

Religious Conflict in Bakumatsu Japan

Zen Master Imakita Kōsen and
Confucian Scholar Higashi Takusha

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The relationship between Confucianism and Buddhism in East Asia has vacillated between conflict and mutual tolerance. In the late Tokugawa era in Japan, Confucian polemics against Buddhism became increasingly frequent and intense. This article investigates a representative example of the antagonism that characterized the late Tokugawa intellectual world: the book Zenkai ichiran (One wave in the Zen sea) by Imakita Kōsen, a Rinzai Zen master, and the response it evoked from Higashi Takusha, a follower of Wang Yang-ming. The political factors of the time are also examined in order to clarify the background of this particular instance of religious conflict.

IS “RELIGIOUS CONFLICT” a wide rubric that includes all of the various types of tensions, disputes, and battles that occur between people who are religious? Or should the term be defined more narrowly as disagreements about doctrines, deities, scriptures, rituals, and other elements that are essential to the identities of religious systems themselves? To what extent are the contended issues indispensable to the structures of faith, the “worlds of meaning” of the individuals or communities involved in the conflict? When issues of institutional power, politics, or economics are truly central to the conflict—when doctrinal and ritual factors are in fact “marginal”—should we still consider the dispute “religious”?

The range of the term “religious” is only one of the vexing ques-

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tions raised by the topic of Japanese religious conflict. A historian's answer might be that religious conflict in the narrower sense (doctrinal, ritual) is what survives through time—a pattern of dispute that reemerges, with only slight variation, in different cultures and socio-historical contexts. The tension between Confucianism and Buddhism is one of these ancient “traditions” of religious conflict. Its literary expression dates back to the early centuries C.E. in China, the classic example being the *Mou-tzu li-huo lun* 牟子理惑論, an apologetic for those aspects of Buddhism, such as celibacy and tonsure, that the Chinese found most alien to their Confucian-reinforced family orientation. The “defense of the Dharma” became more penetrating and sophisticated as the Buddhist tradition became imbedded in Chinese culture, resulting in numerous apologetical and polemical treatises. These writings in turn became a source for Japanese Buddhists who sought to respond to Confucian criticisms.

Confucian polemics against Buddhism became increasingly frequent and intense during the late Tokugawa era.¹ One of the more learned responses to the Confucian challenge in the Bakumatsu period is *Zenkai ichiran* 禅海一瀾 (One wave in the Zen sea) by Imakita Kōsen 今北洪川 (1816–1892). Kōsen, a Rinzai Zen master, is an important figure in the transition from premodern to modern Japanese religion. He is usually noted for his encouragement of lay Zen activities at Engaku-ji in Kamakura during the first decades of the Meiji period—an initiative continued by his better-known disciple, Shaku Sōen 釋宗演 (1860–1919). In this essay, however, I am concerned with Imakita Kōsen as a player in the Buddhist-Confucian antagonism that characterized the late Tokugawa intellectual world. In particular I will consider Kōsen's *Zenkan ichiran* first as an example of a common Japanese approach to religious conflict, and then as one stage in a specific conflict between Kōsen and the Confucian scholar Higashi Takusha 東澤瀉 (1832–1891).

Imakita Kōsen's Approach to Buddhist-Confucian Conflict

Kōsen wrote *Zenkan ichiran* after he became the head priest of Yōkō-ji 永興寺, a temple in the domain of Iwakuni (part of today's Yamaguchi Prefecture), and presented it to Kikkawa Tsunemasa 吉川経幹 (1829–1867), the lord of Iwakuni, in 1862. In the text he adopts the time-honored East Asian method of defending Buddhism by arguing

¹ For an overview of Buddhist-Confucian polemics during this period, see MINAMOTO 1989, especially pages 223–38. See also chapter 1 of KETELAAR 1990.

for its compatibility with Confucianism. He selects thirty key Confucian passages and, in true apologetical style, uses the language of the Confucian classics and their Sung and Ming commentaries to interpret the ideas from a Zen perspective.

Kōsen's avowed purpose in writing *Zenkai ichiran* was to edify the domanial lord, Kikkawa; he may have been targeting the lord's Confucian advisors as well. For the most part these men advocated the orthodox Sung Neo-Confucian teachings of Ch'eng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085), Ch'eng I 程頤 (1033–1107) and Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130–1200); they probably had little use for Buddhist ideas.² This is not to say that the Iwakuni government was anti-Buddhist. The Kikkawa family contributed to the upkeep of the local Buddhist temples with which it was historically associated, including Yōkō-ji, and Kōsen notes in his dedication of *Zenkai ichiran* that Kikkawa himself had visited Yōkō-ji.³ Campaigns to eliminate and consolidate Buddhist temples, like those that took place in the 1840's in Mito and even in neighboring Chōshū, were not carried out in Iwakuni during the late Tokugawa.⁴ Nevertheless, Kikkawa was probably not versed in Buddhist doctrine; Kōsen says that he accordingly avoided Buddhist terminology in *Zenkai ichiran*.⁵

Although Iwakuni was not a hotbed of anti-Buddhist activities in the early 1860's, Kōsen was well aware of the campaigns that had taken place in other parts of the country and of the increase in anti-Buddhist rhetoric even in Iwakuni. In 1858, less than a year before he left Kyoto to be formally installed in Yōkō-ji, Kōsen replied to a letter from the current abbot of the same temple, Chūhō Shūyō 中邦周庸 (d. 1858).

In the summer of last year I received your gracious reply. In the letter you speak at length about how deeply ashamed you are that when you encountered the anti-Buddhism of the former lord of the Mito domain, you were unable to offer your frank counsel [to the lord]. Now a Confucian scholar of your domain called Higashi Hakusa [Takusha] writes works critical of Buddhism. When you heard about this, you were unable to remain silent. You have appended an essay in which, having

² Many of these Ch'eng-Chu scholars also taught at the domain school, e.g., Tamano Kyūka 玉乃九華 (1798–1852) and Ninomiya Kinsui 二宮錦水 (1805–1874). Scholars of other Confucian schools also taught at the school, though in lesser numbers. See *IWAKUNI-SHI SHI* 1:721–24; 727–28; 731–32; 734–37.

³ *Zenkai ichiran*, kan 1, "Reigen," 2b (MORINAGA 1987, p. 140).

⁴ For brief remarks about the campaigns in Mito and Chōshū, see COLLICUTT 1986, pp. 147–48 and 149–50.

⁵ *Zenkai ichiran*, kan 1, "Reigen," 1b-2a (MORINAGA 1987, p. 126).

reached the limit of your patience, you decisively refute [Higashi Takusha] at great length—perhaps 10,000,000 characters!⁶

Kōsen's reply was probably written about the fourth month of 1858; he had received Chūhō's original letter and thus become aware of Higashi Takusha's alleged anti-Buddhism by mid-1857 (NOGUCHI 1990, p. 136) Hence, Kōsen's *Zenkai ichiran* may also have been a response to Takusha's anti-Zen polemic.

But Kōsen's intended audience extended beyond both the domanial lord and the local Confucian scholars—he was also writing for the Rinzai Zen community.

The fact is that students of the Zen school generally misunderstand the saying “separately transmitted outside the teaching, not dependent on words.” They do not enquire into the meaning of Buddhism or Confucianism: they swallow ideas whole, without chewing them fully.⁷ (MORINAGA 1987, pp. 126–27)

Kōsen felt that current Zen training tended to overlook scholarly reflection as a counterbalance to transrational forms of religious experience. He produced *Zenkai ichiran* partly as an educational tool to redress the anti-intellectualism and lack of learning that he perceived within the Zen sangha during the 1850's and '60's.

Imakita Kōsen also had personal reasons for composing his apology. He had spent many years, from early childhood through his mid-twenties, immersed in Confucian studies. In fact, he had run his own Confucian academy in Osaka for several years before giving up his family obligations and the life of the scholar. Eighteen years later, as a Zen priest in Iwakuni, he found himself in an environment conducive to reflection and study. *Zenkai ichiran* represents Kōsen's reconsideration and reintegration of the heterogenous sources of his knowledge. He had long been familiar with the Sung, Ming, and Japanese interpretations of classical Confucian concepts; it was time now to develop his own glosses on these passages from the perspective of his Zen experience.

The thrust of *Zenkai ichiran* is the notion that Confucianism and Buddhism are fundamentally one. This well-precedented appeal to the unity of diverse teachings does not appear directly relevant to the issue of conflict—indeed, it comprises one more example of the “typi-

⁶ *Sōryō kōroku* 2:22a–22b; translated into modern Japanese in NOGUCHI 1990, p. 136. The two monks had probably become friends earlier in Kyoto; see also *Kinsei Zenrin sōbōden* 2: 485 (OGINO 1938).

⁷ *Zendai ichiran, kan* 1, “Reigen,” 2a. “Separately transmitted...” is part of a verse traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma.

cal” Japanese love of harmony. However, that “love” is often a deliberate response to perceived contradictions—in this case, contradictions between Buddhist and Confucian ideas. *Zenkai ichiran* exemplifies a common Japanese approach to interreligious conflict: the incompatibilities of the different systems are not denied, but bracketed and subordinated to perceived areas of commonality. The common themes are then depicted as the larger, overarching premises of all “learnings” or “teachings.”

Because of the diversity of his own intellectual background, as well as his awareness of the anti-Buddhist polemics of the time, Kōsen was particularly concerned with the problem of conflict between religious systems. He comments in *Zenkai ichiran* that

those of the Confucian school invariably regard Buddhism as harmful. They are apt to argue that the Buddha Dharma should be destroyed. Buddhists for their part revere the Dharma, but usually emphasize the differences between it and the Confucian [teaching]. Therefore, Confucians and Buddhists detest each other and are unable to mix, like water and fire. Accordingly, this book, from beginning to end, interprets [the two teachings] from the perspective of their commonality. My sermons differ in this respect from those of the Buddhists of the world.⁸ (MORINAGA 1987, p. 129)

Like much syncretic East Asian discourse, Kōsen’s argument for interreligious unity is premised on the idea that the mind (variously identified with the Buddha mind, the enlightened nature, and the Way) is a universal reality, a source of truth that encompasses and transcends the details of particular religious systems.

Seek the Great Way in your mind; do not look for it in external things. The marvelous operation of your own mind and body is, in fact, your own Great Way. Do not posit distinctions between Confucianism and Buddhism.... When scholars read this book, they should not regard it as an explication of Confucian terms, nor should they regard it as confined to Buddhist words; they should just view it as constituting the Great Way of their own [particular] school.⁹

(MORINAGA 1987, p. 129)

In Kōsen’s structure of faith, the Great Way—accessible through the mind—was essentially beyond credal distinctions. Nevertheless, in

⁸ *Zendai ichiran, kan 1*, “Reigen,” 2b–3a.

⁹ *Zendai ichiran, kan 1*, “Reigen,” 2b.

Zenkai ichiran, he gives considerable attention to the differences between religious programs. For example, he points out that Zen meditation differs from both Taoist “sitting in forgetfulness” and Sung Neo-Confucian “quiet sitting” because it is not limited to sitting—it should be carried out throughout one’s regular activities.¹⁰ Or, commenting on the Confucian saying that humanity is achieved by “overcoming the self and returning to the rites” (*Analects* 12:1), Kōsen remarks that overcoming the self is not enough: in order truly to attain humanity, one must “kill” the self. Because of the ingrained nature of the selfish mind, he says, “even if we overcome it today, it will return to its former state tomorrow.” Therefore, we need the sharp sword of the Zen *kōan* to eliminate the self entirely.¹¹

Kōsen’s differentiation between Zen and Confucian thought and practices is, in fact, the first step in his argument for the mutual complementarity of the two traditions. After pointing out how one of the two systems (most often the Confucian) is inadequate, he tries to demonstrate how it can be supplemented by the other. In the final analysis, Kōsen concludes, “insofar as they enlighten the world and give life to the human spirit, the Confucian and Buddhist ways are one in virtue. [But] if either of the two lacks the other, it will not be able to stand firm.”¹²

Kōsen’s strategy for dealing with religious difference seems to be based on a paradigm of two levels of truth: ultimate, undifferentiated truth and provisional, differentiated truth. His argument in *Zenkai ichiran* proceeds through three “moments”:

- 1 the fundamental unity of Buddhist and Confucian teachings is affirmed;
- 2 particular differences between their doctrinal interpretations and programs of self-cultivation are acknowledged; and
- 3 the differences are then interpreted as the very basis of the complementarity of the two traditions.

The Zen master was not simply repeating the East Asian truism that Buddhist and Confucian (and Taoist or Shinto) aims are the same, while only their methods differ. He was arguing more aggressively for the reform of both the Buddhist and Confucian religious programs through an active interchange of ideas and practices.

¹⁰ *Zendai ichiran* 1:15a (MORINAGA 1987, p. 200).

¹¹ *Zendai ichiran* 2:22b–23a (MORINAGA 1987, pp. 265–66).

¹² *Zendai ichiran* 1:14b–15a (MORINAGA 1987, p. 199).

Higashi Takusha: Setting Boundaries

Intellectual historian Minamoto Ryōen comments that

with Imakita Kōsen's *Zenkai ichiran* the Buddhist world, for the first time since Takuan, offered a counter-argument that confronted the issues raised by Confucianism. Through this [work], the content of the exchange between Confucianism and Buddhism during the Tokugawa period was greatly enriched. However, the world of thought around the time of the Restoration was in a flurry, and not even one Confucian scholar responded to Kōsen's critique.

(MINAMOTO 1989, p. 238)

In fact, a swift and sharp reply did emerge from the Confucian world of Iwakuni, despite the social and political confusion of the times, especially in neighboring Chōshū. In 1864, two years after Kōsen presented his book to Lord Kikkawa, Higashi Takusha—the same Confucian scholar who had exasperated Kōsen's predecessor Chūhō—produced a rebuttal called *Zenkai honran* 禅海翻瀾 (A reverse wave in the Zen sea).¹³

Takusha was the son of Higashi Hanzō 東藩蔵 (1793–1863), a middle-ranked samurai in the service of the Iwakuni daimyō. As a youth, Takusha studied under the two prominent local Confucian scholars of the time, Ninomiya Kinsui and Tamano Kyūka. He became acquainted with the thought of Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂来 (1666–1728) during these early years, but eventually lost interest and decided to concentrate on the teachings of the Ch'eng brothers and Chu Hsi. The Ch'eng-Chu program did not fully satisfy him either, and by 1851 he was defending Chu Hsi's opponent Lu Hsiang-shan 陸象山 (1139–1192) and citing the works of the Ming thinker Wang Yang-ming 王陽明 (1472–1529). In 1854 Takusha went to Edo to study in the school of Satō Issai 佐藤一斎 (1772–1859), a scholar who drew on both Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming. Thereafter Takusha continued to move closer to the Wang position, though he never completely rejected the orthodox Sung masters or limited his intellectual associations. Even after he decisively committed himself to Yōmeigaku (Yang-ming learning) in 1860, Takusha maintained firm ties with such Chu Hsi followers as Kusumoto Sekisui 楠本碩水 (1832–1916).¹⁴

¹³ *Zenkai honran* circulated in manuscript form until it was published in block print in 1885.

¹⁴ Takusha studied mainly with Issai's disciples, Yoshimura Shūyō 吉村秋陽 (1797–1866), Asaka Gonsai 安積良齋 (1791–1861) and Ōhashi Totsuan 大橋訥菴 (1816–1862). Takusha also studied with Ikeda Sōan 池田草菴 (1813–1878). For more details on Takusha's intellectual

Higashi Takusha's dispute with Imakita Kōsen was, on one level, simply another version of the anti-Buddhist critique that had become standard fare in Confucian writing by the Bakumatsu period. As the financial circumstances of the Confucian-educated samurai class deteriorated in the second half of the Tokugawa era, Confucian scholars increasingly characterized Buddhist monastics as corrupt, economic parasites who were useless to society (MINAMOTO 1989, pp. 218–22; KETELAAR 1990, pp. 37–41). Underlying this view was the usual Confucian allegation that Buddhists denied the value, indeed, the very reality of the phenomenal world, including human society and the ethical principles that Confucians considered essential to its harmonious maintenance. Zen especially was said to lead to moral lifelessness and withdrawal from the world because of its purported emphasis on passive meditation and the elimination of discursive thought.

Nevertheless, the Zen teaching that the mind was the source of enlightenment had considerable affinity with certain strains of Neo-Confucian thought—particularly with the Ming version of the “learning of the mind” (*shingaku* 心学) associated with Wang Yang-ming. Wang had identified the mind with “principles” (*ri* 理): the mind was the repository of innate moral knowledge. Yōmeigaku thinkers and Zen practitioners both regarded the mind as the ultimate source of truth. However, Zen discourse about the nondiscriminative, “empty” nature of truth undermined the Neo-Confucian notion of heaven and the immutable moral principles believed to derive from it. Hence most Yōmeigaku scholars clearly distinguished their ideas from Zen; some severely criticized it. Higashi Takusha's decision to refute *Zenkai ichiran* was not exceptional in this regard. In one essay he reasoned as follows:

Once the Zen sect appeared, it claimed that [the truth] was “separately transmitted outside the teaching, not dependent on words; directly pointing to the human heart, seeing one's nature and becoming Buddha.”¹⁵ Because of this, the Great Store of Eight Thousand [Buddhist Scriptures] completely died out. I therefore say that when the Zen sect emerged, the Buddha Dharma in turn collapsed.

The Zen sect operates strangely: with one blow, one shout, there is emptiness, complete destruction. Because of this, Zen, too, was unable to stand firm. I therefore say that when the

and religious development, see ARAKI 1982, esp. pp. 153–54, 157, and 163–75; see also ARAKI 1982, pp. 153–54, 157, 163–75; and *Takusha sensei zenshū* 1, pp. 1–3 (HIGASHI 1919).

¹⁵ See note 7 above.

blow and the shout appeared, the Zen sect collapsed in its turn....

Hence, the Way of the sages must necessarily be based on principles. (HIGASHI 1919, 2, p. 1296)

Ironically, Takusha and Kōsen had much in common. Like Takusha, Kōsen had first trained in the Sorai school, eventually rejected Sorai in favor of Sung Neo-Confucian learning, and finally, as he drew closer to Zen, acknowledged the superiority of Wang. In *Zenkai ichiran*, the Zen master explicitly affirms the value of Wang Yang-ming's thought.¹⁶ Moreover, the traditional founder of Yōmeigaku in Japan, Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹 (1608–1648), is one of only two Japanese Confucians who receive positive mention in *Zenkai ichiran*.¹⁷

But the similarity between Kōsen's and Takusha's appraisals of the Neo-Confucian tradition is precisely what impelled Takusha to write *Zenkai honran*. Kōsen's apparent blurring of the distinctions between Confucian and Zen ideas and his call for mutual supplementation of the two traditions threatened a boundary essential to Takusha's system of faith. The Confucian scholar says he wrote his polemic because "I could not bear to see [the monk Kōsen] inserting Confucian [ideas] into Buddhism"¹⁸

Takusha's need to distinguish his ideas from Buddhism was all the keener because he had once been strongly attracted to Zen himself. Years earlier, when he was feeling dissatisfied with the Ch'eng-Chu commentarial tradition, he happened to read the *Ta Hui yu-lu* 大慧語錄 (Recorded sayings of Ta Hui) of Ta Hui Tsung-kao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163). Takusha later recorded that, at the time, Ta Hui's "exquisite words utterly delighted me; I felt he articulated matters that Confucian scholars hitherto had not noticed" (HIGASHI 1919, 1, p. 512). Takusha also reportedly had a Zen-like enlightenment experience during these early years. It was only after his Confucian teachers repeatedly admonished him to distinguish carefully between Confucian and Buddhist ideas that Takusha underwent another shift and recommitted himself to the "true" Confucian path (ARAKI 1982, pp. 165–66).

Even so, Takusha remained in dialogue with Zen, especially through his relationships with Zen monks in Iwakuni (ARAKI 1982, p.

¹⁶ See *Zendai ichiran* 1:4b (MORINAGA 1987, p. 169), where Kōsen expresses admiration for Wang's interpretation of Chu Hsi, and *kan* 1, "Jōsho," 4b (MORINAGA 1987, p. 147), where he includes Wang in a list of Chinese thinkers who studied Zen fruitfully.

¹⁷ *Zendai ichiran* 1:5a (MORINAGA 1987, p. 169).

¹⁸ HIGASHI 1919, 2, p. 1622; NOGUCHI 1991, p. 144.

160). The debate between Takusha and Zen master Chūhō of Yōkō-ji (to which Kōsen refers in the aforementioned letter to Chūhō) was, upon closer inspection, not entirely unfriendly. In fact, Chūhō and Takusha became rather close during the time Chūhō resided at Yōkō-ji (1850–1858).¹⁹ Takusha corresponded with Chūhō, shared poetry with him, and even wrote a memoir of the Zen master after Chūhō's death in the summer of 1858 (HIGASHI 1919, 2, pp. 1324, 1249, 910–11, respectively). In the latter piece, Takusha informs us that he and Chūhō used to meet and converse.

We would thoroughly investigate profound principles or speak freely about the literary arts. We gained from each other and did not oppose each other. I considered the master comparable to Fu-yin and Tai-hsu. For his part, he never failed to treat me as if I were Tung-p'o or Pai-sha.²⁰ (HIGASHI 1919, 2, p. 910)

Even taking into account the necessarily eulogistic tone of the memoir, we can infer that Takusha, at least, regarded his relationship with Chūhō as one of respectful dialogue rather than antagonistic dispute. The memoir confirms that the two men had their disagreements. According to Takusha, Chūhō was honest and straightforward, but apt to be harsh in his criticism of others, and he did not hesitate to take Takusha to task when the occasion demanded. But Takusha tells us that, as Chūhō approached death, the Zen monk

neither insisted [on his viewpoint], nor lapsed into fearful timidity. It was like an ordinary event of daily life [for him]. Nothing moved his mind; in this one could see a part of the power he had gained and built up. At that point, his words of criticism ceased; perhaps he believed that I understood him deeply. (HIGASHI 1919, 2, p. 911)

In comparison, Takusha's debate with Imakita Kōsen took on a much sharper tone. The Confucian scholar's challenges to Zen elicited a stern reaction from the Zen master.

Recently in our domain an evil Confucian has been recklessly claiming to transmit the doctrines of Yang-ming, but he himself has nothing to do with the Way of enlightenment.

¹⁹ Chūhō is said in *Kinsei Zenrin sōbōden* (OGINO 1938, 2, p. 485) to have been installed in Yōkō-ji when he was thirty-four years old, and to have died when he was over forty. We know that he died in 1858; he was probably born in 1816 or 1817 and came to Yōkō-ji in 1850.

²⁰ Zen master Fu-yin Liao-yuan 仏印了元 (1032–1098) was a close friend of the famous poet Su Tung-p'o 蘇東坡 (1036–1101); Wu-hsiang T'ai-hsu 無相太虛 was friends with the Confucian thinker Ch'en Pai-sha 陳白沙.

Basically, he does not even believe that there *is* a Way to enlightenment. On the contrary, he says that quiet sitting is useless.... The young samurai of this domain are often harmed by his poisonous [influence]. One blind man is leading other blind men—this is truly pitiful.

Yang-ming established the Way of learning of the enlightened mind. Since [Takusha] advocates the learning [of Yang-ming] but does away with the Way of enlightenment, it is clear that his work is totally false.... How can one possibly not regard the Way of enlightenment as essential?

However, I will not debate this with him; one cannot speak with summer insects about ice.²¹

But Kōsen was already fully involved in a debate with his gadfly, even if not face-to-face. His assertions in *Zenkai ichiran* and Takusha's rebuttals in *Zenkai honran* formalized and refined their ongoing argument.

Takusha's actual critique of *Zenkai ichiran* is largely an attempt to reinforce boundaries that Kōsen tried to eliminate. An example is the two writers' contention over the alleged Buddhist sympathies of the Neo-Confucian "founding fathers." Kōsen depicts Chou Tun-i 周敦頤 (1017–1073), Ch'eng Hao, Chu Hsi, and Wang Yang-ming as distinctly more positive toward Buddhism than they were regarded to be by most Neo-Confucians. Indeed, Kōsen turns to Wang Yang-ming to add weight to his argument that, in the final analysis, Chu appreciated the value of Buddhism. The Zen master quotes at length from Wang's preface to *Chu-tzu wan-nien ting-lun hsu* 朱子晚年定論序 (Chu Hsi's final conclusions arrived at late in life) in which the Ming scholar makes the controversial claim that Chu Hsi ultimately realized "the mistakes of his earlier doctrines...[and] regretted them."²² Although by "mistakes" Wang intended primarily Chu's interpretation of the *Great Learning*, Kōsen interprets Wang to mean that Chu Hsi also regretted his earlier anti-Buddhist arguments, and suggests that the Sung master's polemical statements were simply the manifestation of his "unawakened" condition during his middle years.

Takusha, a Wang follower, does not take issue with Wang's view of Chu Hsi's intellectual biography; he focuses his criticism on Kōsen's depiction of Wang as pro-Buddhist. In his preface, Wang refers to his

²¹ *Sōryō kōroku*, 2:15a–15b (IMAKITA 1892); NOGUCHI 1991, p. 137. The date of these remarks is not clear; they are contained in a compilation that seems to include material from both before and after *Zenkai ichiran* was written.

²² Cited in *Zenkai ichiran* 1:4a (MORINAGA 1987, p. 166). Translated by Wing-tsit CHAN as "Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming" (1963, p. 266).

earlier search for the truth, which included forays into Buddhism and Taoism. But as Takusha points out, Kōsen's quotation from the preface omits Wang's mildly critical remarks about Buddhism and Taoism:

The thirty characters omitted from [*Zenkai*] *Ichiran* constitute the passage in which [Wang] doubts whether Buddhism and Taoism agree with the Way of the sages. Nevertheless, [Kōsen] has now deleted this vital passage, making Buddhist learning appear completely in agreement with the teaching of Confucius. This is the height of deception!... [Kōsen] reverses what Yang-ming believed and what he doubted.²³

Takusha seems to delight in exposing Kōsen's rather unscholarly attempts to expand Wang Yang-ming's (and the Sung masters') Buddhist sympathies. The Confucian scholar's counterarguments here are among the most effective passages in *Zenkai honran*. The intellectual identity of the Neo-Confucian founders was evidently an issue of paramount concern for Takusha. Wang Yang-ming's position on Buddhism, in particular, symbolized the final boundary between Neo-Confucianism and Zen—a boundary that Takusha now zealously maintained, perhaps because he knew from experience how porous it could be.

Takusha also berates Kōsen for what I have called his ultimate-provisional approach to the relations between the various teachings. The Confucian scholar argues that

[Kōsen] unifies the Three Teachings in order to advocate that Buddhism encompasses all things; he distinguishes the Three Teachings in order to boast about the marvelous virtues of Buddhism. This unifying and distinguishing [by turns]...is enchantingly kaleidoscopic—it prevents people from thoroughly grasping [the truth]. It is the basis of [*Zenkai ichiran*'s] confusing, pernicious deviation [from the Way].

(HIGASHI 1919, 2, p. 1613; NOGUCHI 1990, p. 163)

Takusha's structure of faith differed from Kōsen's in that it did not incorporate a two-tiered view of truth, unified on one level and differ-

²³ HIGASHI 1919, 2, p. 1611; NOGUCHI 1990, p. 153. The passage in question runs as follows in the original text:

[The Taoist and Buddhist] teachings are sometimes at odds with those of Confucius, and when applied to the ordinary affairs of life they were often inadequate and had no solution to offer. I half followed them and half rejected them. I half tended toward them and half tended away from them. I believed in them and yet I doubted them. (CHAN 1963, p. 265)

entiated on another. Confucian values were not temporary conventions, encompassed or transcended by a more ultimate truth; they themselves were the absolute Way. Takusha thus insisted that the differences between the two traditions marked permanent boundaries between separate worlds of meaning: “Confucianism and Buddhism are as incompatible as ice and fire....” (HIGASHI 1919, 2, p. 1618; NOGUCHI 1991, p. 128).

Takusha and Kōsen never really established a dialogue, much less a friendship. Both thinkers made disparaging remarks about each other years after the completion of their respective treatises. It was probably in 1865, about a year after Takusha wrote *Zenkai honran*, that Kōsen remarked:

There is a Confucian scholar who studies the learning of Wang but who has not yet opened his eyes to [the true meaning of] Wang[’s teaching]. Recently, he wrote a book called *Zenkai hanran* 禅海返瀾 [sic; A counterwave in the Zen sea] to refute my book, *Zenkai ichiren*. I have not yet seen his book, but I imagine it is mostly unfounded criticism—something that is not worth reading.

(*Sōryō kōroku* 5:7a; part. trans. in NOGUCHI 1990, p. 139)

The barbs between the two men did not stop here. Takusha told his students after Kōsen’s *Zenkai ichiran* was published in block print in 1874 that “when I read the recently published [edition of] *Zenkai ichiran*, [I realized that] it was considerably different from the first version. Very likely, [Kōsen] read my refutation, [*Zenkai*] *honran*, and secretly revised his book [in response to my criticisms]” (HIGASHI 1919, 2, p. 1634; NOGUCHI 1990, p. 144). Thus the antagonism between the Confucian scholar and the Zen master seems to have continued into the Meiji period. But the sentiments that first produced the books during the early period of confrontation, 1858–1864, must be understood in relation to the circumstances of the time.

The Political Factor

Why did Takusha’s relatively friendly dialogue with one Zen master in the 1850’s give way to a heated dispute with another in the 1860’s? Why was Takusha less forgiving of Kōsen than he had been of the former abbot of Yōkō-ji, Chūhō? No doubt this was partly a matter of the personalities involved. Moreover, Kōsen’s studied arguments for Buddhist-Confucian unity, especially his profession of affinity with Wang Yang-ming, probably represented a more serious challenge to

Takusha's belief system than Chūhō's less formal attempts to defend Buddhism. But the Yōmeigaku scholar's conflict with Kōsen may also have been exacerbated by the sociopolitical developments of the time.

The years leading up to the writing of *Zenkai ichiran* and *Zenkai honran* were unusually eventful in Iwakuni, largely because of its proximity, both political and geographical, to the Chōshū Domain. Beginning in 1858, the same year that Kōsen was summoned to Yōkō-ji, Chōshū became involved in a headlong course of events that soon transformed it into a stronghold of pro-Imperial activism in pre-Restoration Japan. Yoshida Shōin 吉田松陰 (1830–1859) and other loyalists in Chōshū were radicalized when, in 1858, the Tokugawa Shogunate signed the Ansei Commercial Treaties 安政五箇国条約 with the five foreign powers against the wishes of the court (CRAIG 1967, p. 159). In the ensuing years, extremist and moderate loyalist factions jockeyed for power in the Chōshū government, with the more extreme party taking dominance in the summer of 1862 (CRAIG 1967, p. 183). Kōsen had completed *Zenkai ichiran* earlier the same year.

Relations between the Mōri, the ruling house of Chōshū (the main domain), and the Kikkawa, the branch family that ruled Iwakuni, had been poor ever since the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. But after Perry's "black ships" entered the harbor of Uruga in 1853, the Chōshū lord, Mōri Takachika 毛利敬親, evidently hoping to build unity within the region in the face of the perceived foreign threat, began a series of overtures toward Kikkawa Tsunemasa.²⁴ Thereafter, Kikkawa, a skillful mediator, was called on repeatedly by the Chōshū daimyō for diplomatic and military assistance.

Kōsen formally dedicated *Zenkai ichiran* to the Iwakuni lord at the beginning of 1863. It was to be a busy year for Kikkawa. In the first part of 1863 the Chōshū loyalists' struggle to gain control over the Court in Kyoto intensified dramatically. During the same period, terrorist acts were carried out in Kyoto by various pro-Imperial extremists (CRAIG 1976, pp. 192–99). In the fifth month, after conferring with the Chōshū daimyō, Kikkawa proceeded to Kyoto to work for loyalist goals on behalf of the main domain. He stayed there for several months mediating between the Court, the Chōshū government and the shogunate (*IWAKUNI-SHI SHI* 1, p. 279).

However, a political movement headed by the Satsuma Domain that advocated compromise with the Bakufu was building momentum

²⁴ Until then, Chōshū had considered Iwakuni a fief rather than a full-fledged branch domain. Mōri's overtures to Kikkawa culminated in a personal visit to Iwakuni in the second month of 1863, when he announced that the Kikkawa house would thereafter be treated on the same footing as the other branch houses. *IWAKUNI-SHI SHI* 1, p. 278.

at the time, and in the eighth month, the Satsuma and Aizu domains initiated a coup in Kyoto. Chōshū troops were forced to retreat, but extremist loyalists in Chōshū were soon advocating another advance. In the subsequent policy debate among various political factions in Chōshū, which continued through the early months of 1864, Kikkawa took the side of those who advised caution. But Mōri Takachika approved the expedition and by the middle of the seventh month Chōshū units had already taken up positions around Kyoto. Putting allegiance to his lord first, Kikkawa now also departed for Kyoto with his troops (*IWAKUNI-SHI SHI* 1, pp. 282–83).

Just at this point, Takusha officially resigned his position as domanical Confucian scholar. According to the chronology of his life compiled by his followers,

Before this, Master had deeply considered the trend of the times. He had repeatedly recommended policies to the domanical lord [Kikkawa Tsunemasa], but had never seen them implemented. Now, once again, he strongly advised against [the lord] going to Kyoto. [But his counsel] was not heard. Therefore, in the end, he personally cut off his hair and, with his appearance utterly transformed, resigned.

(HIGASHI 1919, 1, p. 5)

Takusha apparently advised Kikkawa to avoid participating in the Chōshū counter coup, not because he advocated moderation in the struggle against pro-Bakufu forces, but because he felt that the Iwakuni troops were in desperate need of reform. He believed that with their outdated military equipment and poor morale, they would not be able to perform honorably in support of the main domain.²⁵

Takusha's resignation was an important step toward his becoming a leader of the reformist-loyalist party in Iwakuni during the last years of Tokugawa rule. His passionate, outspoken commitment to political and military renewal, which he considered a prerequisite for Iwakuni's effective participation in the loyalist movement, led in late 1866 to his exile from Iwakuni and the suicide of his closest supporter, Kurisu Tenzan 栗栖天山 (1839–1866).

For our purposes, it is significant that Takusha completed *Zenkai honran* in the ninth month of 1864, only two months after his resignation. Although Takusha does not openly discuss political matters in a work of this genre, his polemic against Kōsen was not unrelated to his wider concerns. By late 1864 the Confucian scholar was already com-

²⁵ See ARAKI 1982, pp. 182–86, for a brief discussion of Takusha's views on Iwakuni military policy.

mitted to an aggressive pro-Imperial position and to the radical reform of Iwakuni political and military policy. From Takusha's standpoint, Kōsen's "counsel" to Lord Kikkawa to deepen his Confucian learning by supplementing it with Zen practice must have seemed vague and out of touch with the needs of the time (ARAKI 1982, p. 161).

It is difficult, in fact, to show that Imakita Kōsen did not fit the Confucian stereotype of the Buddhist monk who keeps aloof from secular affairs, regarding them as mere passing phenomena. In his formal Chinese writings, Kōsen makes only a few passing references to the turmoil in Chōshū. In a poem written in fall 1864, on the eve of the shogunate's punitive attack on Chōshū, he muses:

The wind passes through mountains and forests, dreams
surprise me time after time
In front of the Buddha, I turn the scroll and pray for peace
Empty flowers produce fruit, in this vain life
What does one take up, to start a war over trivialities?

(*Sōryō kōroku* 5:6a; ctd. in SUZUKI 1992, p. 37)

Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 conjectures that Kōsen was not indifferent to the events swirling around him, but there is little evidence that Kōsen was involved, either emotionally or in more concrete ways. His few references to the dramatic events of the time are remarkably dispassionate.²⁶ In a set of verses written in early 1865, Kōsen says:

The entire country is in confusion, learning how to do battle
The sound of muskets, the roll of drums make the spring wind
tremble
A blessing! Military matters do not reach this pure place
In the quiet, I peruse ancient scriptures and practice
the teaching of the founder.

The entire country is in confusion, learning how to do battle
So many regiments of soldiers and cavalry rushing west and
east
I sit alone below the dark window
Watching the clouds float across the vast emptiness.

The entire country is in confusion, learning how to fight
Alone, I delight in my love of the mountains and forests
The cry of the bush warbler penetrates my ears, the plum blossoms
penetrate my eyes

²⁶ This is a preliminary impression; I have not completed a thorough study of Kōsen's writings, especially his unpublished Japanese writings.

Other than these, nothing occupies my mind.

(*Sōryō kōroku* 5:6b; partially cited in SUZUKI 1992, p. 38)

Kōsen's temple was eventually affected by the disturbances of the time. In the sixth month of 1866, when the shogunate sent its second punitive expedition to Chōshū, "hostilities were begun and the entire region was in chaos. Everyone in the castle [town of Iwakuni] transported their household goods and fled" (*Sōryōkutsu nenpu* 10a; SHAKU SŌEN 1894). At the time, Kōsen reflected:

I have trained my mind for twenty years
 Death and life are the same—dependent on past karma
 The boom of the guns fills my ears, the [sight
 of] swords fills my eyes
 Limitless, the pure wind in turn fills heaven.

(SUZUKI 1992, p. 38)

In general, Kōsen kept his distance from the turmoil of the time. If he had opinions about Lord Kikkawa's policies, he did not record them. Kōsen may have perceived the Zen ideal as this very detachment; perhaps the realization of the true nature of reality implied to him equanimity in the face of all passions, including political passions—these, too, were conditioned, temporary phenomena. From this perspective, war and peace could well appear to be "passing clouds." Suzuki, for his part, remarks that shortly after the above poem was written, "Everything became peaceful. From the viewpoint of a Zen monk, this, too, was probably not the sort of thing of which to take great notice" (SUZUKI 1992, p. 39).

We cannot address here the question of the ideal attitude of a Zen master caught in the chaos of pre-Restoration Japan. But the sparse evidence available indicates that Kōsen was not involved in the political events of the 1860s. In the eighth month of 1869, when the Restoration was a *fait accompli*, he gave a sermon at a service dedicated to the spirits of those who had died in the Chōshū battles.

An instant of pure loyalty, a war over trivialities—among these, what definitely represents defeat or victory?... Here, in recent years, the entire region within our four borders was subjected to battle. In pursuit, we put forth troops on the various roads to the north and east. As they circled around, approaching [the battle field], both armies sounded their drums and waved their banners. The attack fires blazed hot, the guns discharged with a blast. It was as if the gates of heaven were collapsing and the depths of the earth were turning over.... For the sake of

their lord, the samurai and people of the two armies [of Suō and Nagato, the two provinces of Chōshū], considered their lives to be less significant than dirt, and righteousness to be more important than Mount T'ai. We do not know how many thousands of myriads fell for the sake of loyalty, died for righteousness, burned to death, and succumbed to wounds. When suddenly it was time to lay aside the arms, take in the banners, and search for the remains, it resembled a dream.

(*Sōryō kōroku* 2: 28b-29a; IMAKITA 1892)

To be sure, Kōsen was keenly aware of the suffering caused by the war and deeply respected the loyalty of the Chōshū troops. But his ultimate concern was not the pursuit of loyalty; it was rather the enlightened state that he believed encompassed and gave meaning to loyalty. Thus, even in retrospect, he persists in characterizing the pre-Restoration struggle as a “war over trivialities.” However profound his understanding of reality, Kōsen’s stated outlook here would have been anathema to a fiery activist like Takusha. Like other Yōmeigaku thinkers who played a vital role in the Meiji Restoration, Takusha was inspired by Wang Yang-ming’s doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action. According to Wang, the only true knowledge is knowledge that is put into practice: “Those who are supposed to know but do not act simply do not yet know.”²⁷ For Takusha, loyal action itself constituted the Way; it had to be enacted, even at the cost of one’s life. Imakita Kōsen’s professed admiration for Wang, coupled with his apparent acquiescence in Iwakuni’s stagnant sociopolitical system, may have been the ultimate insult to Takusha’s idealistic sensibilities.

Further study of the conflict between these two men must await another occasion. But even a preliminary analysis indicates that this particular confrontation was not purely a “religious conflict.” Certainly, the doctrinal disagreements between Kōsen and Takusha were central to the dispute, but sociopolitical differences functioned as a kind of “subtext” for the religious polemic. Imakita Kōsen’s insistence on the complementarity of the Buddhist and Confucian traditions was impelled by his own religious experience of the undifferentiated nature of ultimate truth. But his “love of harmony” was also a deliberate, time-honored method for defending Buddhism against the charge of social and political irrelevance—a charge that, in Bakumatsu times, seemed especially compelling to Confucian activists like Higashi Takusha. Kōsen’s argument for unity was a defensive move; it was one phase in a specific historical conflict that had social and polit-

²⁷ Translated in CHAN 1963, p. 669.

ical, as well as religious, dimensions. His call for harmony was, in this sense, a Buddhist call to arms.

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