

is so far actually adequately understood in the West – and *even* among Buddhologists. Thus the volume’s implicit correction against Shin influence seems to put the cart a considerable ways before the horse. In any case the authors would have done better to deal with this major issue openly.

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Monika Schrimpf

Zur Begegnung des japanischen Buddhismus mit dem Christentum in der Meiji-Zeit (1868-1912).

Wiesbaden: Harassowitz Verlag 2000.

As one who has had the privilege of studying the dramatic interactions between Buddhism and Christianity in the latter half of the nineteenth century (*Buddhism and Christianity in Japan*, University of Hawaii Press 1987), I enjoyed reading Monika Schrimpf’s analysis of Buddhist encounters with Christianity in the Meiji period. Our books inevitably cover much of the same history and to a great extent use the same material. However, since her concern is primarily to investigate the religious encounter as part of a Buddhist “Geistesgeschichte,” with particular emphasis on the causes, motives and contents of the Buddhist attitudes to Christianity, she is able to leave space for a more detailed presentation of institutions, movements, and literature on the Buddhist side.

The structure of the book is divided in four: A brief introduction describes central aspects of anti-Christian attitudes of Buddhists in the Tokugawa period. The second chapter deals with the Buddhist criticism of Christianity in the first part of the Meiji period (until the early 1890s), with emphasis on the rejection of Christianity as incompatible with patriotic values as well as with modern science and philosophy. The third chapter analyses the rapprochement between Buddhists and Christians in the later Meiji period, with emphasis on the Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893); the Japanese Religious Conference in 1896, and the series of inter-religious organizations and conferences that followed; and the various Buddhist movements to establish a “New Buddhism” in the same period.

The book is well-written and balanced in its evaluations, and certainly adds to the understanding of Buddhist apologetics and reform movements in the period, and in that way broadens the understanding of changes in attitudes to Christianity.

The strength of the book, its focus on the Buddhist side of the relationship, however, is perhaps also the reason for some of its weaknesses. I will limit myself to a few points. Christianity and its role for the development of Buddhism are of course present in Schrimpf’s book, but the focus on Buddhism seems to weaken the understanding of the enormous impact Christianity made on Meiji Buddhism, not only as a challenge creating anxiety, aggression, and reactionary apologetics, but also in terms of reform, renewal, and new energy. Christianity came as a vigorous religion regarding itself as the spiritual backbone of the West, representing

civilization, enlightenment, and progress, and encountered a Buddhism that was in such a serious crisis that the missionaries – along with the Japanese intellectual and political elites – ignored it as a potential spiritual force, at least initially. Paradoxically enough, the beginning of Buddhist renewal was not the reform movements in the later Meiji, but rather the desperate reactions in the early Meiji, when Buddhism tried to fortify itself against the threat of Christianity, establishing educational institutions for Buddhist studies *and* Western and Christian studies, and realizing the need for radical reforms. The anti-Christian activity and apologetics somehow prepared Buddhists for more friendly relationships, just as Christians' apologetic study of Buddhism prepared Christians for new attitudes and relationships. In brief, the Buddhist investigation of Western traditions and its attempts to come to terms with modernity were to a great extent an expression of its encounter with Christianity.

Another result of Schrimpf's focus on the Buddhist "Geistesgeschichte" seems to be a limitation of the scope to a few aspects of the attitudes to Christianity, primarily the anti-Christian writings in early Meiji, and the conferences and reform movements in later Meiji. In that way some of the dynamism of the wider context in the period does not seem to receive sufficient attention, such as the international relationships (treaties, Westernization, Japanese explorations of Western learning), political unrest, Japanese military aggression (wars with China and Russia), social changes, and ideological challenges.

Let me add a minor complaint. I have always wondered why historians still use such artificial periodization as Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa, etc. The Meiji restoration (1868) was admittedly an important transition, but the vital changes in Buddhist relationships to Christianity was primarily influenced by other types of transitions, as Schrimpf's own study shows.

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Why Are the Japanese Non-Religious? Japanese Spirituality: Being Non-Religious in a Religious Culture.

Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005. 90 pp. (Originally *Nihonjin naze mushūkyō na no ka*. Tokyo: Chikuma shoten, 1996)

Toshimaru Ama is a well-known scholar of religion, and this 2005 English translation is a rendition of a Japanese language best-seller from 1996. Publishing in Japan, like American publishing, contains quantities of spirituality books for a general readership, and writings like Ama's perhaps represent in their own context roughly something like what the journalist William Moyers represents in the United States, i.e. middlebrow, liberal discussion of religion for broad audiences.

A big difference of course is the societies under examination. Ama is addressing a long-established issue which marks Japan: what does it mean that the Japanese