Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics. By Christopher Ives. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. $52.00.

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While there has been a surge in scholarship on Imperial Way Buddhism *(kōdō Bukkyō)* in the past several decades, little attention has been paid, particularly in Western scholarship, to the life and work of Ichikawa Hakugen (1902–1986), the most prominent and sophisticated postwar critic of the role of Buddhism, and particularly Zen, in modern Japanese militarism. By way of a thorough and critical investigation of Ichikawa's critique, *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics* by Christopher Ives seeks to provide answers to a number of important questions regarding Zen ethics in the context of modern Japan. Particularly fruitful is Ives' discussion, in chapter 7, of the resources within Zen for a contemporary Zen ethic based in what he calls "prophetic critique."

The first chapter, somewhat sardonically titled "Useful Buddhism," provides the context in which Imperial Way Zen emerged in the decades following the Meiji Restoration. While it serves its purpose in this regard, my concern is that it paints a picture that is rather unidirectional. Although I do not think it was the author's intent to collapse all forms of "modern" or "new" Buddhism of the late Meiji into the broader "Imperial Way" stream, this is how the rapid-fire narrative in the first half of the chapter sometimes reads. Part of the problem here is the application of broad terms like "nationalism," "loyalty," and "patriotism," the precise meaning and implications of which are notoriously vague and, at any rate, had certainly changed between the Meiji and Shōwa periods. Even with this reservation, the chapter provides a useful capsule summary of the history of Japanese Buddhism from the early Meiji period through the early Shōwa.

Chapters 2 and 3 bring the reader to the heart of Ichikawa Hakugen's analysis and critique of Imperial Way Zen. Here, Ives does the reader a favor by breaking down Ichikawa's complex and many-sided argument into four foci: "the epistemological, metaphysical, sociological, and historical dimensions of Zen." In sum, Ichikawa presents the origins and early development of Zen (Chan) in China in terms of a sort of "escape" from the tensions and fragilities of the chaos and uncertainty of the world. Over the centuries, via doctrines espousing "non-discrimination," "non-duality," "non-contention," and "non-choosing," Zen would become, for many Chinese (and later Japanese) "elites," a way of finding "peace of mind" (Chin. *anxin*; Jpn. *anshin*) (p. 60). As such, Ichikawa argues, the Zen awakening or *satori* experience, inflected with Chinese Daoist principles of adaptability, emerges as a "peaceful" affirmation of the way things are, bereft of any need for change or criticism (p. 62).

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Moreover, as Ives comments, in the rhetoric of "becoming one" with things, the "epistemological distance" necessary for criticism is non-existent (p. 68). (The argument here is virtually identical to the Critical Buddhist discussion and critique of "topicalism" in the 1990s.) Ichikawa extends this critique from medieval China to modern Japan, where it lands squarely upon two of the biggest names in modern Japanese thought: D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966) and Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), both of whom shared an affinity for the so-called "logic of *sokuhi,*" which, Ichikawa argues, creates a "static, aesthetic perspective" that "weakens interest in political and social liberation of people" (p. 79). In terms of the Zen approach to society and ethics, Ichikawa argues that in spite of the great potential of certain Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrines, such as the assertion of a universal "buddha-nature" that transcends class, ethnicity, and gender, this potential has very rarely been actualized within Zen theory or practice (p. 83). Instead, as with virtually all Buddhist traditions in Asia, *karma* has been employed in Zen both to account for and to justify social and gender distinctions, along with the more particular Mahāyāna teaching that "differentiation is equality" *(sabetsu-soku-byōdō)* (pp. 84–86), and the Confucian-inspired valuation of "tolerance," "harmony," and the repayment of debts *(on)* (pp. 91–97), which are so central to the imperial ideology of modern Japan.

After presenting Ichikawa's critique, largely without comment, in chapters 2 and 3, Ives undertakes his own analysis of Ichikawa and Imperial Way Zen in the fourth chapter. He begins with a critique of Brian Victoria's analysis in works such as *Zen at War* and *Zen War Stories.* In particular, Ives questions Victoria's assertion of the centrality of *bushidō* both to the development of militaristic Zen and to Japanese militarism more generally. Instead, Ives suggests, the main factor in the development of modern Imperial Way Zen is "the traditional symbiotic relationship between Buddhism and Japanese rulers" (p. 107). Ives' critique of Victoria is well taken, although, ironically, it would appear that on a number of points, such as the overestimation of the Zen (and Buddhist) impact on wartime ideology and decision making, Victoria stands closer to Ives' subject, Ichikawa, than Ives himself. But perhaps this is a good thing, since it gives Ives a chance to distance himself somewhat from his subject, adding an important, one might say "updated," aspect to the foundational critique provided by Ichikawa and Victoria. Moreover, Ives' argument for paying more attention to the empirical evidence of *sangha*-state interdependence stemming from the sixth century provides a refreshingly materialist perspective on an issue that, as with so many others in Buddhist studies, always risks lapsing into speculative idealism. It also happens to elide well with the recent trend toward understanding the basis of Japanese religious practice in terms of "worldly benefits" *(genze riyaku).* In short, Ives argues that it is a mistake to suggest that Buddhism was "co-opted" by the state from the late Meiji period, since "Buddhism never existed apart from politics or the government in Japan" (p. 124). What Buddhists were engaged in, then, was a new form of the long-standing Japanese practice of *honji suijaku,* that is, syncretism with other non-Buddhist doctrines and ideologies, which not only served to protect their own interests but also legitimated the imperial system.

Before picking up with Ichikawa's more constructive proposals for postwar Zen Buddhists, Ives devotes the opening pages of chapter 5 to a brief but nuanced discussion of the tricky matter of "war responsibility," raising questions about possible mitigating factors and extenuating circumstances that complicate any simple apportioning of "blame." Although this might be considered treading on dangerous ground, given the fact that conservative apologists in Japan invoke similar-sounding arguments, Ives presents these not as a way to exonerate those involved, but rather to make sure we have as many facts at our disposal as possible before rendering judgment on the actions of Buddhists during the war. Having given this caution, Ives goes on to present Ichikawa's argument regarding the lack of responsibility and self-reflection on the part of Buddhists (and Japanese more generally) in the postwar situation, at least up to the point of Ichikawa's death in 1986. For Ichikawa, Zen Buddhists' postwar responsibility entails, first and foremost, serious and sustained intellectual reflection on the doctrines that had so readily supported Japan's "holy war," what he calls "the *logic* and *ethics* of Buddhist *thought*" (p. 137). But it also must include practical "work for peace," particularly within Asia (p. 150). The chapter concludes with a brief chronicle of the various apologies and admissions of repentance by Buddhist sects beginning, interestingly, in 1987, the year after Ichikawa's death.

My biggest concern with *Imperial-Way Zen* has to do with its structure, which is rather loose. While some chapters provide extensive argumentation and analysis, others are rather too concise. Chapter 6, at a mere ten pages, reads like an annotated outline for a much longer paper. This reader would have liked to hear more about Ichikawa's more constructive proposals, in particular his theory of "origin humanism" (p. 163) and "*śūnya*-anarchism-communism" (p. 166), both of which are only briefly touched upon here (although Ives does note that Ichikawa never fully "fleshed them out into a systematic ethics"). Meanwhile chapter 7, a sophisticated reflection on the various resources within Zen ethics, seems to be a separate essay unto itself. Perhaps this is an unavoidable result of this book being at one and the same time (a) an analysis of the development and implications of Imperial Way Zen by Chris Ives and (b) a presentation, interpretation, and critique of Ichikawa Hakugen's (and Brian Victoria's) critique. Finally, I would also have liked to hear more about Ichikawa, who seems to be a fascinating character, as attractive for his humility and admissions of wartime cowardice as for his lonely postwar vigil as virtually the sole public critic of Imperial Way Buddhism.

These quibbles aside, other than the odd error with regard to Japanese terms (e.g., *Meiji ishin,* not *isshin* [p. 18 n. 38; p. 194]), *Imperial-Way Zen* is a solid, well-researched book, and a must-read for anyone interested in the important question of why a world religion renowned for peace became so heavily embroiled in the twentieth-century's most devastating conflict. With the possible exception of Brian Victoria, Chris Ives has done more than any other scholar writing in English to address this complex and sensitive issue. In this book, through his ongoing conversation with the work of Ichikawa and Victoria, Ives further complicates the issue, and this is a good thing.