

Helen J. BARONI, *Obaku Zen: The Emergence of the Third Sect of Zen in Tokugawa Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000. ix + 280 pp. \$60.00 cloth, ISBN 0-82482195-5. \$32.95 paper, ISBN 0-8248-2243-9.

HELEN BARONI'S STUDY of Ōbaku Zen is a very important addition to English-language scholarship on Zen as well as to recent studies of Buddhism in

Tokugawa Japan. The Obaku Zen sect has been the neglected “third sect” of Zen, overshadowed by the two larger Japanese Zen sects, Sōtō and Rinzai. But the relative smallness of Ōbaku’s institutional size masks its much larger impact not only on the other two Zen sects but also, as Baroni suggests, on the larger political and cultural worlds of Tokugawa Japan. Like the influence of another numerically-small movement, Christianity in Japan, Ōbaku Zen has had a disproportionately large impact, especially on the intellectual and cultural elite of the Tokugawa period.

Although Stephen ADDISS’s *Ōbaku: Zen Painting and Calligraphy* (1978) and Dieter SCHWALLER’s *Der japanische Ōbaku-Mönch Tetsugen Dōkō* (1989) and *Unreiner Zen? Zwei Texte des Ōbaku-Mönchs Chōon Dōkai* (1996) have been the standard book-length Western-language references on the Ōbaku sect for some time, Baroni’s *Obaku Zen* is the first book that comprehensively examines the emergence of the sect during the Tokugawa period, beyond the study of its art or one of its eminent monks. Indeed, one of the methodologically unique aspects of this book is Baroni’s use of “concepts and themes developed in the study of new religious movements (NRMs) in the contemporary West” (4). She employs the language of researchers of NRMs to provide a fascinating account of how Ōbaku could be viewed as a “new religion,” having come to Japan from China during the seventeenth century, a period much later than the other two Zen sects. Its “newness” was further amplified by its emphasis on the dual practice of Pure Land or Amidist *nenbutsu* with Zen training, its new monastic code (the 1673 *Ōbaku shingī*), and its “foreignness” as it retained its Ming-style Chinese cultural identity in such areas as language, dress, and temple architecture. Rather than view Ōbaku simply as an established tradition transplanted from China to Japan, Baroni finds parallels between certain NRMs in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America (though she does not give any detailed examples of American cases) and Ōbaku Zen in terms of its “introduction and spread, its relations with established religious groups, and its pattern of growth into a recognized religious tradition in its own right” (20). It is this process of gradual establishment (institutional and financial) during Tokugawa Japan, within a context of “revitalization” or “reform” within the Sōtō and Rinzai Zen sects that the Ōbaku sect successfully negotiated, that she explores in the main body of the book.

The book can be divided into five major sections. The first is a section dealing with methodological questions raised by the topic of Ōbaku Zen as well as an explanation of Baroni’s own approach to the subject. Here, she provides an overview of the history and state of the field of Ōbaku studies in Japan. The second section (chapters 3 through 6) gives a fairly straightforward historical accounting of the initial establishment of the Ōbaku sect in Nagasaki and Kyoto (specifically, the building of Mampuku-ji) as well as biographical sketches of the Chinese masters and their Japanese converts. The third section (chapters 7 and 8) takes up Ōbaku Zen practice, based primarily on the Ōbaku monastic regulations (*Ōbaku shingī*) and Pure Land practices within the sect. Here, Baroni discusses the sect’s distinctive emphasis on “Chineseness” (sutra chanting, robes, monastic food, etc.) as well as the ways in which the dual practice of “Zen and Pure Land” might be understood. The

fourth section (chapter 9) discusses Ōbaku's place in the world of Tokugawa Buddhism. Baroni discusses not only the sect's attraction to certain members of the Sōtō and Rinzai communities but also its tension with Rinzai Zen (especially the Myōshinji-ha) head temples. Finally, the fifth section (chapter 10) deals with the sect's position vis-à-vis the Tokugawa secular authorities (or more precisely, its relationship to the imperial household, especially Emperor Gomizunoo, the bakufu in Edo, and to local domainal authorities). The skillful way in which the Ōbaku sect managed to gain the bakufu's favor, especially after the so-called Purple Robe incident of 1627 when the bakufu increased its authority over both imperial and Buddhist institutions, allowed the sect to increase its size despite a political atmosphere that was not conducive to the growth of Buddhist institutions.

Ultimately, Baroni suggests that it was the newness and foreignness of the Ōbaku sect that most contributed to its "success." (By 1745, it had 1,043 temples affiliated with it, which, while a relatively small number compared to other sects, was significant considering its growth over a period of roughly 100 years.) While most scholars of Japanese Buddhism would tend to attribute the success of other Chinese-derived Buddhist schools to their ability to adapt themselves to the Japanese milieu (Japanization), in her conclusion Baroni offers an intriguing interpretation for the case of Ōbaku Zen, which she says flourished due to its emphasis on its Chineseness. The sect's growth continued for roughly one hundred years before tapering off. Baroni's novel interpretation is that "As Ōbaku became more and more similar to Rinzai Zen, indeed, as it became more Japanese in style, it no longer represented a truly distinctive religious option. Ironically, in the case of Ōbaku, the process of Japanization marked the end rather than the beginning of its success" (203). It is a thought-provoking view that might be cast back on contemporary "foreign-transplanted religions," such as the recent growth of Tibetan Buddhism in America, which relies on its exotic character for its appeal.

Indeed, in thinking about the larger contributions that Baroni might make with this book, in addition to her fruitful methodological lines of inquiry, we can point most immediately to her contribution to Zen studies. Baroni covers both the Chinese and Japanese contexts in which to understand the emergence and growth of Ōbaku as both a distinctive sect and as a part of a larger Rinzai Zen movement. Moreover, Baroni's discussions of Zen monastic codes and the relationship between Pure Land and Zen practices will certainly be referred to by scholars of Zen.

Furthermore, Baroni's study joins an increasingly sophisticated series of studies of Buddhism during the Tokugawa period. Although in the study of Japanese religions, Tsuji Zennosuke's "theory of Buddhist degeneration during the Edo period" (*Edo Bukkyō darakuron*) held sway for so long, both in Japan and in the West, the period is increasingly becoming recognized as an important link between the medieval and modern forms of religious practice in Japan. In the United States, for instance, the Tokugawa Religions seminar (a five-year project at the American Academy of Religion, 1997–2001) has provided a forum for new research on this period. Nam Lin HUR's *Prayer and Play in Late Tokugawa Japan: Asakusa Sensōji and Edo Society* (2000) and recently

completed or near-completion doctoral dissertations—including Barbara AMBROS’s “The Cult of Ōyama in Early Modern Japan” (2001), Duncan WILLIAMS’s “Representations of Zen: A Social and Institutional History of Sōtō Zen Buddhism in Edo Japan” (2000), and Alex VESEY’s “The Social Roles of the Rural Buddhist Clergy in Early Modern Japan” (2001)—have provided a more complex picture of the institutional context of Tokugawa Buddhism as well as its emergence in local and village society. Baroni’s work has particular resonances with two doctoral dissertations on the Sōtō Zen “reform movement”: Lawrence GROSS’s “Manzan Dōhaku and the Transmission of the Teaching” (1998) and David RIGGS’s “Menzan Zuihō and the Reform of Japanese Sōtō Zen Buddhism” (2001). These works discuss the same type of issues of returning to Chinese orthodoxy and orthopraxy by not only “returning to the founder” in terms of Dōgen, but to the Chinese Sōtō founder of the lineage, Tung-shan.

Research on Buddhism of the Tokugawa period requires a multidisciplinary approach combining religious studies, Buddhist studies, and socio-political history. Baroni’s interweaving of monastic regulations, bakufu documents, and methodologies derived from the study of NRMs results in a significant contribution that will be of interest to scholars of Buddhism, Zen, and Japanese religions in general.

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