

NANZAN GUIDE TO JAPANESE RELIGIONS

EDITED BY

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Buddhism

The academic field of "Japanese Buddhism" emerged in Japan roughly a century ago, centering around the disciplines of doctrinal studies and history. These two approaches were represented, respectively, by such pioneers as SHIMAJI Daitō 島地大等 (1875–1927) and TSUJI Zennosuke 辻善之助 (1877–1955), scholars whose work, read critically, is still valuable today. The field has also developed within a dual venue: at Japanese national universities originally established on the Western model, and at private sectarian Buddhist universities, which originated in the seminaries (*danrin* 檀林) of the Edo period and, in addition to their more recently acquired role as liberal arts colleges, retain the function of training priests. It is due in no small measure to the influence of sectarian scholarship (*shūgaku* 宗学) that, even outside Japan, the study of Japanese Buddhism was for decades structured around the life and thought of sectarian founders and the traditions descending from them.

Since about the 1970s, however, there have been some dramatic changes. Increased scholarly exchange across disciplinary boundaries has brought the study of Japanese Buddhism into dialogue with social history, folklore studies, art history, archaeology, women's studies, literature, and other fields. A specific stimulus for some of these developments can be found in the work of the late medieval historian Kuroda Toshio (discussed below), who drew new attention to Buddhism's political, economic, and ideological dimensions. At the same time, these trends may be seen as part of a broader move on the part of scholars worldwide toward cross-disciplinary approaches in Buddhist studies and in the humanities more generally. In a shift away from earlier modes of Buddhist studies emphasizing philological, textual, and doctrinal studies, Japanese Buddhism has come to be seen as embodied in specific historical, social, and institutional contexts. An earlier focus on elites and cultural centers has expanded to include attention to Buddhism at the peripheries, in the provinces and rural areas, and also among marginal groups. Increasingly varied approaches to the study of Japanese Buddhism have encouraged, and been encouraged by, a remarkable expansion in the range of sources. In addition to canonical or classic doctrinal texts, scholars have begun to look to ritual handbooks, temple records, and other local historical material, as well as to the evidence of art history and archaeological findings, greatly multiplying the perspectives from which Buddhism can be studied. A prominent example can be seen in recent studies of the Sōtō sect, where painstaking editing of secret transmission texts (*kirikami* 切紙) by Ishikawa Rikizan 石川力山, along with the recent publication of other, previously untapped sources, has made possible a new kind of Sōtō Zen studies emphasizing not the philosophical teachings of the founder Dōgen, but the social history and ritual practice of Sōtō in rural communities.¹

An exhaustive account of specific developments in the study of Japanese Buddhism would be impossible in a brief essay. Rather than attempting a comprehensive survey, the following discussion focuses on a few selected areas of both new research and ongoing scholarly concern. For further discussion of sources and methods and a more detailed overview, see NIHON BUKKYŌ KENKYŪKAI 1996 and 2000, whose members have helped pioneer the interdisciplinary study of Japanese Buddhism. An innovative introductory text on "thirty-four keys to Japanese Buddhism" (ŌKUBO 2003) also provides a brief overview of new directions in scholarship.

HEIAN BUDDHISM: CHALLENGING OLD MODELS

Recent research on Buddhism in Japan's Heian period (794–1185) offers several striking examples of how older scholarly models, dating to the postwar period or even earlier, are now being revised. The standard narrative of Heian Buddhism was in essence one of the new schools or movements emerging in reaction against, and eventually displacing, decadent older ones. It typically began with the founding of the Tendai and Shingon schools by Saichō 最澄 (766/767–822) and Kūkai 空海 (774–835) respectively, a development often

1. For new directions in the history of Sōtō or of Zen more generally, see HIROSE 1988; FAURE 1991, 1996; BODIFORD 1993; HARADA 1998; WILLIAMS 2005.

said to have originated in their dissatisfaction with empty formalism of the “six schools of Nara” (*nanto rokushū* 南都六宗), whose doctrines had long constituted orthodoxy. The mid-Heian period, according to this narrative, saw the proliferation of Tendai and Shingon esoteric rites, sponsored by noble families for “this-worldly” aims, while the latter Heian was marked by the spread of Pure Land beliefs, representing a new concern with individual salvation in the next life. Otherworldly Pure Land faith is said to have attracted disaffected members of middle and lower aristocracy unable to win honor and promotion commensurate with their abilities and was also spread by *hijiri* 聖, monks based primarily at small retreats (*bessho* 別所) apart from major temples, who rejected the worldliness of the Buddhist establishment and its noble patrons and paved the way for the independent “popular” Pure Land movements of Hōnen and Shinran in the Kamakura period. However, new methodological perspectives have called into question major components of this “textbook” model of Heian Buddhism. Attention to the interplay of doctrine and institutional history, for example, has suggested that the “six Nara schools” did not represent a long established orthodoxy that Saichō and Kūkai rejected. Rather, it was not until the early ninth century, roughly when Saichō and Kūkai were formulating their teachings, that the Nara schools began to standardize their own respective doctrines in connection with reorganization of the system of court-allotted yearly ordinands (*nenbundosha* 年分度者) along sectarian lines. In this sense, the “eight schools”—the Nara schools along with Tendai and Shingon—took shape together and collectively represented a “new Buddhism” of the early Heian (SONE 2003; see also 2000). Kūkai himself has been reevaluated, not primarily as the founder of a “Shingon school,” but as the formulator of a new mode of esoteric Buddhist ritual language adopted across sectarian lines and carrying profound social, political, and cultural ramifications (ABÉ 1999).

Studies are beginning to appear of hitherto neglected figures, important in their own age, but who do not figure prominently in received sectarian narratives. These include Ryōgen 良源 (912–985), eighteenth *zasu* 座主 or head of the Tendai monastery on Mt. Hiei, who left few doctrinal teachings but made vital innovations in monastic education, debate, and ritual practice (GRONER 2002) and the scholar-monk Jichihan (a.k.a. Jitsuhan or Jippan 実範, d. 1144), versed in esoteric Buddhism, precepts, and Pure Land thought, who is mentioned only cursorily in Pure Land histories today but was celebrated by the great medieval scholar Gyōnen 凝然 (1240–1321) as one of six patriarchs of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism (BUNJISTERS 1999). In addition, studies drawing on sources other than doctrinal writings and temple documents are beginning to recover a picture of Heian Buddhism as “lived religion” that bears little relation to schools and founders. MITSUHASHI Tadashi (2000) has used court diaries (*nikki* 日記) to investigate the role of Heian nobles in shaping patterns of Japanese religious life by appropriating Buddhist observances, in conjunction with kami worship and yin-yang practices, and their influence as patrons on the development of Buddhist ritual. BRIAN RUPPERT’s attention to esoteric ritual manuals and material culture has shed light on the roles of relic worship in constructing imperial authority and ensuring the prosperity of family lineages (2000).

Another aspect of the standard narrative now being challenged is its tendency to characterize specific historical moments as represented by a single form of Buddhism having a

single constituency and a unitary aim. According to the traditional account, to oversimplify a bit, early Heian Buddhism was “state Buddhism,” officially sponsored and concerned chiefly with thaumaturgical protection of the emperor and the realm (on problems with the category of “state Buddhism,” see Yoshida’s essay in this *Guide*); then in the mid-Heian, with the decline of the *ritsuryō* system, “state Buddhism” was displaced by an “aristocratic Buddhism” centered on esoteric rites sponsored by noble families for this-worldly prosperity, while the later Heian saw the emergence, via the spread of Pure Land faith, of “popular Buddhism.” Historical research has been chipping away at this linear depiction for some time now, noting, for example, that Pure Land practices spread, not in reaction to the “this-worldly” orientation of esoteric rites, but within the same framework of reception: the chanted *nenbutsu* 念仏 was widely understood by both clerics and laity in the same manner as the *kōmyō shingon* 光明真言 and other esoteric mantras and *dhāraṇī*, as a powerful spell for pacifying the deceased and effecting their salvation (HAYAMI 1975). And concern for personal salvation in the next life did not have to await the Pure Land faith of late Heian *hijiri* or lower level aristocrats but is well attested in the writings of high-ranking clerics and court nobles from the ninth century on (TAIRA 1992). The trajectory of the old narrative—from “state Buddhism” to “aristocratic Buddhism” to “popular Buddhism”—was a teleological one, suggesting a gradual shift in Buddhist concerns, from politics and this-worldly benefits to individual liberation, and culminating in the teachings of the “new Buddhism” of the Kamakura period. It is now being challenged by the recognition that Buddhism at each juncture of the Heian period (or any period, for that matter) encompassed a range of both social bases and soteriological aims.

(STILL) RE-VISIONING “KAMAKURA BUDDHISM”

No era in the history of Japanese Buddhism has drawn more scholarly attention than the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Until recently such research focused not on Kamakura Buddhism broadly conceived, but on the teachings and activities of a few individuals revered as the founders of new sectarian movements, collectively termed “Kamakura new Buddhism” (*Kamakura shin-Bukkyō* 鎌倉新仏教): Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), who initiated the Jōdoshū 浄土宗 or Pure Land sect; his disciple Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), honored as the founder of Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 or the True Pure Land sect; Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), the patriarch of Japanese Sōtō Zen 曹洞禅; and Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282), from whom the Nichiren sects trace their lineages. (To a lesser extent, Eisai or Yōsai 栄西, 1141–1215, revered as the patriarch of Rinzaï Zen 臨済禅, and Ippen 一遍, 1239–1289, founder of the Jishū 時宗, are also grouped among the seminal figures of “Kamakura new Buddhism.”) These figures have been typically associated with a rejection of the ritual complexity characterizing the older Buddhist establishment; notions of an “easy path” to enlightenment or salvation; and emphasis on personal faith and a single, exclusive form of practice held to be uniquely efficacious and suitable to persons of all capacities—whether it was chanting the *nenbutsu* or the *daimoku* 題目 (title) of the *Lotus Sūtra* or sitting in meditation (*za-zen* 坐禅). Jōdoshū, Jōdo Shinshū, Sōtō Zen, and Nichirensū number among the largest Buddhist institutions in contemporary Japan, and scholarly emphasis on Hōnen, Shinran,

Dōgen, and Nichiren owes less to the influence of these teachers in the Kamakura period than to their importance as the founders of schools that predominate today. These figures have long been considered exemplars of the entire Japanese Buddhist tradition, though the reasons for this valorization have shifted over time. During the Meiji period (1868–1912), a time of nation formation, they were often celebrated as cultural heroes, initiators of distinctively “Japanese” forms of Buddhism, or as leaders of a Japanese analogue to the Protestant Reformation. In the postwar era, they have more frequently been characterized as democratic reformers championing the religious needs of the common people (*minshū* 民衆) or even as quasi-Marxist figures resisting a hegemonic religio-political establishment.²

Already evident in prewar scholarship, the category of “Kamakura new Buddhism” became central to postwar studies of medieval Japanese Buddhism, notably in the work of IENAGA Saburō 家永三郎 and INOUE Mitsusada 井上光貞, who focused in particular on the new Pure Land movements of Hōnen and Shinran. These scholars took the “new Buddhism” to be representative of the Buddhism of the medieval period, arising against and displacing an elitist, formalistic, and outmoded “old Buddhism” (*kyū-Bukkyō* 旧仏教). The popularity of this model owed much to the revulsion of thoughtful intellectuals against institutional Buddhism’s recent support for militant imperialism and to their desire for social reform. In the postwar milieu, the official temples of Kamakura “old Buddhism,” associated with rites of nation protection, were easily characterized as “corrupt,” and the new movements that broke away from them, as reformist and egalitarian. In light of historical research since the 1970s, it is now generally recognized that the movements of Hōnen, Shinran, and Nichiren remained marginal during the Kamakura period and did not gain institutional prominence until later medieval times; thus their followings cannot be said to have represented the mainstream of medieval Japanese Buddhism. Nor, we now know, were they by any means the first to spread Buddhism among the masses. Buddhism was embraced across social classes from early on, and Kuroda Toshio’s successors in particular have shed light on the popular support base of the major temple-shrine complexes. Nonetheless, the importance of the new movements, in terms of both Buddhist thought and later institutional development, remains undeniable. How to rethink these new movements and their place in the larger Kamakura-period Buddhist world has provoked a great deal of scholarly discussion.

First, attempts have been made to complicate, refine, or transcend models emphasizing the opposition of “old” and “new” Buddhism. Among the first of such challenges was serious study of the existing Buddhist establishment in its own right, rather than as a foil against which to highlight the new movements. The landmark publication of *Kamakura kyū Bukkyō* 鎌倉旧仏教 (KAMATA and TANAKA 1971) was soon followed by studies of specific figures deemed representative of the “old Buddhist” establishment, such as Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232) (see MORRELL 1987; GIRARD 1990; TANABE 1992). Other scholars have offered re-readings of “new” Buddhist figures, such as Christoph KLEIN’s assessment of Hōnen, not as a reformer or sectarian founder, but as a radically heterodox thinker (1996). Still others

2. On representations of the Kamakura-period sectarian founders, see DOBBINS 1998; and STONE 1999a, pp. 55–62.

have sought to identify new patterns in medieval Buddhism transcending institutional or sectarian lines between “old” and “new” (e.g., PAYNE 1998). Such studies have, for example, noted a common trend toward simplified practices, new forms of religious organization, and new proselytizing techniques (FOARD 1980); transsectarian concerns with the role of the kami, the image of the *tennō* or ruler, and the position of Japan as a marginal country in the last age (*masse hendo* 末世辺土; TAKAGI 1982); and new concepts of enlightenment or liberation as readily accessible in the act of practice or even through faith alone, ideas which emerged across the “new Buddhism”/“old Buddhism” divide and were particularly distinctive, not just of the “new Buddhism,” but of the medieval period (STONE 1999a).

Another approach to reconceiving Kamakura Buddhism has been to redraw the “old”/“new” configuration. SASAKI Kaoru has posited a “trans-establishment Buddhism” (*chō-taisei Bukkyō* 超体制仏教), represented by such figures as Saigyō 西行, Chōgen 重源, or Ippen, as constituting a third element cutting across the opposition between the “establishment Buddhism” (*taisei Bukkyō* 体制仏教) supporting the court and *bakufu* and the “anti-establishment Buddhism” (*han-taisei Bukkyō* 反体制仏教) represented by the single-practice movements of Hōnen, Shinran, and Nichiren (1988). A more thorough redefinition of “Kamakura new Buddhism” is that of MATSUO Kenji (1988, 1997). Matsuo identifies the “old Buddhism” with “official monks” (*kansō* 官僧), who were ordained on state-sponsored ordination platforms; were responsible for conducting rites of nation protection; observed pollution taboos; and were primarily concerned with community religion. In contrast, he argues, the “new Buddhism” was associated with “reclusive monks” (*tonseisō* 遁世僧), who adopted new forms of ordination independent of the state-sponsored ordination system; worked for the salvation of lepers and other outcasts; ordained women; conducted funerals; engaged in fundraising; and were concerned primarily with individual religion. Matsuo’s definition is innovative in that it groups figures such as Myōe and the precept revival movements of Eison 叡尊 (1201–1290) and Ninshō 忍性 (1217–1303), along with the exclusive Pure Land and Nichiren movements, as “new Buddhism” (1988). While his distinction between official monks and reclusive monks has been criticized as overdrawn, his work has shed significant light on hitherto neglected aspects of Kamakura Buddhism, in particular, the activities of the Shingon-Ritsu movement. Matsuo’s model also informs a landmark study by MINOWA Kenryō (1999) of the precept revival efforts of the Nara schools in the early medieval period.

The work of Kuroda Toshio and others has done much to de-center the Kamakura period as the focus of academic Buddhist studies. Outside sectarian scholarly circles, the category of “Kamakura new Buddhism” no longer enjoys its former prominence, nor is it treated as frequently as before in teleological fashion as the definitive historical moment toward which earlier forms were evolving and against which later developments are judged. Nonetheless, images of the “new Buddhist” founders as reformers persist, and—although not necessarily couched in terms of “old” and “new”—binary models of medieval Buddhism emphasizing the tension between reformist new movements and an entrenched Buddhist establishment continue to inform scholarship, a point to which we shall return below. Moreover, even in the narrowest definition of “Kamakura Buddhism” as the life and teachings of the new Buddhist founders, research topics have by no means been exhausted.

We have yet to see in English, for example, a definitive book-length study of Hōnen and the early development of Jōdoshū lineages. At the same time, the Kamakura period saw a flourishing in lineage formation, ritual practices, textual production, and doctrinal innovation within the Tendai, Shingon, and Nara schools as well as the spread of popular practices across denominational lines—all topics that cry out for further study.

THE THEORY OF THE “EXOTERIC-ESOTERIC SYSTEM”

One of the greatest paradigm shifts ever to occur in Japanese Buddhist studies, or in medieval studies more generally, is represented by the work of the late historian KURODA Toshio 黒田俊雄 (1926–1993) and his theory of the *kenmitsu taisei* 顕密体制 or “exoteric-esoteric system” that characterized the dominant medieval Buddhist institutions—Tendai, Shingon, and the Nara schools.³ This system consisted of a shared and loosely unifying basis in esoteric teachings and practice, especially *mikkyō* thaumaturgical rites, which all Buddhist schools had incorporated, joined to an emphasis by each school on its particular exoteric doctrine.

Kuroda’s *kenmitsu* theory has made numerous contributions. First, as already noted, it has served as a major corrective to postwar “Kamakura new Buddhism” centered approaches. Kuroda persuasively demonstrated that the overwhelmingly dominant forms of medieval Japanese Buddhism were not the new movements of Hōnen, Shinran, etc., but the *kenmitsu* Buddhism of the major temple-shrine complexes (*jisha* 寺社), which represented religious orthodoxy (*seitō-ha* 正統派). The new movements did not displace the preexisting Buddhist establishment but existed coevally with it as marginal heterodoxies (*itan-ha* 異端派).

Second, *kenmitsu taisei* theory has done much to clarify the integral relationship of medieval religion, economics, political power, and land ownership. Kuroda demonstrated how leading temple-shrine complexes received donations of extensive private estates (*shōen* 莊園) in return for esoteric rites of protection performed for powerful patrons. By amassing large portfolios of landholdings, *jisha* emerged as powerful economic and political forces in their own right; along with the court and *bakufu*, they were integral to the medieval system of ruling elites (*kenmon taisei* 権門体制). At the same time, “*kenmitsu* ideology” (*kenmitsu-shugi* 顕密主義) was deployed to legitimize the hierarchy of rule, from the management of local *shōen* to an overarching rhetoric of the mutual dependence of Buddhist law and the ruler’s law (*ōbō buppō sōi ron* 王法仏法相依論).⁴

Third, *kenmitsu taisei* theory has provided the basis for an integrated view of different strands of Japanese religion. The perceived magical powers of esoteric ritual to invite prosperity and ward off danger enabled the *kenmitsu* system to incorporate local thaumaturgical rites, including the pacification of vengeful spirits (*goryō* 御霊), yin-yang divination practices, and cults of the kami, subsuming them all within a framework of Mahāyāna universalism. From this perspective, both medieval Shinto lore and doctrine, as well as discourse about Japan as a “land of the kami” (*shinkoku* 神国) are redefined as expressions

3. For an introduction to Kuroda’s scholarship, see DOBBINS 1996.

4. On the political influence of elite Buddhist temples, see ADOLPHSON 2000.

of *kenmitsu* Buddhism, challenging earlier notions of a medieval Shinto arising in opposition to Buddhism. While not everyone has accepted Kuroda's argument that the existence of an independent Shinto tradition continuous since premodern times is no more than "a ghost image produced by a word linking together unrelated phenomenon (*sic*)" (KURODA 1981), his work has promoted a healthy tendency to consider premodern Buddhism, not in isolation, but in terms of its interactions with kami ritual and other non-Buddhist traditions, overcoming reified divisions in the academic world between "Buddhism," "Shinto," etc. Even the principle of the unity of "original forms and their manifest traces" (*honji sui-jaku* 本地垂迹), by which kami were understood to be the local forms of universal buddhas and bodhisattvas, now appears to have been far more than a simple binary logic equating specific Buddhist deities with corresponding kami; rather, it served as a "combinative paradigm" whose specifics varied from one site, text, or ritual setting to another and involved complex webs of association linking not only Buddhist divinities and kami but including yin-yang, esoteric, and other continental deities, demons, spirits, and cultural heroes (TEEUWEN and RAMBELLI 2003). Nor, it seems, was the distinction between buddhas and kami necessarily always the chief division among divinities in the medieval world. SATŌ Hiroo, for example, has argued for a distinction between what he terms "saving deities" (*sukuu kami* 救う神), or the transcendent buddhas and bodhisattvas who extend their universal compassion to all beings, and "wrathful deities" (*ikaru kami* 怒る神), who reward and punish in this world. While buddhas and bodhisattvas in their original forms are "saving deities," once enshrined and rendered physically present as "manifest traces" at specific sites—such as the Great Buddha of Tōdaiji or the Ishiyama Kannon—they could also function in the same manner as kami, to mete out reward and punishment (SATŌ 1998, pp. 348–76; trans. in TEEUWEN and RAMBELLI 2003, pp. 95–144).

A fourth contribution, one owing to Kuroda's intellectual heirs, is the use of his *kenmitsu* concept to identify and illuminate a pervasive medieval episteme. In this episteme, "exoteric" doctrines such as one mind, emptiness, the threefold truth, or original enlightenment provided notions of a wholly integrated, interpenetrating cosmos, while "esoteric" teachings and practices introduced the possibility of ritual control and transformation of the world through the manipulation of symbols. Any sphere of phenomenal activity could be "mandalized" as a realm where the wisdom and compassion of buddhas and bodhisattvas were expressed. Thus temple and shrine precincts and landholdings could be defined as realms of the buddhas and kami, immune from government incursion, while the disciplines of specific arts, professions, and trades could be constructed as "ways" (*michi* 道) of religious cultivation. Symbols of the sacred realm of Buddhist reality were mapped onto specific features of the phenomenal world via complex sets of correspondences and resemblances, both formal and linguistic, equating, for example, the three pagoda precincts of Mt. Hiei with the threefold truth or the five viscera of the human body with the five wisdom buddhas. The decoding (actually, encoding) of these resemblances formed the substance of secret transmissions passed down in master-disciple (or father-son) lineages of religious and worldly knowledge, esoteric rites, court precedents, and the arts. These identifications of specific sets of phenomena or activities with Buddhist principles—a paradigm that may perhaps be considered the "unity of original forms and their manifest

traces" (*honji suijaku*) in a broad sense—is proving to have been central to the cognitive, aesthetic, and ideological dimensions of much of medieval Japanese culture (GRAPARD 1987; RAMBELLI 2003).

Kenmitsu taisei theory has also drawn some criticism. Kuroda's subsuming of Shinto within a Buddhist framework has been criticized for overlooking the extent to which Buddhism in Japan was shaped by kami-related practices (BREEN and TEEUWEN 2000, pp. 5–8). Some scholars have questioned how well the category of *kenmitsu* describes the Buddhism of eastern Japan; SASAKI Kaoru, for example, has proposed as a counter-theory a "Zen-esoteric" ideology (*zenmitsu shugi* 禅密主義) that provided thaumaturgical support and religious legitimation for the Kamakura *bakufu* (1997). Another set of critiques revolves around Kuroda's reified and inadequate definition of *mikkyō* as the basis of the *kenmitsu* system (SUEKI 1998; ABÉ 1999, pp. 416–28). Kuroda saw medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought (*hongaku shisō* 本覚思想) as "archetypical" of *kenmitsu* ideology (a claim that has itself been questioned), but appears to have overlooked earlier theoretical integrations of esoteric and exoteric Buddhism within the Nara schools, following the systematizing of *mikkyō* by Kūkai. It is not clear, in fact, whether Kuroda located early Heian Buddhism, when *mikkyō* was first formally established, within the *kenmitsu* system or not. In addition, a range of explanations of the relationship between esoteric and exoteric Buddhism were put forth over the course of the medieval period, not all of which support Kuroda's argument that *mikkyō* was invariably deemed fundamental. His claim that the thaumaturgical elements of *kenmitsu* Buddhism were rejected by the heterodox movements has been controverted in the case of Nichiren (DOLCE 2002), raising questions about the nature of the "orthodox"/"heterodox" distinction. Another question concerns how far Heian-period Pure Land thought, such as Genshin's, or the activities of independent *hijiri* or holy men can be understood within an esoteric framework. A more precise understanding of "esoteric Buddhism" and a closer integration of the approaches of intellectual and institutional history are among the challenges confronting *kenmitsu taisei* theorists.

One further point of controversy involves the status of the new Kamakura Buddhism in post-Kuroda scholarship. Kuroda himself tended to reject notions of a rigid opposition between "old" and "new" forms of Buddhism, for example, by noting points of continuity between the marginal sectarian movements (*itan-ha*) of Hōnen, Shinran, etc., and reform movements (*kaikaku-ha* 改革派) within mainstream Buddhist institutions. Some of his successors, however, see a radical disjuncture between the new heterodox movements and the orthodox *kenmitsu* establishment in terms of their respective stances toward dominant structures of authority and power. Such scholars argue that the all-encompassing nature of *kenmitsu* Buddhism served as an ideology of social control. For example, because all buddhas, bodhisattvas, or kami were understood as embodiments of Buddhist truth, taxes or corvée labor provided for temple-administered *shōen* could be defined as offerings to the particular Buddhist deity enshrined as a temple's object of worship, and peasant recalcitrance in providing such services could be countered with the threat of divine punishment. From this perspective, the absolutizing of a single practice and rejection of all other forms seen in the teachings of Hōnen, Shinran, or Nichiren is understood as ideological resistance to the entire *kenmitsu* establishment and to the order of authority that it legiti-

mated (e.g., TAIRA 1992, 1994; SATŌ 1998). In contrast, SUEKI Fumihiko (1998) has argued that the founders of the new Buddhist movements, despite their soteriologically egalitarian views, were not primarily social reformers, and that to characterize them as unique critics of *kenmitsu* authority simply replicates in the language of *kenmitsu taisei* theory the “new Buddhism”-centered approaches of earlier scholarship.⁵

A NOTE ON BUDDHISM AND THE ARTS

The interrelated view of Buddhism and social practice suggested by *kenmitsu* theory highlights a need for deeper understanding of the relation between religion and the literary, visual, and performing arts, as the modern disciplinary separation between “art” and “religion” does not reflect medieval realities. While scholars have long traced Buddhist influences upon specific works of literature, “Buddhist literature” (*Bukkyō bungaku* 仏教文学) is itself now emerging as a recognized subfield within the study of Japanese Buddhism, as seen, for example, in the *Journal of Comparative Buddhist Literature* (*Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyō bungaku kenkyū* 駒澤大学仏教文学研究) inaugurated in 1998. Recent studies have suggested a more integrated approach, in which abstract Buddhist teachings were shaped and concretized by *setsuwa*, *imayō*, Noh drama, and popular forms of preaching such as *jikidan* 直談 (see, for example, HIROTA 1987). Such approaches shed light on the process by which poetry and music, once shunned by clerics as worldly distractions, were appropriated as forms of Buddhist practice in their own right (LAFLEUR 1983, pp. 1–25, 80–106; OGI 1998), and artistic expressions, like the concrete forms of esoteric ritual (*ji* 事), came to be seen as instantiating formless principles (*ri* 理); thus the arts, too, could be conceived of as the “traces” (*suijaku*) of Buddhist truth (SANFORD, LAFLEUR, and NAGATOMI 1992, pp. 3–7; MISAKI 1999). This move is in turn related to practices of initiation and secret transmission in the arts paralleling the formation of Buddhist ritual and teaching lineages—a subject in need of further research.

Recent interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Japanese Buddhist art have shed light on such areas as the politics of art patronage and the appropriation of Buddhism in specific localities, such as Mimi YIENGPRUKSAWAN’s work relating the structures and icons of the Chūsonji 中尊寺 in Hiraizumi to Ōshū Fujiwara polity (1998). Other studies have investigated the cultic and ritual dimensions of Buddhist icons (MCCALLUM 1994; SHARF and SHARF 2001). Such work promises to help rectify a longstanding aniconic bias in Western Buddhist studies, for example, by showing that images were not seen as purely “symbolic” or as aids to meditation or devotion, but rather, as actually instantiating the powerful sacred presences they represented.

WOMEN, GENDER, AND THE FAMILY

Stimulated by developments in the study of social history and the emergence of women’s studies as an academic field, research into the roles and position of women and

5. Compare, for example, the perspectives of TAIRA 1996 and SUEKI 1996.

gender in Japanese Buddhism has progressed remarkably since the 1980s.⁶ Early impetus was provided by the Research Group on Women and Buddhism in Japan (Kenkyūkai: Nihon no Josei to Bukkyō 研究会・日本の女性と仏教) formed in 1984 by Nishiguchi Junko and Ōsumi Kazuo and consisting primarily of younger scholars representing a range of disciplines.⁷

One major focus of scholarly attention in this area has been the history of nuns. As described in Yoshida Kazuhiko's essay in this *Guide*, nuns played a key role in the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the sixth century; they were active in court-sponsored rites and also helped to promote Buddhism in the provinces. From the latter part of the eighth century, however, their status began to decline. Nuns gradually disappeared from official ceremonies; nunneries came under the management of monks, declined, or were converted to monasteries. By the ninth century, formal ordination for women appears to have lapsed altogether (USHIYAMA 1990; GRONER 2002, pp. 245–88). Despite loss of formal ordination, however, renunciate women by no means disappeared. Research since the 1980s has done much to illuminate the varied activities and modes of life of privately ordained or self-ordained “unofficial” nuns throughout the Heian period. Many such women took the tonsure only after raising children, often on the death of a husband. Depending upon the individual, her class, and her personal resources, some nuns established private retreats, became mendicants, or supported themselves by washing and sewing robes for monks; many, however, continued to live in their family households while devoting themselves to Buddhist practice (KATSUURA 1995 and 2000). Elite women, especially of the court, developed their own ordination traditions independent of the Vinaya and the state-sponsored ordination system (NISHIGUCHI 1992; MEEKS 2003, pp. 209–33).

The Kamakura period witnessed efforts to revive official nuns' ordination and monastic institutions for women. These have drawn scholarly attention, especially in connection with Eison's Shingon Ritsu 真言律 precept revival movement (HOSOKAWA 1987, 1989; MATSUO 1995, pp. 379–401; GRONER 2005).⁸ While most research on nuns to date has focused on premodern times, surveys of the archives of major Kansai area nunneries, chiefly holding Edo-period documents, are now in progress. These “*amadera chōsa*” may eventually yield vital information about Buddhist nuns in early modern Japan. A few studies have begun to examine the cultural and political influence exerted during the early modern period by elite nuns of the imperial house and the shogunal household (WRIGHT 2002; COGAN 2004). Modern and contemporary nuns, however, represent an almost wholly neglected area.⁹

The intersection of Buddhism and the family in the medieval period represents another

6. For a brief history of this subfield, see YOSHIDA 1999, pp. 6–34.

7. For the group's initial achievements, see ŌSUMI and NISHIGUCHI 1989; some of these essays have been translated and published with contributions from European and North American scholars (see RUCH 2002).

8. See also MEEKS 2003, who argues that the Ritsu nuns of this period were in substantial ways independent of Eison's community.

9. For a study of contemporary nuns, see ARAI 1999.

new research area. Despite traditional rhetoric of “leaving the household,” many clerics continued to occupy themselves with family concerns. Monks from aristocratic families often performed rites for the welfare and prosperity of family members, who in turn commended private estates (*shōen*) to their temples; these in turn would often be passed down to disciples of the same family, a process contributing to the “aristocraticization” of the upper echelons of the clergy. Lines between monastic renunciation and family life were blurred in other ways as well. While private or self-ordination as a “lay nun” was virtually the sole option for women, for men in the medieval period as well, the most widely adopted model of renunciate life was not that of the monk who enters a temple as a child and receives formal ordination according to the Vinaya, but that of the *nyūdō* 入道 or lay novice. Such individuals typically shaved their heads and took vows later in life, devoting themselves to Buddhist practices, while at the same time remaining in the household and continuing to look after family interests. Lay nuns in particular were often responsible for memorial rites for family members (NISHIGUCHI 1997). Of particular interest are “monastic families” (see NISHIGUCHI 1987, pp. 183–218). Throughout the medieval period, numerous monks maintained homes in *sato-bō* 里坊 or towns below the precincts of mountain temples, had wives and children, administered personal property, and transferred monastic office and temple wealth to their biological sons. While the extent of such practices remains to be fully clarified, such research calls into question the notion of fixed distinctions between monastics and laity, and demands a fundamental re-imagining of medieval monastic life.

Yet another related research area concerns the ideology of Buddhist attitudes about gender. One major accomplishment has been the overturning of earlier claims that, where the “old Buddhism” of the establishment excluded women as karmically limited and difficult to save, teachers of the “new Buddhism” such as Hōnen and Shinran compassionately extended salvation to women as well as men (e.g., KASAHARA 1975). In fact, teachings asserting the possibility of women’s salvation (*nyonin ōjō* 女人往生, *nyonin jōbutsu* 女人成仏) were common in the dominant *kenmitsu* Buddhism of the Heian period. Far from promoting soteriological egalitarianism, however, such teachings represented the obverse face of discriminatory rhetoric about the special karmic obstructions of women, which had begun to appear around the late ninth century, and were often enlisted in support of claims for the efficacy of particular practices, such as the *nenbutsu* or *kōmyō shingon*, in encompassing women’s salvation (TAIRA 1992, pp. 391–426). Claims that a particular practice saves “even women”—which assume female soteriological hindrances—can also be found in the teachings of the Kamakura new Buddhist movements.

Lack of a clear counter-discourse in premodern times has led some scholars to assume that women passively accepted and internalized rhetoric about female hindrances to salvation. Others question this assumption. James DOBBINS (2004, pp. 74–106), for example, in studying the letters of Shinran’s wife, the nun Eshinni 恵信尼 (1182–1268?), suggests that doctrinal axioms about female obstructions to salvation were not necessarily operative for women at the level of practiced religion, while Lori MEEKS (2003) has shown how elite nuns of Hokkeji in the Kamakura period developed rhetorical strategies for “talking past” male monastic rhetoric about women’s soteriological hindrances without directly engaging

it. There are severe limitations to our sources, and how premodern Japanese women themselves received teachings about the alleged karmic burden of female gender remains an open question.

The emergence in early medieval times of Buddhist discourses about women's special hindrances was also accompanied by the exclusion of women from the precincts of certain Buddhist temples. Why these *nyonin kekkai* 女人結界 were established, and why women were banned from some temples but not others, have been the subject of considerable scholarly discussion. Suggestions about possible factors contributing to the exclusion of women from temple precincts include concern for protecting monastic celibacy; the rise of Confucian values and the emergence of a patriarchal family system; local traditions associating mountain ascetic practice with ritual purity; and new concepts of pollution (*kegare* 穢れ) associated with the breakdown of the *ritsuryō* system, the vulnerability of the capital to crime and disease, and the accompanying perceived need to establish ritually pure zones (such as Mt. Hiei) for thaumaturgical protection of the ruler's law (*ōbō*). As noted by Kawahashi Noriko in her essay in this *Guide*, with some variation, scholarly consensus now holds that the *nyonin kekkai* originated in regulations enforcing the precepts by prohibiting the presence of women at monasteries and of men at nunneries. As nunneries disappeared, only the ban excluding women from monasteries remained and was later rationalized in terms of female pollution (USHIYAMA 1996; YOSHIDA 1999, pp. 27–31; GRONER 2002, pp. 262–65). Researchers have also highlighted early modern concerns about female pollution, as expressed in practices associated with the *Ketsubon-kyō* 血盆經 (Blood bowl sutra), a sutra said to save women from a Blood Pool Hell into which they would otherwise fall for the sin of pollution caused by their blood of menstruation and childbirth (GLASSMAN 2001; KŌDATE 2004; WILLIAMS 2005, pp. 50–58, 125–28). Practices such as the *nyonin kekkai* and *Ketsubon-kyō* rites point out the need for clearer understanding of premodern notions of pollution and their complex variations with respect to status groups, gender, place, and variation over time.

While research on women and Buddhism in Japan has focused on ancient and medieval times, the modern period also represents a rich, largely untapped field for such studies. Promising areas for research include the ambiguous status of *jizoku* 寺族 or temple wives (KAWAHASHI 1995); feminist critiques of Buddhism (ŌGOSHI, MINAMOTO, and YAMASHITA 1990; MINAMOTO 1996); and the networks of Buddhist women—nuns, priests' wives, teachers, researchers, and lay believers—working for internal, egalitarian reform of Buddhist institutions (JOSEI TO BUKKYŌ TŌKAI-KANTŌ NETTOWĀKU 1999).

RECONSIDERING EARLY MODERN BUDDHISM

During the unification campaigns of Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536/1537–1598), Buddhist temples were gradually stripped of the political, military, and economic power they had enjoyed during the medieval period, and, in the Edo or Tokugawa period (1603–1868), were subjected to varying degrees of state control. This marked a radical break with the “mutual dependence of the Buddhist law and the ruler's law” that had underlain state polity for centuries (see FUJII 1975; McMULLIN 1984).

The *bakufu* sought to regulate Buddhist institutions by organizing the temples of each sect as branch temples under the oversight of a single head temple. At the same time, all families were required to affiliate with a local temple, which would issue certificates testifying that they were not Christians or members of other proscribed religious groups. As patron families (*danka* 檀家), they were obliged to support their *danka* temple and participate in its regularly scheduled rites; in particular, they were required to hold Buddhist funerals for all family members and make offerings to the temple for an extended sequence of memorial rites. Thus on one hand, during the Edo period, Buddhist temples were subsumed within the official administrative apparatus for population surveillance, while on the other hand, this was the era when—largely through the medium of the *danka* system and Buddhist funerals—Buddhism for the first time truly penetrated all levels of society.

Citing the use of Buddhist temples to monitor the population and the compulsory affiliation of the laity, the influential historian Tsuji Zennosuke characterized the Buddhism of this period as ossified and corrupt, thus discouraging serious study for some time. Since the founding of the academic journal *Kinsei Bukkyō* 近世仏教 (1960–1965; second series 1979–1987), scholars working in this area have been struggling against Tsuji's characterization to gain a more precise understanding of early modern Buddhism, both as the matrix of Buddhist institutions in contemporary Japan and as a worthy object of historical inquiry in its own right.¹⁰ Attempts to gain a more detailed and accurate picture of Edo Buddhism have been aided by numerous regional history projects, including the cataloguing of temple, family, and local government archives, which began in the 1970s and are yielding a wealth of documentation. Broadly speaking, scholarship since Tsuji in a social historical mode has tended to concentrate either on the role of Buddhist institutions in the Tokugawa regime's attempts at social control or on the development of popular Buddhist practices. As Duncan Williams notes in his essay in this *Guide*, these two trends characterize the study of early modern Japanese religion more generally.

The first of these two lines of inquiry has examined Buddhist institutional structures, such as the temple certification (*terauke seido* 寺請制度), parishioner (*danka seido* 檀家制度), and head temple–branch temple (*honmatsu seido* 本末制度) systems and their linkages to *bakufu* and domainal authority. Such studies have often emphasized the connection between Buddhist funerals and memorial rites, both institutionally and ideologically, in the maintenance of social order. TAMAMURO Taijō, who coined the term “funerary Buddhism” (*sōshiki bukkyō* 葬式仏教) in his study of the same name (1977), was among the first to stress this aspect of early modern Buddhism. More exhaustive research in this vein has been done by TAMAMURO Fumio, who has shown how mandatory temple certification and the performance of Buddhist funerals were connected to government suppression of Christianity and functioned as an instrument for monitoring the populace (1999). Nam-lin HUR (forthcoming) has argued that the spread of Buddhist funerals and ancestor cults served to help construct and maintain Tokugawa social order. Studies in the second vein, while acknowledging government use of Buddhist temples for population surveillance,

10. For an overview of these efforts, see ŌKUWA 1991, pp. 259–80.

have instead focused on the popular Buddhist culture, exploring, for example, the inseparable connection between “prayer” and “play,” or entertainment, that characterized the urban Buddhism of Edo (HUR 2000); lay confraternities (*kō* 講) and their support for *kaichō* 開帳 or temples’ public exhibition of sacred treasures (KITAMURA 1989); the role of village priests in mediating peasant disputes and interceding with local authorities on behalf of their parishioners (VESEY 2003); and the practices for worldly benefits and management of the dead by which Sōtō Zen vastly expanded its regional parishioner bases (WILLIAMS 2005). Buddhist pilgrimage and popular preaching have also drawn scholarly attention (see the essays by Barbara Ambros and Duncan Williams in this *Guide*).

Though not yet as well studied as temple institutions or popular Buddhist culture, the intellectual history of Edo Buddhism is also beginning to draw scholarly attention. One area of research concerns Buddhist contributions to early modern social and political ideology. For a long time, scholarly assumptions that neo-Confucianism represented the official discourse made it possible to overlook the ongoing intellectual vitality of early modern Buddhism. However, historians such as Herman OOMS (1985) and ŌKUWA Hitoshi (1991), focusing on the case of Suzuki Shōzan 鈴木正三, have noted how Buddhist figures—like neo-Confucians, Nativists, and others—seeking a place for themselves and their traditions in the new regime, actively contributed to the formation of Tokugawa ideology. SONEHARA Satoshi (1996) has examined the role of the eminent Tendai Buddhist cleric Tenkai 天海 (1536–1643) in the legitimation of the Tokugawa regime and divinization of the first Tokugawa shōgun, Ieyasu.

Japanese sectarian scholarship has provided numerous studies of specific Buddhist schools during the early modern period (see the essay by Williams in this *Guide*). Outside Japan, Zen has been the tradition most widely studied. In addition to major studies of Sōtō and Rinzai figures, the less well-known Ōbaku tradition has drawn scholarly attention (SCHWALLER 1989, 1996; BARONI 2000). Janine SAWADA has investigated the integration of Zen with Neo-Confucianism in local Shingaku 心学 circles (1993) and in popular discourses and practices of “self-cultivation” (2004). Sawada’s work is especially valuable in showing that “Buddhism” was not a self-contained entity but participated in broader early modern conceptual trends that crossed religious traditions, such as the enormously influential ideology of self-cultivation as the key to both personal religious attainment and social prosperity, still prominent in the discourse and practice of Japanese religions today.

Trends in early modern Buddhism that emerged across sectarian lines call out for investigation. Movements to revive the precepts occurred in a number of schools and have not yet been studied in a comprehensive manner. Another crucial but understudied topic is the formalization and solidification of sectarian identity, a salient feature of early modern Buddhism. The “discovery” during this era of sectarian founders as sources of normative authority; the compiling, editing, and publishing of sectarian canons, aided by the emergence of a sophisticated print culture; and the codification of sectarian doctrine continue to shape Buddhist institutional self-definitions down to the present. These developments occurred within the context of Edo-period intellectual currents, crossing religious traditions, that emphasized the uncovering of normative origins and the identification, collation, and publication of authoritative texts, which in some quarters began to displace medieval

traditions of secret transmission (*kuden* 口伝) as sources of legitimizing knowledge. The place of Buddhist sectarianism in this early modern epistemological shift remains to be investigated.

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY BUDDHISM

With the fall of the Tokugawa *bakufu* in 1868 and the establishment of the Meiji regime, Buddhist institutions confronted a number of threats and challenges: the disestablishment of Buddhism and the abrogation of mandatory temple affiliation, seriously affecting temples' economic base; the promulgation of edicts mandating "separation of Shinto and Buddhism" (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離); and the ensuing outbreaks of anti-Buddhist violence (*haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈) in which numerous temples were destroyed and monks and nuns forcibly laicized. Documents relating to the "separation of Shinto and Buddhism" were collected by historians early on (MURAKAMI, TSUJI, and WASHIO, 1926–1929; this collection, along with more recent advances in regional history, has enabled some detailed studies of the impact of the separation edicts and the *haibutsu kishaku* movement in specific localities, e.g., TAMAMURO 1977; YASUMARU 1979; COLLCUTT 1986; NAKURA 1988; GRAPARD 1984; MURATA 1999). However, as Hayashi Makoto notes in his essay in this *Guide*, the study of "modern Buddhism" is chiefly a postwar phenomenon, beginning only in the late 1950s with the groundbreaking social historical research of YOSHIDA Kyūichi (1992). Since then, this field has gained considerable momentum, especially since the founding in 1992 of the Society for the Study of Modern Japanese Buddhist History (Nihon Kindai Bukkyōshi Kenkyūkai 日本近代仏教史研究会) and the inauguration of its yearly journal, *Kindai Bukkyō* 近代仏教.

Since the formation and development of "modern Buddhism" as an academic field are detailed in Hayashi's essay in this *Guide*, a brief summary will suffice here. One prominent trend in scholarship on modern Buddhism has been to examine Buddhist institutional changes and internal self-redefinitions in response to the challenges of modernity, beginning with the seminal developments of the Meiji period (1868–1912). Examples focusing on institutional change include research on Buddhism's social roles (YOSHIDA 1991); the formation of ground-level Buddhist teaching assemblies (*kyōkai* 教会) and lay societies (*kessha* 結社) and their impact on the formation of modern sectarian organization (IKEDA 1994); and the debates, conflicts, and practical problems arising from the decriminalization of clerical marriage in 1872 (JAFJE 2001). Others have focused on how influential Buddhist leaders reconfigured their tradition as a unique spiritual resource for the projects of modernization and nation-building. An early example was Kathleen STAGG's study (1983) of Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) and his attempts to redefine Buddhism as consistent with Western philosophy, scientific, and superior to Christianity. Broader treatments include James KETELAAR's pioneering study (1990) of the "definitional strategies" by which Meiji Buddhists reformulated their tradition as "modern Buddhism," and the work of ŌTANI Eiichi (2001) on the emergence of lay Nichirenism (*Nichirenshugi* 日蓮主義) as a politically involved, highly nationalistic movement. A ground-breaking, two-volume study by SUEKI Fumihiko (2004), including analyses of eleven key figures,

explores the contributions of modern Buddhists in shaping the discourses and issues that engaged Meiji-period intellectuals more broadly, especially the relation of society and the individual, and of religion and the state. Another, more recent trend has been to consider modern Japanese Buddhism in a broader Asian context, investigating, for example, the role of Buddhism in Japan's colonial ventures in China and Manchuria (KOJIMA and AKESHI 1992; SUEKI 2004, vol. 2) or the development of modern Buddhism from the comparative perspective of Japan and China (SUEKI 2004, vol. 2). Richard JAFFE (2004) has investigated how global travel by Japanese Buddhists and interactions with their counterparts in other Asian countries from the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries contributed to the formation of a pan-Asian Buddhist identity. Japanese versions of Buddhist pan-Asianism were deployed against hegemonic Western notions of culture and civilization and often, though not exclusively, enlisted in the service of Japanese imperialistic agendas. Such studies illuminate the place of Japanese Buddhist thinkers and activists in the formation of Buddhist modernism as a global as well as national phenomenon and promise to bring the study of modern Japanese Buddhism into dialogue with research in other cultural contexts on trans-nationalism and the emergence of modern Asian identities.

The subject of Buddhist institutional and ideological support for modern nationalism leads inevitably to the issue of Buddhist involvement in Japan's ventures of militant imperialism. Along with broader studies of religion under imperialism (e.g., YOSHIDA 1970), several articles and a few booklength studies have appeared on Buddhism's wartime role (ICHIKAWA 1970; NAKANO 1977; VICTORIA 1997). Wartime sectarian doctrinal materials have also been compiled (SENJI KYŌGAKU KENKYŪKAI 1988–1995). This subject was for a long time deeply painful, even taboo, in some academic quarters, and has only just begun to be addressed directly. More extensive research will be of value in illuminating issues of religion and the state, religion and violence, and the complex processes by which religious teachings are revised, reappropriated, and invoked to legitimize national aims. In addition to "top down" methodological approaches, stressing the actions of institutions and influential figures, one hopes also for studies shedding light on what Buddhist involvement in modernization, nation-building, and war meant for ordinary clerics and lay Buddhists.

Despite a persistent rhetoric of Buddhist "decadence," as well as some very real present challenges, temples of the traditional Buddhist sects still collectively represent the largest religious institutional presence in Japan. Yet until the 1990s there was little academic research on contemporary Buddhism, almost as though Buddhism in the postwar period lay outside the legitimate purview of Buddhist studies. Some initial work was done by scholars also affiliated with Buddhist institutions on topics such as Buddhist social work (TAMIYA, HASEGAWA, and MIYAGI 1994) and Buddhist funerary and mortuary practices (ITŌ and FUJII 1997). These studies combine historical inquiry with concern for the future direction of traditional Buddhism. At issue are questions of how temples can effectively contribute to redressing social problems, such as the effects of an aging population, or cope with loss of traditional roles brought about, for example, by the growth of secular funeral companies (*sōgiya* 葬儀屋 or *sōgisha* 葬儀社) that have assumed many of the functions once performed by temples and priests. In contrast to frequently expressed internal critiques and anxieties about institutional Buddhism's diminishing social role, a few scholars have

stressed temples' ingenuity in devising new ways to maintain contemporary relevance and garner economic support, for example, by promoting pilgrimage, festivals, worldly benefits, and the sale of amulets (READER and TANABE 1998) or by initiating voluntary burial societies and other alternatives to the family grave system (ROWE 2004). Since the beginning of the present century, some illuminating studies of contemporary Buddhist institutions—incorporating along with archival research the anthropological and sociological methods used in the study of new religions—have begun to appear. Most noteworthy are Stephen COVELL's study of contemporary Tendai temples (forthcoming) and a significant collection of essays on the status of traditional Buddhism in contemporary Japan (COVELL and ROWE 2004), addressing such topics as popular ethical teachings, priestly education, Buddhism in civil society, and Japanese Buddhist NGOs.

More work is also needed on Buddhist-based new religions. Very little academic research has been conducted, for example, on the lay Buddhist organizations Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 and Risshō Kōseikai 立正佼成会, the two largest "new religions" in Japan. Such research might fruitfully adopt Buddhist studies and historical approaches, for example, by inquiring into Buddhist new religions' appropriation of traditional Buddhist doctrines (e.g., HUBBARD 1998) or the continuities between these movements and earlier forms, such as the lay confraternities of the early modern period.

ISSUES IN BUDDHIST THOUGHT

Outside sectarian circles, in recent years, social history has to some extent displaced Buddhist thought as the mainstream of the academic study of Japanese Buddhism. However, important contributions continue to appear in this area. In the West, the teachings of Shinran and of Zen, Dōgen in particular, have drawn scholarly attention from the standpoints of both philosophy and intellectual history. Shinran has inspired comparison with Protestant theologians, while philosophically oriented Dōgen studies have focused on his teachings about the Buddha nature, impermanence, and "being-time"; he has also been the subject of comparative studies, notably with Heidegger. The philosophers of the Kyoto school—Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎, Tanabe Hajime 田辺 元, and Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治—have also inspired numerous discussions and comparative studies. Kyoto-school related studies and translations for a readership outside Japan include the work of D. A. Dilworth, Kevin Doak, Andrew Feenberg, Gereon Kopf, James Heisig, Christopher Ives, Agustín Jacinto Zavala, Thomas Kasulis, Lin Chen-Kuo, John Maraldo, Steve Odin, Taitetsu Unno, Jan Van Bragt, Michiko Yusa, Hans Waldenfels, Dale Wright, and others.

One recent trend, both in Japan and elsewhere, has been analysis of modern ideological uses of Buddhist thought, especially by Zen and the Kyoto school, to shape discourses of reverse orientalism, Japanese nationalism, and militarism (FAURE 1993, pp. 52–88; SHARF 1993; HEISIG and MARALDO 1995). In a more polemical vein, the intellectual movement known as "Critical Buddhism" (*hihan Bukkyō* 批判仏教) has argued that the influential doctrine of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覚; some prefer "original awakening"), celebrated by some scholars as the "climax" of Japanese Buddhism as philosophy, in fact

constitutes an oppressive ideology whose claim that “all things are enlightened just as they are” has served to legitimate social inequality and even militant imperialism.¹¹

Popular debates stimulated by Critical Buddhism have also been paralleled by new scholarly research on the *hongaku* doctrine in its medieval Tendai contexts, based on close textual and historical study. Following in the pioneering footsteps of Shimaji Daitō, Hazama Jikō 裕 慈弘, Ōkubo Ryōjun 大久保良順, and Tamura Yoshirō 田村芳朗, several booklength essay collections and monographs have recently appeared (ASAI 1991; HABITO 1996; ŌKUBO 1998; STONE 1999a), as well as significant essays by HANANO (e.g., 1979, 1992) and SUEKI Fumihiko (e.g., 1987 and 1993). Collectively, such research can be expected to yield a more detailed and accurate picture of the nature of this influential doctrine; its relationship to practice, ritual, and institutions; and its broader impact on medieval Japanese thought and culture.

Continuities and differences between original enlightenment doctrine and esoteric Buddhist teachings, especially those of Tendai esotericism or Taimitsu 台密, need to be further investigated. Particular attention should be paid to how *hongaku* ideas were understood in their medieval context. As William Bodiford notes in his essay in this *Guide*, “original enlightenment thought” is a modern interpretive rubric, one whose heuristic nature is often overlooked, and the term tends to be bandied about in an excessively broad and reified fashion. Medieval texts do not necessarily agree in their interpretations of *hongaku* ideas, which are sometimes hard to distinguish from esoteric Buddhist thought or even more general Mahāyāna concepts of nonduality. Nor is there a distinct bibliographic category that can be designated as *hongaku* writings. “Original enlightenment thought” is a useful category in studying specific intellectual developments within medieval Tendai, but its utility as a broader interpretive model remains to be assessed.

Increased attention to Heian Buddhist doctrinal developments should also be noted. New research has explored, for example, the Tendai system of religious examination and debate (GRONER 2002); *mikkyō*, especially Taimitsu, thought and practice (MISAKI 1988; ŌKUBO 2004); and the influence upon Tendai thinkers of the *Ta-sheng ch'i-hsin lun* 大乘起信論 (Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith; see TAKE 1988). Challenging longstanding opinion that the Kamakura period represents the formative moment in Japanese Buddhist history, SUEKI Fumihiko has argued that, from the standpoint of the history of thought (*shisōshi* 思想史), the major ideas distinctive of Japanese Buddhism emerged in the early Heian period. His own study (1995) of Annen 安然 (841–?) discusses the origin and development of key concepts such as the Buddhahood of grasses and trees (*sōmoku jōbutsu* 草木成佛) and the realization of Buddhahood in this very body (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成佛).

Despite the sustained attention devoted to the thought of a few sectarian founders, Zen teachers, and Buddhist philosophers, vast areas in Japanese Buddhist intellectual history remain to be explored. Texts of unknown, questionable, or spurious authorship, or of traditions without a strong contemporary presence, have attracted less attention than

11. For an introduction to Critical Buddhism, see HUBBARD and SWANSON 1997; see also STONE 1999b.

the works of famous figures associated with major schools and sects. Medieval debate literature and transmission records, for example, have barely begun to be tapped. Japanese Hossō or Yogācara thought is another vast area calling out for scholarly investigation.

SOME CONCERNS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A great many topics and issues in the field of Japanese Buddhism remain to be investigated. Several specific areas in need of further research have been noted in passing in this and other related essays in this volume. Rather than attempting an exhaustive list, this concluding section will raise only a few broad issues of concern.

First, we lack reliable booklength overviews or introductory works on Japanese Buddhism in English, suited to the non-specialist reader, for college and university teaching. The standbys on which we have relied so long (e.g., MATSUNAGA 1974–1976), as well as more recently available translations (TAMURA 2001) rest on older scholarly models and must now be used with care. More excellent translations of primary texts are also needed. While neither textbook writing nor translation does much to further academic careers, both remain areas of urgent need.

Another concern has to do with tensions between the methods of social history and the history of thought. Half a century ago, Buddhist studies—including the study of Japanese Buddhism—centered on textual and doctrinal research. The pendulum has now swung, however, and scholarship is becoming more historically grounded. Buddhism is no longer seen chiefly as a matter of abstract “thought” or as a quest for transcendent enlightenment, but as inextricably embedded in the political, ideological, and cultural specifics of Japanese society.

On one hand, this move has been salutary, and one would like to see it developed still further; “on the ground” studies of what Buddhist institutions, ritual practices, and ideas meant in the lives of actual people, both monastics and laity, are in short supply for almost every historical period. On the other hand, the shift toward social history has involved costs as well as gains. Especially when coupled with the pressures of shortened graduate programs, it often means (at least in North America) that graduate students complete their Ph.D. without acquiring the broad familiarity with Buddhist texts and doctrine that the last generation of specialists deemed essential. Some worry that the study of Japanese Buddhist thought may be irretrievably losing ground. One hopes, not only for the survival and prosperity of Japanese Buddhist thought as an academic subfield, but for studies that will bridge the two approaches, shedding light on the interrelation of doctrine and social practice.

As the field develops, it will become increasingly important to recognize that we can no longer consider Japan in isolation. A third desideratum would be for more studies considering Japanese Buddhism within the larger context of East Asia or even Asia more generally, juxtaposing specific Japanese developments with comparable ones in China, Korea, and—especially in relation to esoteric Buddhism—Tibet.

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