abbot of a small Sōtō temple that Kuruma joined the debate over clerical marriage. In a series of articles published in *Bukkyō* in 1901, the year before his own marriage, Kuruma rebutted the objections to clerical marriage and, more positively, described the benefits of marriage for Buddhism and how married clerics were to support their families. Like other advocates of clerical marriage, Kuruma argued that applying old standards to Japanese Buddhism was a fruitless endeavor. Such critics of marriage as Fukuda Gyōkai, Ueda Shōhen 上田照遍 (1828–1907), and the hierarchs of the Sōtō denomination responsible for the official antimarriage position of the denomination had argued that celibacy was the rule at the time of Śākyamuni and, therefore, should remain the rule for the Buddhist clergy in the Meiji era. As Kuruma summarized their argument, “at the time of the Buddha, there were no married clerics. There is no reason why clerics should marry today.”<sup>28</sup> But for Kuruma, the argument of these Buddhist fundamentalists missed the point entirely. Describing how different circumstances were for the Buddhist clergy in Meiji Japan, Kuruma noted,

This is a criticism made by everybody. However, at the time of the Buddha there also were no abbots (*jūshoku* 住職). Nor were there temples (*jiin* 寺院). Nor was there any need for clerics to perform bill keeping, run a guest house, etc. Those who were clerics wandered throughout the realm and slept under a tree or on a rock. If today’s clerics were to return completely to this former state, leaving their temples, becoming mendicants and true wanderers, then of course they would live with three robes and one bowl and would feel no need for a wife.

(KURUMA 1934, p. 479)

For Kuruma, Meiji temple life, which required continual activity—preaching, raising funds for the temple, and so on—by the cleric outside the temple necessitated that someone stay at home to tend to chores. He concluded that “the cleric who tries to support the temple, stay free from debt, and be active outside the temple, should look for a good wife (*ryōsai* 良妻) and rely upon her assistance.” Ultimately,

clerics who are frantic abbots, kept busy with domestic chores, and who, when they occasionally venture out to disseminate

<sup>28</sup> KURUMA 1934, p. 479. The article cited, “Zenko iori mango” 前古庵漫語, first appeared in *Bukkyō* in August 1901.



the teaching, are pursued at the gate by creditors, are not those who possess the spirit of the Buddha. Rather, the one who has sought a wife and entrusted to her domestic matters and is active in the world is the cleric that is in harmony with the spirit of the Buddha. This is the one who should be called a noble, eminent cleric. (KURUMA 1934, p. 479)

In light of the fundamental importance of having an assistant at the temple to free the cleric for proselytization and active engagement in society, Kuruma argued that it was crucial for the Buddhist clergy to resolve the practical problems mentioned by Sugimura and other critics of clerical marriage. On the whole agreeing with Sugimura's assessment about the need to separate the family residence from traditional temple buildings, Kuruma suggested, pointing to the Protestant church, where frequently the minister had a private residence or parish house on church property, that some type of separate private residence quarters be constructed on temple grounds. Kuruma also agreed with Sugimura that the finances raised for specific purposes, for example, money donated for the head temple or for the building of a lecture hall, not be used for supporting the family. However, Kuruma contended that money gathered from giving lectures, ceremonies, sermons, sutra readings, and painting or calligraphy, was not necessarily off limits for private use by the cleric. If that income should not be used to support the cleric's family, Kuruma wrote, then it also should not be used to purchase shoes, clothing, or other personal effects either.<sup>29</sup>

The continued strong rejection of clerical marriage by the leadership of the Sōtō and other denominations drew the attention of others besides those like Kuruma, who were directly affected by the policies. By late Meiji, several prominent Jōdo Shinshū proponents of "enlightenment Buddhism" also began openly to criticize mandatory clerical celibacy and vegetarianism. The "enlightenment Buddhists" attempted to revitalize Buddhism by harmonizing its doctrines and practices with the various imported philosophical and scientific discourses gaining currency in Japan at the turn of the century. An essential part of their project to reformulate Buddhism was the elimination of what they regarded as backward practices that weakened the clergy and rendered them incapable of responding fruitfully to the challenges of the modern era.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> KURUMA 1934, pp. 116–17. The article cited, "Bengijō 'Shin Bukkyō' no Sugimura Jūō kun ni kotau," 便宜上『新佛教』の杉村縦横君に對ふ, first appeared in *Bukkyō* in October 1901.

<sup>30</sup> See DAVIS 1992, pp. 163–64 for a brief description of these enlightenment thinkers.

Two of the most important representatives of this movement, the Jōdo Shin clerics Inoue Enryō and Shimaji Mokurai, attempted to modify the policies of those denominations that had continued to ban *nikujiki saitai*. In articles in the pan-sectarian journal *Nihonjin* 日本人 and in the journal *Zenshū* 禪宗, Inoue and Shimaji voiced their concerns about mandatory celibacy directly to the leaders of the monastic denominations. Like many others writing about clerical marriage in late Meiji, both Shimaji and Inoue were concerned about the problems facing clerical families and the effect those problems were having on the quality of the clergy. The arguments marshalled by these late-Meiji critics of celibacy reveal the convergence of the older political-economic anticlericalism of Nativists, Shintoists, and some Buddhist reformers with scientific arguments imported from the Western powers. In their articles, Inoue and Shimaji synergistically merged the discourses of eugenics and evolutionism with the older fecundist arguments in favor of clerical marriage exemplified by the petitions of Ōtori and others. Through the strategic addition of the authority of “science” in the form of evolutionism to the anticelibacy argument, Inoue and Shimaji defined the advocates of celibacy as antimodern, antiscience, and unpatriotic.

In an 1890 letter to the heads of the celibate denominations (he lists the Tendai, Shingon, Zen, Jōdo, and Nichiren establishments), Inoue expressed concern about the deterioration of the biological quality of the candidates for clerical ordination. Inoue wrote that, unlike Jōdo Shinshū, which drew the majority of its clerics from temple families, the celibate denominations depended for their continued existence on the recruitment of new clerics from outside the clergy. Therefore the fate of those schools hinged on the quality of the newly recruited ordinands. According to Inoue, the leaders of those schools had not paid enough attention to the hereditary character (*idensei* 遺伝性) of the ordinands, a factor of critical importance for the future success of Buddhism. Contrasting the quality of current clerical candidates with that of candidates in an idealized past, Inoue argued that formerly only the finest individuals (*jōtō no jinbutsu* 上等の人物) had been allowed to enter the clerical registry. The result was a vigorous clergy composed of many brilliant individuals. But by the Meiji period, Inoue claimed, the schools no longer attracted men and women of talent. Accepting the eugenic notion that intellectual potential and character were inherited, Inoue concluded that because only people with poor hereditary histories now joined the “celibate” denominations it was impossible for them to become clerics of character. Inoue urged the heads of those denominations that continued to ban clerical marriage and familial succession at the denominational

temples to carefully investigate the family histories of potential ordinands in order to insure that the Buddhist clergy were of the finest hereditary stock (INOUE 1890, pp. 587–88).

Shimaji Mokurai responded to Inoue by extending Inoue's eugenic concern for the ordinands to the covert wives of clerics in the "celibate" denominations. Shimaji agreed with Inoue that clerics who were truly celibate needed only to follow Inoue's suggestion that they use caution in choosing a disciple—but Shimaji was well aware that many "celibate" clerics were actually married and were passing on their temples to their biological sons, who posed as their disciples. Therefore, an additional warning was required for the majority of "ordinary teachers" in the schools where marriage was still banned. In the past, Shimaji wrote, because of the strict ban on clerical marriage the Buddhist clergy in the "celibate" schools would clandestinely marry women of very poor background and character (that is, women past the age considered optimal for marriage, destitute widows, and former prostitutes). Shimaji argued that there was no reason for such a harmful practice to continue now that the government had allowed the clergy to marry freely. It was particularly important, Shimaji wrote, that clerics be free to use eugenic criteria in the selection of their future wives (SHIMAJI 1890, p. 637). Those clerics who would marry had to consider "of course the merits and demerits of their wife's character and whether she was educated, but most importantly they should pay attention to the hereditary quality of her family line" (SHIMAJI 1890, pp. 636–37).

By 1901 Inoue's concern over the *nikujiki saitai* problem had deepened, and he began to suggest that the ban on marriage in the celibate denominations be at least partially abolished. In an article urging experimentation with clerical marriage in the Zen denominations and other monastic traditions, Inoue tried to place the problem of clerical marriage in the broader context of Japan's confrontation with the West. He argued that in a world governed by "survival of the fittest" and the "strong overpowering the weak," clerical leaders had to formulate sectarian policies with attention to more than just the narrow religious world. The old world-abnegating Buddhism that emphasized celibate monasticism could not contribute enough to a nation locked in an international struggle. Surrounded by strong enemies on all sides, Japan now needed to advance and acquire what was rightfully Japan's, not to retreat and protect itself. Ultimately the very survival of Japanese Buddhism depended on the country's success in the international arena; if Japan could not achieve parity with other great powers, then Japanese Buddhism would disappear along with the nation.

Religion, Inoue wrote, could help Japan compete successfully by instilling in its people an energetic spirit. To achieve that, he concluded, it was essential to replace the old world-abnegating attitude of the Buddhist clergy with an engaged one. Ending the ban on *nikujiki saitai* was an essential part of the process (INOUE 1898). Acknowledging that suddenly ending the ban would be an impossibility for some denominations, Inoue suggested a variety of alternatives, including that of allowing only low-ranking clerics to marry, or permitting meat eating but not marriage, or vice versa.

By late Meiji, pressure on the Sōtō leadership to acknowledge the depth of the clerical marriage problem within the denomination began to sway even the staunchest celibacy advocates. At the Fifth Sōtōshū Congress in 1901 a group of eight assembly members submitted a petition requesting that the sect law banning clerical marriage be abolished by the leadership (KUMAMOTO 1996, p. 18). In response to the petition, the members of the Committee of the Two Head Temples (*Ryōhonzan In* 兩本山委員) requested that the matter of the ban on marriage be entrusted to a committee charged with reforming Sōtō sect law. In an effort to placate the pro-marriage faction and at the same time to avoid admitting the failure of their policies, the committee members disingenuously predicted that—because in a denomination that transmits the Great Dharma of the Buddhas and Patriarchs, explicit restriction of clerical marriage is unnecessary—the regulation prohibiting clerical marriage would probably be abolished when the new “enlightened sect law” (*bunmeiteki shūsei* 文明的宗制) was completed (KUMAMOTO 1996, pp. 18–19). As the committee members predicted, five years later the Sōtō leadership abolished the strict regulation that prohibited the housing of women in temples. Without a word of public comment, the ban was deleted from sect law when the First Sōtō Constitution (*Sōtōshū shūken* 曹洞宗宗憲) was issued in 1906.

Although dropping the explicit ban on marriage may have amounted to a tacit acceptance of the practice by the Sōtō leadership, ongoing hostility to marriage within the denomination and, in some temple communities, the disapproval of the parishioners continued to force clerics to be secretive about their families. Well after the ban on clerical marriage was dropped from the sect law, the issue remained a topic of debate within the Sōtō denomination. One moving defense of marriage written at the end of the Meiji period and published in *Wayūshi* described the continuing plight of temple families; Maruyama’s 1911 article, “Sōryo saitai ron” 僧侶妻帯論, reveals that the change in formal Sōtō regulations did little to improve the image or the lot of temple families. The disapproval of parishioners and the leaders of the denomination continued to make life miserable for married clerics

and their families.

Most of those who are members of the temple household are miserable individuals. They are wretched old maids forced into marriage. Or they are former licensed prostitutes who serve as *daikoku* 大黒 (wife of a monk). The temple household is an ephemeral thing. The temple wife is not a legal wife taken through proper procedures, she is a *de facto* wife (*naien no tsuma* 内縁の妻) or she is manipulated as if she were a mistress. The temple household is a pitiable, sad thing. If the abbot were to die, his wife and children would not be given the means to provide for themselves. The worst thing is that outsiders will gang up on the family and forcibly transfer all of the so-called temple possessions to the next abbot. If he should despise the female successor, then that especially is the end, for he will happily find an excuse to dismiss her, naked and barefoot. It was that way in the past, it is that way now, and it will probably be that way in the future.

(MARUYAMA 1911, p. 851)

No doubt the growth in concern for domestic issues by such Buddhist writers as Maruyama was partially spurred by the spread of newer attitudes concerning marriage and women in society as a whole during the Meiji period. As noted by Sharon Nolte and Sally Hastings, “in the two decades between 1890 and 1910, the Japanese state pieced together a policy toward women based on two assumptions: that the family was an essential building block of the national structure and that the management of the household was increasingly in women’s hands.” There was a growing consensus among bureaucrats and women reformers that “Japan would not be able to equal the West until it provided proper respect for the institution of marriage.”<sup>31</sup> Drawing on conceptions of companionate marriage and domestic life that had grown in popularity during the latter half of the Meiji era as the standard by which to measure the vitality of temple families, Maruyama extended the concern for families in general to the specific problem of clerical marriage and temple families.<sup>32</sup> According to Maruyama, accepting temple women as legitimate wives and fully acknowledging the validity of clerical marriage would allow the creation of a healthy home life in Buddhist temples.

<sup>31</sup> NOLTE and HASTINGS 1991, pp. 170–71. For a recent discussion of the advocacy of the ideology of the home among the urban middle class see AMBARAS 1998, pp. 25–29.

<sup>32</sup> During late Meiji a number of Buddhist authors attempted to describe how Buddhism could contribute to the formation of a healthy domestic life. The language they used resonates strongly with that of Maruyama. See, for example, ISHIHARA 1901.

My argument for marriage is an argument for the home (*katei* 家庭). That is to say, the marriage of the Buddhist clergy is the creation of a home by the Buddhist clergy, it is nothing other than the temple home. But in fact are there actually homes in today's temples? In the end do the Buddhist clergy create a home (*hōmu* ホーム)? Those who advocate clerical marriage frequently debate whether one should have a wife, but they have not yet touched on whether one should have a home. Although some speak of the necessity of allowing a woman in the temple, those who speak of the need for a home are few.<sup>33</sup>

(MARUYAMA 1911, pp. 848–49)

Like Kuruma, Maruyama believed that the new societal conditions demanded the abandonment of celibate monasticism. If Śākyamuni, Bodhidharma, or Dōgen were alive today, Maruyama conjectured, they would no doubt opt to marry and create a healthy home so that they might fully experience social life (MARUYAMA 1911, p. 852). Maruyama urged each cleric to abandon the secretive, unhealthy world of mistresses and furtive affairs. Instead they should create ideal homes (*risōteki katei* 理想の家庭) and, on the basis of their experience in the world, preach the dharma as bodhisattvas (MARUYAMA 1911, p. 853).

### *Post-Meiji Developments*

Despite Maruyama's plea for the improvement of the lot of married clerics and their families, little changed within the Sōtō denomination over the next several decades. The number of dispossessed temple families grew. Until the start of the Pacific War one Sōtō pro-marriage advocate after another published tracts denouncing what they saw as continuing discrimination against married clerics and their families within the denomination.<sup>34</sup> Well into the Taishō era, Kuriyama Taion 栗山泰音 (1860–1937), who worked at Sōtō headquarters and eventually became abbot of Sōji-ji 総持寺 in 1934, wrote a scathing attack against the prevailing pro-celibacy position within the Sōtō denomination. Tacit acceptance of clerical marriage accompanied by continued prioritization of celibate monastic life was destroying the Sōtō denomination, he suggested. In a chapter devoted to describing the attempts by temple parents to conceal their children's origins, Kuriyama once again energetically directed the reader's attention to the difficulties

<sup>33</sup> On the importance of the concept of the Western-inspired home (*katei* 家庭) during the Meiji era see MUTA 1994.

<sup>34</sup> Two of the most important pro-marriage works by Sōtōshū authors published during the first half of the twentieth century are KURIYAMA 1917 and FURUKAWA 1938.

encountered by the wives and children of the clergy. Commenting on an article in a December 1916 issue of the Buddhist newspaper *Chūgai nippō*, which had disparagingly referred to the sons of clerics as “Venerable Rāhula,” Kuriyama wrote:

The children born at temples are called Venerable Rāhula (*Ragora sonja* ラゴラ尊者). The temple wife and mother of the children is called Princess Yaśodharā (*Yashudara hime* 耶須陀羅姬). Or it is common to call her *daikoku* (God of the Kitchen) or Bonsai 梵妻 (Buddhist Wife). They endure vehement reproaches that truly are the extremes of insult. Are these not unavoidable phenomena during the transitional period in which the problem of clerical marriage remains unresolved?

(KURIYAMA 1917, p. 24)

In addition to the public denunciation of Sōtō policies by pro-marriage advocates like Kuriyama, factions within the denomination clamored for changes in official policies toward temple wives and families. From 1919 Sōtō clerics petitioned their leadership at every annual meeting of the denominational assembly to adopt a family protection regulation (*jizoku hogo kitei* 寺族保護規程) that would guarantee the security of temple wives and children should their breadwinner husband die unexpectedly. At every annual meeting the request was turned down by the Sōtō assembly, with some leaders continuing to argue that the adoption of such a measure would amount to a complete betrayal of the fundamental principles of the denomination.<sup>35</sup>

But by the mid-1930s the staunch opponents of family protection laws were forced to give ground yet again. At the Fortieth Sōtōshū Assembly in 1936, the leadership finally adopted the Temple Family Protection Regulation, thereby tacitly recognizing the legitimacy of clerical marriage. The new regulation, which was promulgated on 1 January 1937, provided protection for temple families in the event of the husband-abbot's sudden death by stipulating that if an appropriate successor to the abbot was part of the family, that person could apply to succeed to the abbacy of the temple. If the designated successor was not mature enough to assume that position but had already been ordained, the temple would be placed under the care of an appropriate cleric until the successor could assume the abbacy. If no successor was present, the temple wife and children (*jizoku* 寺族) could be asked to leave the temple, but an appropriate sum of money for family support (*hogokin* 保護金) would be provided by the temple.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed account of the attempt to pass the Temple Family Protection Regulation, see KUMAMOTO 1994 and 1996.

The regulation also made provisions for the resolution of disputes over the protection of the family and for the removal of family members from their status as *jizoku*. Although earlier drafts of the proposal had cursorily specified the duties of the *jizoku*, the law in its final form made no mention of the role of the *jizoku*. It also completely avoided saying anything about how the *jizoku* got into the temple in the first place. At no time was the problem of clerical marriage directly addressed.<sup>36</sup>

There were several reasons why the creation of the law had become imperative for the Sōtō leadership at this time. No doubt, as Uchino Kumiko has suggested, as male clerics were mobilized for military service the Sōtō leadership was forced to rely on temple wives to staff the temples (UCHINO 1990, p. 330). Overwhelming and embarrassing demographic evidence must also have contributed to the adoption of the protection regulation. When the first comprehensive survey of Sōtō temples was conducted by the denomination in 1936, the results revealed the extent to which marriage had spread among the clergy. According to the survey, in 1936 families lived in more than eighty-one percent of the temples; leaving little room for speculation, the editors of the census specified that the vast majority of these households included a married cleric, his wife, and their children (TANIGUCHI 1937, pp. 13–14). The editor of the survey, clearly frustrated with the continuing denial of the realities of Sōtō temple life, wrote:

Let us set aside, for the time being, the debate over whether [the high percentage of married clerics] is lamentable. I would like to demonstrate statistically that this is the actual condition of our denomination. Today, when we have put the Temple Family Protection Regulation into effect, there probably no longer is any way we can twist things to allow ourselves to question whether there are temple families in the Sōtō school. Our verification of the factuality of their existence using the survey may be nothing more than a confirmation of common knowledge, but I believe it demonstrates the survey's effectiveness. It goes without saying that, whether one likes the fact or not, we must completely abandon our idle fantasies and create a policy that conforms to reality.

(TANIGUCHI 1937, p. 14)

<sup>36</sup> MIO 1937, pp. 90–91. Sōtōshū was by no means the last Buddhist denomination to grant even this partial recognition of clerical marriage or to acknowledge indirectly the presence of *jizoku* in temples. The Myōshin-ji 妙心寺 sect of Rinzai, for example, did not openly acknowledge *jizoku* until 1961. See “Myōshinjiha teiki shūkai: Tsui ni *jizoku* o kōnin” 妙心寺派定期宗会一遂に寺族を公認, *Chūgai nippō* 17,405 (1 March 1961), p. 3.



As mentioned earlier, the exigencies of the Pacific War accelerated the Sōtō denomination's reliance on temple wives to help run the branch temples. At the height of the war in 1943 the clerical leaders not only tolerated temple wives but encouraged them to help at the temples. An unprecedented special seminar for temple wives was held at Eihei-ji in conjunction with a meeting for Sōtō nuns. It ended with an ordination ceremony and the granting of a Buddhist surplice (*kara* 掛絡) to each participant. The following year, the Sōtō leadership also allowed temple wives to be ordained and given nun's rank (*nisōi* 尼僧位) if they attended a special course of instruction. As a report on the Eihei-ji meeting made clear, these measures were on a par with emergency measures enacted by the central government (UCHINO 1990, p. 331). By the end of the war, the Sōtō leadership had gone from not even acknowledging the existence of the *jizoku* to relying on the wives and children for the maintenance of the temples.

### *Conclusions*

The sweeping legal, social, and intellectual changes wrought by the Meiji government posed formidable challenges for the leaders of the Sōtō denomination. Particularly during the first decades of the era, state religious policy was enacted by a variety of ministries in an ad hoc, experimental manner. As a consequence the Sōtō clergy found themselves responding to multiple, sometimes contradictory imperatives.

On the one hand, as part of the government's effort to modernize social life, Meiji officials abolished government enforcement of such status-based legal strictures as the prohibitions against meat eating, marriage, or abandonment of the tonsure by ordained Buddhist clerics. In effect, the end to these restrictions transformed mandatory patterns of behavior, which had signified the assumption of clerical status, into voluntary practices that each individual cleric was free to reject.

On the other hand, in order to strengthen government control of Buddhist institutions, Meiji government officials simultaneously enacted measures that furthered the centralization of the Buddhist denominations and reified denominational identity. As government officials moved from a policy of direct intervention in sectarian matters to one of indirect control of the denominations through the creation of the *kanchō* system, they required the adoption of government-approved sect laws universal for all clerics of each denomination and demanded that rank-and-file clerics obey the rules of their denomination. Thus

at the same time that societal changes and modifications of state law weakened the ability of the Sōtō leaders to control their subordinates, the government called on those leaders to codify an institutional structure, sect law, and an overarching formal Sōtō identity. Eliding the regional, sectarian, and hierarchical variations in practice that had existed in the past, the Sōtō leaders adopted uniform rules and institutional arrangements for all members of the denomination. The rejection of clerical marriage and the stress on monastic practice was an important component in the formulation of this official Sōtō identity.

But at the start of the Meiji period the Sōtō denomination was far from monolithic. With more than 14,000 temples scattered throughout Japan it was only natural that there would be resistance to any controversial pronouncement issued by the Sōtō leadership.<sup>37</sup> The denomination was riven by regional differences, intellectual factions, sectarian conflicts—between the Sōji-ji and Eihei-ji branches, for example—and divisions between ordinary clerics and the leadership. Given all of these differences, it is worthwhile to question the nature and strength of Sōtō identity at the start of the Meiji period. How did clerics balance allegiance to their specific lineage and temple with their identity as members of the Sōtō denomination? In what ways did the priorities of local temple life conflict with the demands of the denominational leadership? The formation of sectarian identity within the Sōtō and other denominations in the wake of the institutional restructuring of the modern era is an area worthy of further investigation.

The battle over *nikujiki saitai* threw into relief the various divisions within the Sōtō denomination. Despite the leadership's adamant opposition to clerical marriage and other related practices, factions within the Sōtō clergy rejected the emphasis on celibate practice. While the rank-and-file clergy expressed their rejection of official Sōtō policy through their actions—by marrying and having children—the most intellectually articulate and vocal opposition to mandatory celibacy occurred in the upper ranks of the denomination. As shown in this essay, such Sōtō clerics as Ōtori, Kuruma, Maruyama, and Kuriyama all repudiated the official pro-celibacy position. Their critiques of mandatory celibacy were part of a strategy for responding to the challenges of Christianity, modernity, and social change that was fundamentally at odds with the vision of Buddhist practice shared by those in control of the Sōtō denomination.

Of even greater significance for the history of modern Sōtō Zen

<sup>37</sup> According to TŌYŌ KEIZAI SHINPŌ SHA (1983, p. 681), in 1882 there were 14,310 Sōtō temples and 12,467 abbots.

than the opposition of some Buddhist intellectuals to mandatory celibacy was the split between the leaders of the denomination and the rank-and-file clerics over the issue. Because the lower-ranking clerics did their best to remain hidden and, therefore, rarely participated in the published debates over *nikujiki saitai*, there is little concrete information about these clerics. Nonetheless the debate literature strongly suggests that the Sōtō leadership had a difficult time imposing its standard of practice on the clergy who ran the ordinary temples. The existence of these married clerics was assumed by both the proponents and the opponents of *nikujiki saitai*. Ōtori, for example, called for the decriminalization of clerical marriage because so many clerics were flaunting the state codes of clerical deportment. And, as I have described earlier, the abbots of Eihei-ji and Sōji-ji as well, despite their opposition to clerical marriage, called on their subordinates to be sensitive to regional differences with regard to *nikujiki saitai*. In addition to these two examples, most other participants in the debate have at least obliquely referred to the rapidly increasing number of married clerics. These are the clerics whose deaths left the impoverished women and illegitimate children described by Sugimura and Maruyama. Given the weight of the evidence there is little doubt that married clerics comprised a sizeable and rapidly growing group within the Sōtō denomination from the start of the Meiji period.

Despite widespread resistance to its decrees, however, the Sōtō leadership was not totally impotent. Although the Sōtō clergy married in ever greater numbers during the Meiji era, many of them felt constrained enough by the opprobrium of the leadership and, perhaps, disapproving parishioners to keep their marriages unofficial. As a result, for much of the Meiji and Taishō periods the Sōtō leadership supported standards they knew were widely violated, while many clerics pretended to adhere to those regulations while breaking them. During the modern era the disregard for central denominational policy has not been restricted to the issue of clerical marriage. Even today, with regard to a variety of concerns, including the performance of rites for aborted fetuses or correcting discriminatory posthumous names in temple necrologies, one can see a similar pattern of disregard for and resistance to mandates from denominational officials.<sup>38</sup>

By late Meiji these contradictions were so glaring that the explicit ban on lodging women in temples was abolished. As even more clerics married, the Sōtō denomination was forced to enact policies that resolved practical problems associated with the presence of large

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, BODIFORD 1996, pp. 12–13; 16–18, for a description of local clerical resistance to Sōtōshū policies regarding discriminatory posthumous names.

numbers of clerical families, thus deepening the implicit tolerance of clerical marriage. Without having resolved the thorny question of the doctrinal validity of clerical marriage, the focus of the debate became how to deal with dispossessed temple widows and children. By the late 1930s, the realities of Sōtō temple life, revealed statistically by the first comprehensive survey of the Sōtō denomination, once again forced members of the Sōtō assembly to act. Without ever explicitly agreeing that Sōtō clerics should or even could marry, the Sōtō leadership was forced to resolve the problems of temple families and institutionalize the familial inheritance of temples. When a temple family protection regulation was finally promulgated by the Sōtō leadership in 1937, clerical marriage was still not openly accepted. Although the clergy were tacitly allowed to marry and the overwhelming majority did so, the ordination vows taken by the Sōtō clergy remained unchanged and no direct statement of the permissibility of marriage for the clergy was issued.

The partial resolution of the clerical marriage problem in 1937 failed to satisfy many members of the Sōtō denomination. While space will not allow me to detail postwar developments in Sōtō policies regarding temple families and marriage of the clergy, periodic eruptions of debate over marriage and celibacy have continued to occur until today. Within a year of the acceptance of the Temple Family Protection Regulation by the Sōtōshū Assembly, yet another Sōtō cleric, Furukawa Taigo, issued a plea for Buddhist leaders to positively acknowledge the legitimacy of *nikujiki saitai*.<sup>39</sup> His call has been repeated by frustrated members of each successive generation of Sōtō clerics and, more recently, by dissatisfied Sōtō temple wives.<sup>40</sup> Thus, more than a century after the decriminalization of *nikujiki saitai* by the Meiji government, Sōtō clerics and their families continue to wrestle with the tensions arising from the contradiction between the idealization of monastic, celibate practice that remains at the heart of their sectarian identity and the practical reality of life at their home temples.

<sup>39</sup> FURUKAWA 1938. Furukawa's book includes a section specifically devoted to the arguments in favor of clerical meat eating. See pp. 57–68.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Yamauchi's 1959 essay, *Sōtōshū no shūjō to genjitsu* 曹洞宗の宗乗と現実, reprinted in YAMAUCHI 1990, pp. 14–23. See also TANAKA 1984; the series of articles about the nature of ordination in modern Japan, *Gendai 'shukke' kō* 現代「出家」考 that was anthologized in *Chūgai nippō* between 25 March 1990 and 5 February 1991; KUMAMOTO 1994 and 1996; and NAKANO 1994. The articles in *Chūgai nippō* are written by clerics from a variety of Buddhist denominations, demonstrating that Sōtōshū is not the only denomination still wrestling with the problem of clerical marriage. For a recent, cogent critique of the unresolved status of clerical marriage and temple wives within Sōtōshū see KAWAHASHI 1995.

## ABBREVIATION

- SFZ *Meijinen Sôtōshū Ryōhonzan futatsu zensho* 明治年曹洞宗兩本山布達全書. Sôtōshū Shūmukyoku 曹洞宗宗務局, ed. 5 vols., 1872–1889. (Available in the Komazawa University library)

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