

Bryan Cuevas's article deals with death in Tibetan Buddhist popular literature by working from the biography of an ordinary seventeenth-century laywoman, Karma Wangzin, who journeyed to hell and back again. John Holt's article "The Dead Among the Living in Contemporary Buddhist Sri Lanka" discusses the activities of a village lay priestess who helps the living communicate with the recently deceased; he argues this type of Sinhala lay religiosity is not new but has ancient roots. Matthew Kapstein's study of Mulian and Gesar examines how the Chinese tale of the Buddha's disciple Mulian (Maudgalyāyana), who descended to hell to save his mother, was rendered into a Tibetan context and associated with the culture hero Gesar. Although no Chinese-style "ghost festival" was ever practiced in Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism still contained a great deal of filial piety which influenced the mythos of Gesar.

A final cluster of articles deals with the biological end of life. Since the dead and their disposal are a physical process in a society, Buddhism has been greatly concerned with the practical matters of funerary and mortuary rites. Hank Glassman's article on "Chinese Buddhist Death Ritual and the Transformation of Japanese Kinship" argues that Heian Buddhist funerary and mortuary practices evidence a shift to the patriarchally-oriented family grave and memorial system which dominated later Japanese society. Mark Rowe's article on "Scattering Ashes in Contemporary Japan" surveys the current movement away from the traditional Buddhist monopoly on family-oriented death ritual which is being expressed in innovative practices of scattering ashes or creating voluntary burial societies. Jason Carbine's article on "A Monk's Final Journey" describes how the death of the twentieth-century Burmese monk Bhaddanta Indācāra in 1993 has become an exemplary reference event for the care of the monastic dead in that Theravāda tradition today.

In summary, this volume presents research of the highest class by a set of the best scholars working in English in Buddhist studies. The editing is excellent; and besides supplying extensive bibliography for each article, the book includes Chinese and Japanese character glossaries and an index. Scholars of both Buddhism in general and of regional/national practices will need to turn to this collection for its up-to-date findings about the variety and importance of this fatally essential dimension of the religion.

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Nam-lin Hur

Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System.

Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, 550 pages.

Every student of Japan knows that during the Tokugawa period every resident of Japan was required to become a member of some Buddhist temple as part of a national *bakufu* policy. In spite of the apparent importance of this phenomenon, it has not been given much detailed or critical attention by foreign scholars, which

is in accordance with a relatively weak interest in Tokugawa Buddhism outside of Japan. However, a synthetic understanding of the Tokugawa system is not easily accessible. As the author Nam-lin Hur notes with accuracy (p. 29), there are great accumulations of research work on the Tokugawa *danka* system in Japanese, but “it is extremely hard to combine them into a coherent whole because they are heavily compartmentalized, fragmented, narrowly specialized along disciplinary lines, and/or scattered throughout innumerable local case studies.” This lengthy new work brings out a wealth of information hitherto not available in English and greatly advances awareness of the subject. At the same time, some serious questions have to be raised about the book’s viewpoint. First, however, Hur’s story deserves a good summary. The work is composed of an introduction, fourteen chapters, and a conclusion, in all covering a wide variety of topics.

The introduction poses the central question: in Tokugawa Japan “officialized” Buddhist temples were everywhere, because of a huge expansion in the numbers of temples in the early decades of the seventeenth century, yet they were not supported by any direct economic policies and expenditures of the Tokugawa regime. Why and how did this situation develop? The answer is the *danka* system, the obligatory link between temples and death practices which was established by the Tokugawa regime’s universal requirement of membership in a Buddhist temple for all individuals. What this linkage really represented was preexisting customary religious affiliation (at least at some places in Japan) which was opportunistically turned into a universal anti-Christian policy by the *bakufu*. In the end, the author claims, it had the effect of “subjugating” the whole population to Buddhism.

Chapter 1 surveys the origin of the *danka* system against the background of trade, anti-Christianity and Buddhism in the years 1600-1632. As the anti-Christian crackdown progressed, from about the year 1614 it became the local, *ad hoc* practice for policing authorities to use proofs of affiliation with a local Buddhist temple as a way for residents to avoid being identified as Kirishitan and persecuted by the samurai. (p. 49) At the early stage, there was no sign that this restricted device would turn into a countrywide strategy; in fact the *bakufu* had no apparent interest in doing anything at all that would strengthen Buddhist institutions. However, after the so-called Purple Robe Incident of 1627-1629, the *bakufu* pivoted and began to order Buddhist temple networks to reorganize in a head-and-branch (*honmatsu*) system, and from 1631 the various head temples were supposed to submit registers of their members to the government.

Chapter 2 surveys how the *ad hoc* police interests in local Buddhist affiliations in the early part of the seventeenth century turned into “Buddhist inspection” between 1633 and 1651 after the start of the Iemitsu administration. Iemitsu’s policy was to ratchet up the pressure and terrorism against Kirishitan, and from about 1634, in Nagasaki, his officials began to use temple membership more and more systematically to try to track down Christian elements; other southern domains began to follow suit in using this method. (Nevertheless, for decades there were many areas quite lacking any Buddhist temples with which local people could affiliate in accordance with this rule.) Then, however, the Shimabara Rebellion of 1637-1638 utterly radicalized the *bakufu* regime

against the Kirishitan. From 1638 the regime made national an informers' program against Kirishitan (to be paid for by with *bakufu* funds, quite irregular in the Tokugawa system) and from this point began to expect – in theory – the implementation of universal annual temple certification across Japan with a standard format. Even then though there was little immediate activation. Some Buddhist monks around this time – among them Suzuki Shōsan and Sessō Sosai – operating in certain areas such as Nagasaki combined Buddhist preaching with anti-Kirishitan messages, yet the *bakufu* still did not develop any confidence that the Buddhists' interests really coincided with those of the *bakufu*. Only a bit later, during the 1640s, Inoue Masashige (1585-1661), an official involved in the anti-Kirishitan campaign who had been appointed to a new *bakufu* post in 1640 (later Inspector of Religions, *shūmon aratame-yaku*), came to the consistent conclusion that the practice of surveillance via temple certification was the best practical policing option to suppress the stubborn Kirishitan.

Chapter 3 then describes how the surveillance system was implemented and extended between 1651 and 1709, beginning with the regime of Ietsuna. Faced with continuing evidence of diehard Kirishitan persistence, the regime further increased its administrative and legal efforts to detect them, including a nationwide network of religious superintendents (*shūmon bugyō*) whose key assignment was the pursuit of Christian followers. (Again, Hur emphasizes that this kind of direct *bakufu* intervention into local government matters was highly irregular in the system and was based in overriding motivations of national security.) As it turned out, the new government policy of universal required membership was like a mass of windfall contracts for Buddhist temples and provided the institutions with huge, new, mostly unearned economic opportunities. In some places, the advent of this unprecedented requirement for people to be affiliated with temples gave Buddhist priests a chance to coerce locals in regard to membership. Otherwise, Buddhist sects sometimes competed sharply with each other to sign up members voluntarily. There were problem cases; the *bakufu* itself recognized certain abuses as early as the 1660s. In three particular domains (Mito, Okayama, Aizu), the daimyo greatly disliked the windfall advantages and authority which the Tokugawa policy had inadvertently given to the temples in their domains, and in response Mito introduced its own heavy-handed temple control policies and Okayama tried to replace temple certification with a kind of substitute Shinto shrine certification.

The whole certification project was characterized by a fundamental time lag. By the 1660s Kirishitan had already been almost completely successfully wiped out in fact, but bureaucratic inertia guaranteed that impetus for the temple registration system would continue past the date when its original usefulness had essentially vanished. The bureaucratic directives morphed into the system of annual temple registration record books which were supposed to be regularly submitted to the central government.

The registration system mirrored the incongruities of Tokugawa politics in general. In areas where it was understood there was no Kirishitan threat, government officials began to receive the records *pro forma*, without any interest in their contents, and to discard them after three or four years (!). In other cases, the records were sent

to the top administrative levels inconsistently. The execution of the recordkeeping was not fully standardized, with discrepancies in practices, gaps in geographic and chronological coverage, and varying choice of details selected for reporting. And in general the authority of the *bakufu* to require anything became weaker as the Tokugawa period wore on.

Chapter 4 investigates the social mode of the *danka* system. There were some cases where Buddhist priests are known to have blackmailed members on the basis of the Kirishitan threat (historian Tamamuro Fumio has stressed these cases with glee), but in principle the shogunate wanted temple membership to be freely chosen by individuals and families, and that even after it was constructed, the system remained a process of compromise and adaptation (“the *danka* system was never a monolithic or unilateral institution” (p. 108)). Unquestionably the provision of funerary and memorial services – to almost all daimyo and samurai as well – was key to the Buddhist economy. Households of all sizes, even “households” consisting of single individuals, were incorporated. However, at a case-by-case or local level any attempt at systematic explanation of membership patterns confronts numerous irregularities. The patterning was messy because, strangely enough, samurai governments never actually intended to use the *danka* system as a comprehensive means of public administration (which would have suggested for example routinely forcing all members of a given village X into the same Buddhist organization for consistency), but instead they allowed – as a matter of principle – individual *danna* households to make their own free choices. In some regions, governments also recognized plural *danna* affiliations within the same household unit, though there was a tendency to rationalize this as the Tokugawa period progressed.

Chapter 5 describes Buddhist mortuary rituals, which enabled coping with the three typical death problems: animistic persistence of the spirit of the ancestor, disposal of the body, and restoration of the social equilibrium. Broadly, across Japan, mortuary rites displayed a similar four-stage structure: an initial rite of trying to call back the departed soul; a rite of appeasing the soul and fending off its danger in the period before the funeral; the funeral, which was the send-off of the spirit to its next abode, followed by some disposal of the physical body; and postmortem intercessory rites over a period of time to safely convert the deceased into an ancestral deity. However, Hur is also careful to note the existence of local variations, and the fact that such rituals could be “diffuse, redundant, overlapping, and self-contradictory.” (p. 143) However, the assumption that Buddhism was responsible for such rites went all but unquestioned in Tokugawa Japan, even in the three domains with peculiarly strong Confucian influence. In 1684 the bakufu introduced some regulations about mourning and abstinence which were supposed to apply generally, but it is agreed that this was no more than a formal cover for existing local customs.

Chapter 6 is specially devoted to memorial services, which paid a major role in the ritual practices around death, and Chapter 7 describes the annual cycle of veneration of ancestral deities. Despite the pervasiveness of Pure Land Buddhist imagery and rhetoric during the Tokugawa period, most Tokugawa people retained an archaic animistic sense of the continuing presence of ancestral spirits somewhere

nearby, along the lines which have been explicated by *minzokugaku* scholarship in the Yamagita Kunio tradition.

Chapter 8 concerns the relation of funerary Buddhism and the social institution of the *ie*. The *danka* system in Japan was constructed at a time when Japanese society was shifting from more collectivist clan structures to more nuclear households, and with this shift came an increasing focus on individual family responsibility for the family's deceased as well as emphasis on the personal commemoration of each individual member. The establishment of the majority of Buddhist temples between the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was based directly on this underlying social evolution, expressed also in the multiplication of family gravestones beginning in the late seventeenth century.

However, along with the increase in nuclear families, also pervasive in Tokugawa society was the trend to consolidation of people in *ie* household formations (ad hoc corporate organizations, like mini-companies) which could contain many residents and participants who were not related by blood. These households were held together not only by a strong network of customs and legal conventions (e.g. property ownership, a kind of *mibun* (legal position in the system), recognized house-names) but also by a notion of "household ancestors" maintained by death and memorial rituals. Once an *ie* was established, there was legal, economic, political and religious pressure for members to feel responsibility for its continuation, to the point that occasionally incompetent leadership figures would even be forcibly replaced by consensus of the membership. Such households were frequently organized around common participation in a specific Buddhist sect such as Jōdo shinshū. However, the "ancestral" – but non-consanguineous – responsibility-consciousness of the Japanese *ie* was sharply distinguished from the consanguineous patrilineal principles of Chinese and Korean family networks.

Chapter 9 deals with relations among patrons, the handling of death, and funerary temples. The *danna* system required members to pay annual dues, called *tsuketodoke*, which amounted to an extra form of taxation. Some Confucian officials in the later Tokugawa period greatly disliked the system because they saw it as draining off financial resources which the daimyo governments should be gathering instead. Occasionally, legal tangles arose when people attempted to move memberships from one *danka* temple to another. The tangles reflected the fact that the system was a negotiated compromise among three interest groups – Buddhist institutions, *danna* members, and governments – with no decisive central control.

Some weight must be given to a forged document called the *Tōshōgū* decree, created probably in the early eighteenth century (after the Kirishitan episode was essentially past history), which was used in all temples of all Buddhist sects, especially the Shinshū, to (supposedly) manipulate the members into obedience by constantly reminding members of their government duty to be anti-Christian and anti-Fujufuse-ha (the Nichiren sect which refused taxation). This duty was to be proven through temple participation, especially by paying the temple for funerals and memorials and being obedient to the priest. The decree was often also used as "indoctrination" in *terakoya*.

Nevertheless there is lots of evidence that member *danka* found ways to fight back against temples or local priests when those were perceived as abusive. In particular, the law recognized temple property as the collective ownership of the *danka*, not the priest; and *danka* normally participated in the selection of new head priests for the local temple. Funeral fees were based on consensus agreements between priests and members and do not seem to have been routinely regarded as exorbitant, although people could choose high spending if they wished to buy increased social status via the display of expensive death services. The shogunate recognized in principle that temple affiliation should be changeable for individuals, though it tried to make the procedure hard to do in practice, especially after the 1720s, because it preferred pragmatic administrative stability above all. Actually, shogunate efforts to tamp down change in the later Tokugawa period were being intensified because of, and in proportion to, the increasing fluidity and complexity in the society.

Chapter 10 concerns relations among *danna* temples, the government and the rise of later Tokugawa anti-Buddhist criticism. There was clearly competition for funeral business between the established temple networks approved by the government and the various alternate itinerant networks of non-official religionists, i.e. *shugenja* or other marginals (“obscure practitioners, itinerant religious vagabonds, and quasi-religious riffraff,” p. 246). The government from the sixteenth century onwards tried, though with limited success, to control the riffraff at the same time that it tried to bureaucratize the established system. However from the late seventeenth century onwards the shogunal government became more interested in constraining all kinds of Buddhism rather than in using and protecting it as before. Buddhist temple operations came under more sumptuary regulations; the shogunate also sought to obtain the support of sects in policies of trying to keep financial burdens on *danna* reasonable. In this period shogunate attempts to restrict new Buddhist temple construction seem to have had complex motives that were not rooted in hostility to Buddhism *per se*, but rather to the shogunate’s worries about burdens on *danna* and competition for resources. In most cases the *bakufu* did not have the funds itself to seek prestige by providing funds for temple building, so an alternative was simply to restrain the Buddhist non-governmental sector which might embarrass the government by its success in fundraising. However, the shogunate was often pressured to agree to religious fundraising for construction anyway, arousing the despair of certain domain officials who basically regarded the Buddhist priests as a bunch of con men. Many Buddhist temples in their search for funds undertook other business ventures including moneylending, and ended up in possession of more and more nontaxable land, another phenomenon hated by domain officials. As Hur notes, samurai officials throughout the Tokugawa period liked to blame Buddhist temples for the government’s own inability to achieve control over its economic strategies. By the end of the eighteenth century, the government appeared unable to slow the growth and prosperity of Buddhist economic activities. At this stage any earlier anti-Buddhist rhetoric had become obviously no more than rhetoric, and even Confucianists admitted that the administration of the system had completely fallen into the hands of the Buddhists themselves.

Chapter 11 again picks up the theme of funerals, public authority and social control. Hur sees the *danna* system as a kind of proactive social engineering, but recognizes the difficulty in securing government control of something as private as family death. In any case, towards the end of the Tokugawa period *bakufu* officials, as part of their general sense of social crisis – especially perhaps their feeling of the erosion of the status system – criticized Buddhist practices more persistently. Doing what little remained within their power, officials made additional attempts to control funerals and to enact sumptuary legislation. The motive was that lavish public Buddhist funerals appeared more and more to be an indirect attack on the official status system by allowing lower status Japanese to assert prestige.

Chapter 12 on filial piety, feudal ethics and wandering spirits takes up how in the *bakumatsu* stage officials promoted enhanced Confucian propaganda as part of their last campaign to try to restore their samurai sense of order. But as Hur reveals, in Japan, Confucian filial piety, when connected with death, had to be promoted within the framework of the Buddhist ritual system, and furthermore so-called filial piety had become a property of households whose members were not all genetically related! In the Pure Land and Shin Buddhist institutions, collections of *Ōjō-den* and *Myōkōnin-den* stories joined the official filial piety bandwagon. Shin Buddhism at this time offered a strong mainstream social ethic, with lots of language about filial piety and social discipline, which Hur at one point explains as the complete incorporation of Shin Buddhism into “feudal ethics.” However, he also states that the populace certainly did not conform blindly to the *bakufu*’s social expectations: “...it would be ludicrous to construe people’s practice of filial piety and ancestor veneration as a matter of their intent to strengthen the Confucian social order of the Tokugawa system; rather, they practice these things in order to achieve autonomy, dignity, self-reliance, and, above all, the survival of their households.” (p. 308)

Finally, the last two chapters concern the efforts of certain Shinto priests and ideologues in the *bakumatsu* period to create a form of Shinto funeral practice which could compete with the Buddhist institutions. However, after various fits and starts which Hur presents in detail, it eventually became clear during the Meiji period that this reform would be impossible.

As noted above, the book is a gold mine of information and references, and the study does a tremendous service by bringing into English a hoard of scattered and untranslated data about Tokugawa Buddhism. A central point, which Hur demonstrates convincingly, is that the local temple registration system was almost purely aimed at Christianity and otherwise reflected practically no interest by the *bakufu* in controlling Buddhism *qua religion* at the local level. The system was actually best understood as a side effect of an outside political threat: sixteenth and seventeenth century European colonial expansion and globalization.

However, there are questions to raise about the analysis. Put in one sentence, the evidence provided in Hur’s own account does not quite accord with any simple insistence on either subjugation and authoritarianism by the *bakufu* or predation by the Buddhist temples. This reviewer felt a series of specific doubts, as follows:

- The problem of actually determining the nature of religious authority in the

Tokugawa period, which resembles that for determining authority in the Tokugawa system as a whole, is not addressed. (See e.g. the summary of this issue in the introductory chapter of Philip C. Brown, *Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan*, Stanford, 1993). Hur's approach is out of touch with the well-known argument delineated by Brown that the Tokugawa had characteristics of a "flamboyant" state with restricted central authority. Indeed, the whole study of Tokugawa Buddhism, at least in English, seems to have somewhat remained out of touch with revisionist views of Tokugawa society which have circulated in other disciplines and made our political understanding more complex.

– Overall Hur expresses a fundamental (if not quite total, and with contradictory information exhibited in various text passages) neglect or lack of appreciation for the nonsamurai people of Tokugawa Japan as persons who might have voluntary agency and who might positively choose to participate in Buddhism. The author insists that the system had little to do with the religious faith or free will of individual family members; rather it became a system almost purely of merely inherited binding affiliation. (Hur describes this at one point as "bondage." (p. 114)) Such a viewpoint is strongly unbalanced in favor of the *bakufu* and the samurai and their advisers; we are given relatively very little evidence from the other side, i.e. how Buddhists, both in central institutions and locally, felt about the *terauke* system. Such a perspective reflects marked tendencies in certain modern historians of Japanese religion such as Tamamuro Fumio and Miyata Noboru, who emphasize the coercive political side of formal Tokugawa Buddhist organization. The perspectives appear to be in part ideological, displaying an old-fashioned Marxist and Marxist-folklorist structure. That is, the Marxist side presents itself as defending the interests of "the people" but without much interest in granting "the people" powers of agency to choose; and on the folklorist (*minzoku-gaku*) side there is an assumption that the traditional Japanese population was essentially animist and not interested in (or existentially capable of being interested in) Buddhism in any serious way in any significant numbers. Arguably, these are ancient tropes, following those of Confucian critics like Kumazawa Banzan in the 1680s who were already permanently persuaded that without *danna* requirements, most Japanese people would just abandon their participation in Buddhism. The Confucian slant – whose basic message was influentially recycled by historian Tsuji Zennosuke in the twentieth century – was consistently distinguished by a resistance to recognizing any real religious commitments at work in the common people's support of Edo Buddhism. In this methodological connection finally it must be noted that while Hur is splendidly oriented to the presentation of factual information drawn from the genres of Japanese scholarship he used, he is much weaker in introducing analytical perspectives from anthropology, sociology or political science; and Buddhist studies *per se* and cross-cultural comparisons are almost completely absent.

– Thus, anti-Christian policy may be half the picture of the *danna* system, but this minimizes the other half: that the seventeenth century in Japan saw a great economic and cultural boom which encouraged people from all over the country to wish to add Buddhist traditions to their lives in new ways by patronizing temples for the first time.

To have a *bodai-ji* (regardless of a family's other degrees of interest in Buddhism) was an indicator of prestige and an approximation to the aristocratic/samurai culture of the elites. As Hur himself emphasizes, this was accompanied in the long run by shifts in Japanese family structure, including those from diffuse medieval clan networks to nuclear family households.

– Hur's own discussions of later Tokugawa Buddhism, long after the heavy-handed anti-Christian policy had been started up, gradually introduce lots of evidence undermining the initial argument that the *danka* system (at least in the end) involved strong centralization or subjugation. The "anomalies" in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries included continuing programs of Buddhist temple construction, spotty deliver of *terauke* records (and evidence of complete disinterest by the government in the records in some cases), and limited evidence that Buddhist priests (at least in areas without Kirishitan) could coerce the *danka* to do much of anything as time went on. Evidence seems insufficient that the temple certification system (even seen in the most negative light) was more than a secondary bureaucratic hassle and a subsidiary tax imposition for the majority of non-Kirishitan Japanese. (In Hur's logic, however, since the foolish common people were decreasingly coerced by *bakufu* policy, they must have been increasingly coerced by their own cunning priests: thus the weaker the anti-Kirishitan rationale for the *danka* system became, the more the temples "reinforced their power by gripping their *danka* patrons ever more firmly." (p. 251))

– A major point is that Hur provides inadequate information about the differentiation of Buddhism in regions of Japan. What actually happened on the ground could be quite different from the unenforceable ideal visions of the national military hegemon. Brown's study of Kaga showed, for example, how internal politics in that domain were the product of a particular local collaboration between villagers and central administration. This suggests obviously that individual close *regional* studies of Buddhism and government – in Kaga for example, largest of the Tokugawa domains, and a stronghold of Shin Buddhism at the same time – would yield much more tonally diverse understandings of "Tokugawa Buddhism" than in Hur's depiction.

– Hur's presentation of the link between Japanese protomodernization and Buddhism is unpersuasive. In his narrative, an (allegedly) individually-centered medieval Buddhism gave way over the course of the Tokugawa period to a family or corporate religion whose function was to further the survival of the family or *ie* rather than to promote the salvation of individual family members. Yet this seems to be an argument that Buddhism was getting more shallowly corporate and less individually meaningful at the same time that nuclear families, religious participation, overall wealth, economic development, social complexity, and literacy in Japanese society were all substantially increasing. If this were true, it would make Japan's early modern experience the exact opposite of Europe's.

– Finally, Hur subordinates evidence for the popularity of Jōdo shinshū, the largest Tokugawa Buddhist tradition. Apparently evidence from Shin just does not well fit the ideology of his argument (not to mention similar evidence for the popularity of other kinds of Buddhism as well). Jōdo shinshū entered the seventeenth century

from a sixteenth century popular history featuring the *ikkō-ikki*, and while *terauke* may have watered down the tradition somewhat, it hardly eliminated all the genuine commitment associated with this school. An interesting ideological paradox in the case of Shinshū is that orthodox Shin from the late sixteenth century onwards had been consistently cooperative with the government. This touches on the unresolved matter of what Shin politics in the late Edo period really were; suffice it to say that circa 1800 feudal-Confucian propaganda was being ramped up rhetorically at the same time that the *mibun* system was breaking down in economic and social reality – and the Shin tradition was openly flourishing. Under these circumstances who was coopting whom?

Let it also be noted that Hur refers to Shin ministers erroneously as monks, apparently on the basis of the literal reading of the character *sō* 僧. This common misuse (even among scholars) obscures the noncelibate status which was a fundamental point of sectarian and social difference in the Shin school (and which in this case strangely violates Hur's own definition of monks as "a community of religious renunciants" p. 378).

In summary, then, some central presuppositions of this book have to be recognized and treated very critically. Yet, in spite of these significant cautions, the book can be regarded as a major achievement which should serve as a great stimulus for more research into Tokugawa Buddhism by non-Japanese scholars – though such research will possibly yield different and varied interpretations of the subject with different sorts of balances.¹

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Menschenopfer und Selbstopfer in den japanischen Legenden: Das Frankfurter Manuskript der Mutsura Sayohime-Legende.

Münster: LIT-Verlag (Religiöse Gegenwart Asiens/ Studies in Modern Asian Religions Vol. 4), 2004, 388 pages.

Menschenopfer und Selbstopfer in den japanischen Legenden (Human Sacrifice and Self-sacrifice in Japanese Legends) examines the motif of ritual human sacrifice in Japanese legends. As her primary example, Katja Triplett, Associate Professor at the department of the Study of Religions of Marburg University and curator of the Museum of Religions in the same university, has translated into German and analyzed the Mutsura Sayohime legend, utilizing a version from the seventeenth century which is preserved at the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Frankfurt.

1. Special notice should be given to an example of meticulous research on local documents by Alexander M. Vesey, "The Buddhist Clergy and Village Society in Early Modern Japan" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton 2003) which focuses in an original manner on the operation of the *mibun* system in Musashi.