

Book Reviews

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Buddhist Hagiography in Early Japan: Images of Compassion in the Gyōki Tradition.

Studies in East Asian Religions. London and New York: Routledge Curzon 2005, 173 pp.

This publication is the first book-length English study of the monk Gyōki (668-749). Gyōki was one of the important monks of the Nara period (710-784). According to the sources introduced and translated in this book, Gyōki received only the initial ordination as a *shami*, and he was active mainly outside the official monastic institutions. After a time of ascetic practices in the mountains, he engaged in charitable works, such as digging wells, building bridges, road-side shelters (*fuseya*) and practice halls (*dōjō*), and preaching the dharma among the people. He did this at the beginning of the Nara period, when the court for the first time in Japanese history attempted to unify and centralize the country by establishing Nara as the capital according to the Chinese model. In order to accomplish this huge project, the court drew heavy taxes from the population and forced men to work for this project two months per year. Since at that time the infrastructure was not yet developed sufficiently, the transport of the supply to the capital took a heavy toll on the people, and many died on their way home. Beginning in 711, many of the corvée laborers also began to escape from their duties in Nara. It is in this social, economic and political context that Gyōki tried to alleviate the burden of the people by his charitable works of constructing bridges and road-side shelters. However, since the court had issued a law for monks and nuns prohibiting any activity outside the monasteries and temples, Gyōki broke this law, a violation which is recorded in the official history *Nihon shoki*. Later, though, the court changed its attitude towards Gyōki and asked him to cooperate in raising funds for casting the huge Buddha statue in the central state temple Tōdai-ji. The present study attempts to combine historical research on Gyōki with an analysis of his hagiographies from the Nara period up to the 14th century.

In Chapter 1, titled “The received biography of Gyōki,” the author examines the development of traditional Gyōki hagiographies as well as recent academic studies. First, he states that Gyōki’s high reputation was already established in the Nara period because “he was one of the six monks whose biography was included in the Nara official history (*Shoku nihongi*),” (p. 13) In comparison with the other monks, however, during most of his life, Gyōki was not officially related to a monastic institution or the court, and thus he had no official rank or title until rather late

when he was appointed as a “senior primary prelate” (*daisōjō*). (Ibid.) Next, on the basis of the early (Nara period) accounts of Gyōki’s life and activities, the *Shoku nihongi* and the *Daisōjō sharibyōki* (Gravestone Memorial of the Senior Primary Prelate), the author elaborates the following “key elements”: (1) Gyōki’s Korean ancestral background, (2) his ordination and precarious status as partially ordained monk (*shami*), (3) his mountain asceticism and violation of the imperial laws for monks and nuns, (4) his charitable works (including the fund-raising campaign for Tōdai-ji), and (5) his receipt of the highest monastic title. (Ibid.) The author traces here also Gyōki’s changing evaluation by the court. Whereas an imperial edict of 717 accused Gyōki of forming unruly cliques and hence called him a “small monk” (*kosō*), an edict of 731 acknowledged him as “Dharma master” (*hōshi*) and granted his followers (above a certain age) the ordination. Finally, after his participation in the fund-raising campaign for casting the grand Buddha statue, in 743 Emperor Shōmu bestowed on him the highest clerical rank *daisōjō*. The author observes also that the *Daisōjō sharibyōki* for unknown reasons does not mention Gyōki’s involvement in this campaign.

Since, according to the *Daisōjō sharibyōki*, the people called Gyōki a bodhisattva, the author examines this title in the next chapter, “The Bodhisattva tradition and the hagiographer’s craft.” This title appears also in Gyōki’s hagiography of the *Nihon ryōiki* (ca. 822). The author further treats also the *Gyōki nenpu* (1175) (including its historical reliability) which lists all the 49 practice halls (*dōjō*) Gyōki was said to have constructed. Here, the author provides also a map and a list of their locations. (pp. 39-43)

In Chapter 3, “Gyōki and the *Sōniryō* – Violations of early monastic regulations in Japan,” the author provides translations of the legal stipulations relevant for Gyōki’s case. He also explains the *Daosengge*, the Chinese legal code according to which the *Sōniryō* was drafted, as well as the modifications undertaken by the Nara court. According to the *Sōniryō*, introduced in 701, Gyōki should have received a penalty up to laication for his activities among the people. He was probably protected from punishment by powerful local clans which had cooperated in his charitable works.

In Chapter 4, “Gyōki and the Politics of the Nara Court,” the author first treats Gyōki’s early activities in the context of the formation of the *ritsuryō* state, the “first centralized administrative structure” in Japan. (pp. 63-64) That is, the implementation of the new taxation and forced labor coincided with Gyōki’s charitable works. After the court shifted its attitude towards Gyōki, between 740 and 745 his construction works were located close to Shōmu’s temporary capitals. Finally, Gyōki cooperated together with his followers in the fund-raising campaign for Tōdai-ji.

Although Chapter 5 is titled “Gyōki’s charitable projects,” the author treats here mainly Buddhist charitable activities before and after Gyōki. First he explains that the likely source for Gyōki’s practical approach should be found in his teacher

Dōshō who during his stay in China probably had encountered the Three Stages Sect (*Sanjie jiao*), a Buddhist school engaged in charitable work. After his return to Japan, Dōshō is said to have constructed a number of bridges and ports. Next, the author introduces some monks who were engaged in charitable work later in Japanese history, such as Saichō who also built road-side shelters (*kōsai-in*).

In Chapter 6, “Gyōki and further developments in Buddhist hagiography,” the author investigates later hagiographies, such as the one contained in the *Nihon ryōiki* as well as the *Gyōki bosatsu engizu ekotoba* (1316). Here he observes that later “hagiographers chose Gyōki to represent values and ideas that did not exist during his own lifetime and how his popular image was altered over the centuries.” (p. 97) For example, his Korean ancestry was changed into Chinese since in the meantime China had gained more prestige for Japanese Buddhists. This chapter includes also a section on the discovery of Gyōki’s grave in 1234 which was triggered by renewed interest in him. In 1915 the grave was discovered a second time. Since the inscription found on a stone fragment matches with a passage of the *Daisōjō sharibyōki*, scholars regard the latter as oldest and most reliable account of Gyōki’s life. (p. 115)

In the conclusion of this study, the author explains that he attempted to combine historical research on Gyōki with an analysis of his hagiographies. As he states, “the emphasis of academic studies on eminent monks has been either to discern the values and ideas that are represented in hagiographic texts or to retrace the actions and thoughts of actual historical figures. However, these projects need not to be mutually exclusive.” (p. 118, cf. p. 8) Whereas basically there is no problem to agree with this tenet, the methodological question arises of how to reach this aim. When reading this book, the constant con-fusion of historical and historiographical (or hagiographical) deliberations results rather in confusing impressions. A different organization of this study – a methodological distinction of both approaches first in the main part of the study and then a final consideration comparing, or combining, both – would have clarified the subject matter much more.

Apart from the basic problem of composition, the book contains also a number of inaccuracies. There are translation problems, such as rendering *dōjō* with “temples” (pp. 6, 10; appropriate: “practice halls” p. 7), *ōjō* with “rebirth” (p. 39; accurate: “birth into the Pure Land”), or *kōsō-den* with “biographies of lofty monks” (pp. 31, etc.; standard: “eminent monks” p. 118). There are conceptual problems, when the author, for example, uses the terms “biography” and “hagiography” interchangeably. There are historical mistakes, for example, when Yoshishige no Yasutane is explained to have been a monk when compiling the *Nihon ōjō gokuraku-ki* (p. 9; at that time he still was a courtier), when this work is characterized as having “a clear sectarian bias” (p. 38; clear-cut sectarianism emerged only in the late Insei and early Kamakura periods), or when the application of the bodhisattva title is declared a “rather short-lived” phenomenon of the Nara and Heian periods (p.

29; e.g. Ōbaku-shū's Tetsugen received this title in the Edo period). There are also a number of cases of sloppiness, e.g. when the author forgets to list Chapter 3 in his Introduction (pp. 11-12), or categorizes a commentary under sutras (p. 87) and the *Sanbōe-kotoba* under hagiographic texts. (p. 99)

Finally, it is deplorable that the book contains not a single Sino-Japanese character, especially of the titles of primary texts and important terms. How can a publisher justify such a publication in the age of highly developed, multi-lingual word-processing software? But what is worse, the publisher charges for a book of 173 pages, the shameless price of US \$ 180 (present listing on Amazon), which makes \$ 10 for one page! Hence, regrettably this book will be beyond the budget of ordinary students and scholars, it will be available only in a few libraries.

Putting criticism aside, this book closes an important gap in Western studies of Nara Buddhism. It contains valuable translations of primary sources as well as a number of helpful maps and charts. Hopefully, it will encourage further research on other important monks of this period as well.

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Jérôme Ducor.

Terre Pure, Zen et Autorité: La Dispute de l'Ère Jōō et la Réfutation du Mémoire sur des Contradictions de la Foi par Ryōnyo du Honganji.

Paris: Collège de France Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, 2007, 159 pp.

Jérôme Ducor is the major European scholar researching Shin Buddhist history. As his website (www.pitaka.ch) describes, he is Swiss, received his doctorate in Japanese Studies from Geneva University, and specialized in Japanese Buddhism at Ryūkoku University in Kyoto. Currently he serves as Conservator at the Asian Department of the Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève. His prolific scholarly work, written mainly in French, has provided many essential contributions concerning the early development of Shin Buddhism, as well as French translations of the *Amida Sūtra* and Hōnen's *Senchaku-shū*.

In this intensively researched volume, he takes up the problem of the so-called doctrinal dispute of the Jōō era (*Jōō gekishō* 承応鬪牆 1653-1655) within the Nishi Hongan-ji branch of the Shin school. This, along with the Meiwa Era dispute (*Meiwa hōron*, ca. 1764-1770) and the famous Three Karmic Acts Controversy (*Sangō wakuran*, ca. 1762-1804) constituted the three principal episodes of doctrinal controversy in the Nishi Hongan-ji institution during the Tokugawa period, the resolution of which resulted in part in the characteristic dry doctrinal systematizations of True Pure Land doctrine which are still inherited today. Ducor's

most specific goal is to understand what became the central document of the *Jōō gekishō*, a writing called the *Ha anjin sōi no oboegaki* (Memorandum on Divergencies from a Proper Understanding of Shin “Faith”) which was issued in 1654 by Ryōnyo (1612-1662), the thirteenth hereditary head of Nishi Hongan-ji.

The first four chapters of the book provide facts which frame the document. As explained in Chapter 1, since Hongan-ji was a relatively new Buddhist tradition, its internal scholastic tradition had emerged slowly. The basic scholasticism was initiated with Shinran’s great-grandson Zonkaku and continued to some extent with the eighth head Rennyō, but it was also associated with the development, as the Hongan-ji headquarters evolved, of a group of liturgical specialists (known as *midōshu* among other terms) who gradually became charged with the intellectual side of the tradition. As the Hongan-ji worked out formal ways of transmitting its authoritative texts from generation to generation of the leadership, it also realized that its own textual study was inadequate compared to that found in other types of Japanese Buddhism.

Thus, as elucidated in Chapter 2, this realization led the foundation of the first Shin seminary (*gakuryō*) in 1639 at Hongan-ji headquarters by Ryōnyo, who seems to have been especially aware of the need for formal pedagogy. The school consisted of a lecture hall and dormitory suitable for about sixty students. An office of head instructor (*nōke*) was established and a tradition of summer study retreats (*ango*) was begun. The best of the teachers and students were extremely well-studied and widely informed in Buddhist teachings. The term of the second *nōke*, Saigin (lived 1605-1663, began as *nōke* in 1647) was marked by an increased formalization and regulation of practices which reflected the overall ethos of systematization of Buddhism which was taking place in the seventeenth century.

The *Jōō gekishō* dispute, narrated in Chapter 3, began in 1653 when one of Saigin’s leading students, Gekkan, undertook to challenge some of his teacher’s behavior and ideas by setting out a written document of accusation. As Ducor notes, the document’s arguments were a bit confused, but along with some complaints about Saigin’s leadership, the most interesting point was the claim that Saigin was using forms of expression based on Zen and the Zen language of “true self” in his instruction about Shin Buddhism and thus seriously misleading his students. Saigin defended himself with his own written counter-statement; the hereditary head Ryōnyo tried to calm the situation diplomatically; unfortunately Gekkan was not appeased. Unpredictably, at this point what had been a rather small scholarly quarrel became a much bigger and qualitatively different conflict when Junshū, the head of a major subbranch of Shin called Kōshō-ji, intervened on the side of Gekkan. Junshū was apparently using the occasion opportunistically to press Kōshō-ji’s institutional interests in challenging the regnant authority of Nishi Hongan-ji over the smaller branch, a position of primacy which was being solidified as the Tokugawa regulatory system for Buddhism was becoming secured. Junshū

penned his own attack against Hongan-ji, which was answered by Ryōnyo in the *Ha anjin sōi no oboegaki*. However, of more concrete significance was that Junshū also took steps towards the radical act of separating Kōshō-ji from Hongan-ji organizationally. The institutional disagreement was so severe that it could not be resolved by the clerical parties (who were also involved in many personal and familial relationships with each other and with other Kyoto elites) so it was quickly referred to officials of the *bakufu* for evaluation and judgment. The failure of the clerics to resolve the matter on their own internally was a fundamental violation of order in the *mibun* (status) system of the regime, and the *bakufu* consequently responded with punishment. After Ryōnyo and Junshū were called in person to Edo for interrogation in 1655, Ryōnyo had to agree to having his seminary torn down, because originally he had never obtained proper permission from the *bakufu* to build it; and Gekkan and Junshū lost their temple positions.

In Chapter 4, Ducor briefly surveys the subsequent history of the Nishi Hongan-ji seminary. Saigin returned to teaching, but the conflict drove some young priests out of Shin Buddhism, including Tetsugen Dōko, who later became famous for his leadership in Obaku Zen. Seminary operations were held in temporary quarters until it was possible officially to re-found the school, now titled *gakurin*, in 1693. The *nōke* system continued until after the conclusion of the *Sangō wakuran* at the beginning of the nineteenth century. That third major dispute involved among other things disputed doctrinal authority claims pushed forward idiosyncratically by the head instructor, and as a result afterwards the system in which doctrinal power was overinvested in a single chief was replaced by a rotating committee system (*kangaku*) which continues today.

Like the *Sangō wakuran* later, the *Jōō gekishō* was a complicated event which mixed intellectual, personal, institutional, and political conflicts, and it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions from it except that the Hongan-ji institution was full of intensely engaged, ambitious participants. What is probably most widely interesting for readers is the Buddhological side of the dispute. This is where Ducor's fifth chapter comes in, which is a translation (for the first time into a Western language) of Ryōnyo's document (the text occupies six pages in volume 50 of a modern printed recension of premodern texts, the *Shinshū zensho*; the Japanese is reprinted in Ducor's volume for reference). This is followed by a sixth chapter explicating the translation.

Like other such Buddhist disputations, the argument was carried on by citation from authoritative texts and commentary on them, and was thus heavy with the characteristic language of Pure Land Buddhism. Junshū, following Gekkan, had criticized Ryōnyo on three main points: the very act of scholarship in Shin as an activity leading away from the real teaching; the Zennish, monistic or mind-only (*yuishiki*) content alleged to be promoted in Saigin's thought; and excessive ritualism at Hongan-ji.

Ryōnyo defended in his response the tradition of doing scholarship and in

addition the necessity for a degree of formalization. However, perhaps centrally, he also carefully addressed point two about the alleged Zennish language of Saigin. As anyone familiar with Shin doctrine knows, it contains both monistic and dualistic aspects, and the interpretation of the Pure Land can be one of its difficult technical points. Shinran had replaced, or at least supplemented, the ancient, conventional dualistic notion of the Pure Land as a karmically transitional “place” near Amida Buddha with a more subtle idea of the Pure Land as perfect enlightenment itself which yet retained a kind of “dualistic” spin (the Pure Land though “outside” of one’s ego-consciousness is not a physical place but a representation of perfect enlightenment). Meanwhile, as Ducor points out, straightforwardly monistic or idealist interpretations of the Pure Land (“the Pure Land is right here within your own mind”) also had a very long history of development, particularly in China. Post-Tang Buddhism tended to be a mixture of the conventional dualistic understanding and the monistic understanding, neither of these options being congruent with Shinran’s idea. At the time of the *Jōō* quarrel in the seventeenth century, Chinese Buddhism was being reintroduced to Japan via the Ming teachers who eventually inspired the Obaku Zen school. This matter was being directly addressed by Saigin when he had defended the primacy of the special “dualistic” position advocated by Shin against the versions offered by Zen. As Ducor makes clear in his commentary, Saigin was completely aware of the various ideas of the Pure Land and was refusing to isolate Shin intellectually, but at the same time was holding on to Shin’s characteristic position nonetheless.

Ducor does not explore the matter deeply, but why was so much perceived to be at stake Buddhologically in the disputes? Why argue vehemently about the choices of language? Was it just about sectarian identity? This is not the place for a full discussion, but two points might be noted. First, while the construction of institutional/sectarian identity in the most obvious sense was presumably present, a serious apprehension of *tariki* language and psychology were also needed to rationalize the distinctively equalized, internalized spiritual attitude fostered in the Shin social tradition. Monism as a language and attitude was linked to the conception of ritual simulation of the perfect Buddha, as in the case of Zen, and therefore monistic language was associated with monastic traditions and all that those traditions had implied in Japanese history. Second, while Shin Buddhist doctrine contained both monistic and dualistic language, it privileged the latter for practical existential purposes of religious feeling. The implication of Shin teaching was that monism was not a psychologically realistic understanding of the human mind and its irreducible defectiveness. However, Shin teachers were still able to use one kind of language or another depending on whether they meant to refer theoretically to ultimate ontology or pragmatically to the human condition; this two-dimensional rhetoric in fact made the Shin discourse *more complex* than the teaching in other kinds of Buddhism.

Of special interest to the modern eye, considering the modern tradition of social criticism and populism in Shin Buddhism, is also how the *Jōō gekishō* illuminates the existence of very long standing tensions in Shin about tendencies to formalism within the institution. Shin Buddhism, like many other religious traditions, has for a very long time struggled with the contradictions between a foundation of austere egalitarian ideals, the worldly success produced by those same ideals, and the subsequent distortions produced by success.

This is an excellent piece of work. Ducor is one of the few foreign scholars to have researched exhaustively in the original source texts of premodern Shinshū (including for his purposes in this book various manuscript items in the library of Ryūkoku University) and his data are based on deep familiarity with the material including the relevant bibliography in the various languages which are involved. The back matter also includes a glossary of the institutional offices and titles which had developed in Nishi Hongan-ji by the early seventeenth century.

The content is perhaps a bit specialized. Total understanding of the material relies on some background knowledge of matters such as orthodox Shin doctrine, the history of Hongan-ji after Rennyo, and the Tokugawa period systematization of Buddhism, which Ducor does not fill in in this book. However, any reader will be able to get the unmistakable message that Shin Buddhism in the early modern period in Japan was a large and sophisticated phenomenon which deserves as much attention as Zen.

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Steven Heine. *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow: Will The Real Zen Buddhism Please Stand Up?*

Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, 217 pp.

The latest work from Steven Heine, *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow: Will the Real Zen Buddhism Please Stand Up?* resulted from a recent combative encounter he witnessed while presiding on an East Asian ethics panel at a national academic conference. The confrontation took place between certain panelists who had presented the possibilities of traditional Zen as a viable response to ethical challenges of the contemporary world and audience members who declared the moral failings of Zen based on evidence taken from critical studies of its institutional history. These two factions (designated by Heine as “Traditional Zen Narrative” and “Historical and Cultural Criticism”) have evolved within the academy over the past twenty years and have become increasing intractable, with little effort on either side to recognize the value of their counterpart’s contributions to the field of Zen studies. Attempting to

function as a mediator in *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow*, Heine carries on his own dialogue with the two viewpoints, recognizing the absence of such a dialogue actually taking place among his contemporaries. It is impossible to predict if he will have any measurable success in reconciling the parties, or in beginning to erase the line that has been so stubbornly drawn in the sand, but at the very least this work does expose the deficiencies infecting both camps.

The core chapters of *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow* are titled, "Zen Writes," "Zen Rites," and "Zen Rights" and are held between an introduction titled "Fore Play" and an epilogue titled "The Real Zen Buddhism: Engaged, Enraged or Disengaged?" As the title of the introduction indicates, one underlying problem in the way the present debate is being carried out is in the glaring lack of critical play. Each side refuses to play with the other, or to find the play within their own, rigidly held positions, or to recognize the importance of play in the very tradition they have immersed themselves. Like Nietzsche's child, Heine takes on a playful role within the debate in order to uncover the limits of the camel's traditionalism and the lion's isolated criticism. Using word play, allusions to contemporary popular culture, and a number of creative devices to compare opposing views, he eases the tensions that feed an either-or judgment of available evidence. At the same time, his experience exploring the questions raised within the debate, most notably in previous works like *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text: Philosophy and Folklore in the Fox Kōan* (1999) and *Opening a Mountain: Kōans of the Zen Masters* (2002) is evident in his capacity to draw from a broad range of textual, historical and cultural sources, while avoiding simple solutions and recognizing the complexities of the task at hand.

In his introduction, Heine reduces the debate to three main points of contention: where traditionalists see ineffability, critical theorists find language recorded in a voluminous collection of canonical texts (*Zen Writes*), where traditionalists see non-duality, critical theorists find ritual and supernatural mediation (*Zen Rites*), and where traditionalists see harmony, original enlightenment and Buddha-nature, critical theorists find a history of discrimination and intolerance (*Zen rights*). In the chapters that follow the introduction Heine attempts to take a step back from the debate and first, examine the historical reasons why Zen studies has become so polarized, and second, develop a middle-way, dialectical methodology that will allow for constructive dialogue while preserving the integrity and contributive value of both sides. Consistently achieving the middle is no easy task, and for the most part Heine finds himself drawn primarily to the positions held by historical and cultural criticism. He breaks ranks however in avoiding the conclusion that Zen is somehow defeated or refuted by these arguments. In doing so, Heine is able to reveal the human dimensions of Zen that are often forgotten or ignored by critical theorists (and traditionalists!), who are unable to recognize that it is in this human grounding where we find both the historical failures of the tradition as well as the possibilities for Zen to reaffirm and redeem itself.

Heine chooses to base his analysis of these competing arguments on two foundational Zen texts, Paichang's *Ch'an men kuei shih*, a tenth century manual for communal living, including both Zen temple layouts and monastic rules, and the *Gozan jissatsu zu*, a collection of diagrams for Zen temple plans used in Sung China and then transmitted to Kamakura Japan in the thirteenth century. What should be recognized as foundational is a matter of methodological choice, but Heine argues that these texts are valid choices because they are taken from the earliest known records of Zen, and proved to be highly influential in how early Zen communities in both China and Japan understood the uniqueness of their sect and the ideals of how their monastic worlds should be constructed. What is indicated by these materials is that Zen was set apart from other competing systems of thought and practice by virtue of the abbot being recognized as a Buddha, thus displacing the historical Buddha and celestial Buddhas praised in the sūtras, so that the unique power of Zen practice was grounded in the direct encounters between monks and a living Buddha. The separate buildings that make up the design of the temple grounds were also arranged as a Buddha body with seven designated body parts: the gate representing the Buddha's groin, the latrines and bathhouse his legs, the Samgha Hall and kitchen his arms, the Buddha Hall his heart and the Dharma Hall his head. It is in the historical use of these halls, especially the Buddha and Dharma Halls, that Heine finds a clarifying methodology for critically assessing the historical unfolding of the Zen sect(s).

In "Zen Writes" Heine analyzes the conflicts between the traditionalist emphasis on silence and transcendence of language and the critical interpretations of the Zen canon, especially the *kōan* collections. There is also a split among critical theorists who posit what Heine categorizes as the "realization" and "dissolution" theses. He places himself in the realization camp, which argues that the language play found in the *kōan* materials are creative expressions of spiritual attainment. The position of the dissolution theorists, based on the argument that the entire corpus of *kōan* literature is nothing more than "meaningless, idle word games and gibberish..."(40) is a surprisingly lazy conclusion to reach, given the claim that this conclusion results from a rigorous critical methodology. Heine rightly contests the dissolution thesis as "Orientalism now disguised as sophisticated scholarship." (51) In his examination of these texts as "monastic narratives" Heine is able to reveal the literary devices and historical contexts of cases like "Kuei-shan's Kicking over the Water Pitcher" and "Te-shan Carries His Bowl." However, it is difficult to imagine that there are contemporary critical scholars who find themselves unable, or even unwilling to recognize these dimensions of the *kōan* records as well, but choose instead to simply label the canon as pure nonsense.

In "Zen Rites" Heine shows how Traditional Zen Narrative generally relegates examples of ritual activity and supernatural belief to Zen Skin, i.e. just unnecessary window dressing, or at most, skillful means. The only important practice in Zen

Buddhism therefore is zazen or seated meditation, identified by traditionalists as the Zen Marrow. Many in Historical and Cultural Criticism argue that the traditionalists have it backwards – the true Zen Marrow, if one admits to the history of Zen, has always been in ritualism, where institutional self-interest has primarily been maintained through ritual support of well-to-do patrons and pragmatic indulgence of local cults and other popular superstitions. Both of these polar assessments of Zen rites seem to be dependent on a naïve ideal of purity projected onto human institutions functioning in the real world. The traditionalists act as if ritual is not central to Zen in an attempt to preserve the perceived purity of zazen, while the critical theorists, recognizing the central importance of ritual in the tradition, respond by condemning the institutions for indulging superstitions. There are some among the critical scholars, like those supporting the realization thesis, who find themselves at least partially within the traditionalist camp by recognizing the ingenuity and flexibility of Zen in embracing local beliefs as a form of skillful means. In order to tread the middle way in this debate Heine turns again to his chosen foundational texts to show how Pai-chang's vision of an ideal temple compound would exclude the Buddha Hall, ordinarily a central building on the grounds of competing Buddhist sects. But the elimination of the Buddha Hall was never fully realized in China or Japan, where these structures were often included, due to local pressures, along with additional ritual halls containing images and relics of tutelary deities, Chan patriarchs and bodhisattvas. Contemporary examples of Zen-folk syncretism are examined by Heine through a close look at a number of the prayer temples associated with Japanese Sōtō Zen. He recognizes the skillful and nuanced ways in which Zen has absorbed and transformed *kami* worship, spirit exorcisms and folk magic, but leaves the chapter open-ended concerning the extent to which indulging in such practices and promoting worldly benefits for lay persons might also result in monastic corruption.

The last point of contention, and the most deeply entrenched division, is concerning the question of "Zen Rights," the topic of the final chapter and the epilogue in *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow*. These arguments have been centered on two ethical issues: first the complicity of both Zen abbots and Kyoto School philosophers in the military activities and colonial enterprises of the 1930s and 1940s, and second, Zen's support for exclusionary socio-political practices towards both the Japanese outcaste community and women. The former issue has been brought to the attention of the academy mainly through ground-breaking works like Ichikawa Hakugen's *Bukkyōsha no sensō sekinin* (Wartime Responsibility of Buddhists, 1970), *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Heisig and Maraldo 1995), and *Zen at War* (Victoria 1997). The discriminatory practices of Zen related to hierarchal practices in funeral rituals has been a focus of condemnation in the Japanese movement of Critical Buddhism, spearheaded by the work of Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō in the 1980s. Traditionalists have

responded to these attacks using the same kinds of rationalizations as the original perpetrators, namely, that from the enlightened standpoint of non-duality there is no discrimination between various worldly views, so that the liberated transcend one-sided notions of good and evil. Moreover, it is because of this unique insight made possible through Zen practice that allows for creative, iconoclastic responses to social ills, ultimately giving Zen Buddhism a unique position regarding its possibilities of contributing to positive change in the world. However, historical and cultural critics argue that Zen, from its earliest periods in China were always dependent upon socio-political power centers, so that the twentieth century support of imperialism and social discrimination was just a modern manifestation of these institutional foundations and should really come as no surprise.

In responding to these highly sensitive debates, Heine returns to the temple layout and the traditional practices of the Samgha Hall, a kind of democratic space where Zen monks not only lived together, but where the rituals of precept recitation and repentance took place. It is in this foundational emphasis on repentance that Heine finds a contemporary space for Zen's redemption. However, the concrete implementation of precepts and repentance in the history of Zen is a complicated matter. Monks were obligated to live according to both the Vinaya and the Mahāyāna precepts, engaging in ritual confessions as part of the regular monastic calendar and receiving harsh punishments including excommunication for misbehavior. Yet there has also been a kind of philosophical loophole provided by the teaching of *śūnyatā* and supported by Hui-neng's *Platform Sūtra* that subverts the necessity for ordinary forms of confession, leading to notions of "the non-production of evil" and evolving into a practice of "formless repentance." According to Heine, "This doctrine suggests that a realization of the fundamental emptiness...of all phenomena, or the realm of the formless, makes one aware that the realm of form is basically irrelevant, so that it is not necessary to confess particular, or form-based transgressions." (127)

In order to reconcile this internal conflict within the confessional history of Zen, and to find a middle way between the traditionalists and critical theorists in the academy Heine turns to the work of Kyoto school philosopher Tanabe Hajime and his notion of *zange-dō*, or "creative pathway of repentance." Heine employs *zange-dō* to critically assess the dangers of moral relativism in the traditional notions of formless repentance. He characterizes the ethical arguments of the contemporary Traditional Zen Narrative as a kind of virtue ethics, emphasizing the subjective attainments of the practitioner while remaining aloof to the objective results of their actions, and Historical and Cultural Criticism as a contemporary example of form repentance, a harshly critical and unforgiving approach. Instead he suggests recognizing the weaknesses of Zen while emphasizing its strengths so that the practice of *zange-dō* will make possible "a profound personal sense of self criticism... an existential struggle and coming to terms with one's wrong doing, which can be applied on both individual and communal levels." (170-171)

By moving the debate towards a human-centered practice of self-examination and honest assessment of concrete activity in the world, Zen apologists can no longer ignore the horse they rode in on through a convenient misapplication of emptiness philosophy. Nor can cultural and historical critics assume they have negated an entire centuries-old religious tradition by simply pointing out examples of human weakness. Whether or not Tanabe can truly serve as a bridge to a new Zen ethic is unclear. By relying on a secondary, non-canonical source, Heine may find few converts, especially among Western practitioners who generally remain unmoved (unfortunately!) by the debates among academics. John Daido Looi has stated that *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow* “belongs on the shelf of every Zen Center in the West.” The only danger with this suggestion is that the book will remain there. But the canon may already contain its own expression of *zange-dō* in the simple, straightforward words of Zen’s claimed founder, Gotama Buddha. Instructing his son Rahula in the *Ambalattikārahulovāda Sutta*, he tells him to reflect before, during and after any bodily, verbal or mental action, considering whether the action leads to the affliction of oneself, others or both. If so, he should definitely not do the action.

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Streben nach Glück: Schicksalsdeutung und Lebensgestaltung in japanischen Religionen.

Mit Beiträge von Monika Schrimpf. Berlin: LIT-Verlag (Religiöse Gegenwart Asiens/ Studies in Modern Asian Religions Vol. 1), 2007, 304 pp.

This co-authored book deals with analyses of destiny (*Schicksalsdeutung*) and shaping of life (*Lebensgestaltung*) in everyday Japanese religious life (an English translation for *Schicksalsdeutung und Lebensgestaltung* offered by the authors in the book reads: “destiny and life management,” p. 83). In particular, Buddhism, Shintō, Tenrikyō and Shinnyoen are taken into account.

The book comprises 8 chapters (Chapter 8 functions as a conclusion), and appendices. The back matter includes the traditional Sino-Japanese calendar; a glossary of Japanese terms with their translations in both English and German and an explanation in German; an index; a bibliography; and more than fifty pictures.

In Chapter 1, entitled “Schicksal und Glück in der religiösen Alltagskultur Japans,” the authors provide an overview of the basic concepts of the book and present various examples related to approaches to fate in modern Japanese religious life. Among them are oracle and divination practices, *o-mikuji* (written oracles) found at both Shintō shrines and Buddhist temples (pp. 19 ff), amulets (*o-mamori*)

sold at temples and shrines, and practices involving the cycle of lucky and unlucky days (*rokuyō*), just to cite a few.

In order to proceed towards the analysis of destiny and life-shaping in the Japanese Buddhist context, Chapter 2 opens with a brief introduction of Japanese Buddhism and of the concept of karma, seen against the background of its importance within the themes at issue in the book under review. The authors explore oracle and divinatory practices within various Japanese Buddhist denominations, offering various examples, such as the oracles of the 28 houses (*nijūhasshuku*) and the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac (*jūnishi* 十二支) as used within Nichiren Buddhism (pp. 38 ff). Further considering the variety of amulets (*o-mamori*) available at shrines and temples, the authors provide some instances, among them a small booklet containing parts of the *Kannon-sutra* and the *Heart sutra* sold at the Zen Buddhist temple Eihei-ji, and straps for mobile phones in form of rosary sold at the Jōdo-shū temple Chion'in. After a brief analysis of the phenomenon of *kankō-dera* 観光寺 (tourist temples), which links religion to tourism, and which is explored in the sections entitled "Tourism, Tempelbesuche und Identitätsstiftung" and "Buddhistische Pilgerfahrt und religiöse Reise als Lebensgestaltung," the authors conclude this chapter by going back to the motif of karma and ancestor veneration.

This chapter highlights the theme of *transaction*. This functions as a sort of leitmotiv throughout the book (see for ex., pp. 37, 54 in connection with pilgrimages, and p. 14 in which it is defined as a repayment received after investing in something, which, the reviewer would add, is not dissimilar to the concept of "this-worldly benefits," *genze riyaku* 現世利益; pp. 93, 99, 101). With regard to ancestor veneration, the authors claim that here too it is possible to recognize a sort of *transaction*, in which ancestors are considered as having a power to influence in a certain sense also the life of one's own children and grandchildren (p. 37). This is also linked with the abovementioned concept of karma (pp. 29-34). This concept affects not only one's individual self-perception and life-shaping, but can also reach the collective self-perception of social groups (p. 38) and has been taken also as a justification for discrimination, as in the case of the *hisabetsu buraku* minority. (p. 37)

Chapter 3 is devoted to the analysis of *manga* (Japanese comics) which present Buddhist motifs and are seen as guides for life-shaping and destiny interpretations. In particular, three *manga* series are taken into account here, i.e., *Hiro Sachiya no Bukkyō komikkusu*; a Zen Buddhist *manga* entitled *Zen no shisō*; and a series from the lay Buddhist religious group Reiyūkai entitled *Oyako de yomu manga denki shirīzu*. According to the authors, each series provides an indication to the path toward happiness by means of the teachings expressed by the corresponding Buddhist school. In particular, Hiro Sachiya's *manga* and the Zen *manga* highlight the intellectual and traditional aspects of Buddhism while the Reiyūkai *manga* is more oriented towards the biography of its founder. Among other characteristics,

the authors further mention rituals for the ancestors, and the need for a religious guide to play an active role in the path toward one's happiness. (p. 76)

Destiny analysis and life-shaping in the Shintō context are explored in Chapter 4. The chapter opens with an introduction of Shintō and its problematic definition, and explains that the understanding used in the book is a practical one, i.e., phenomena occurring within the context of the Shintō shrines which have been visited by the authors during the period of the research project (2002-2004, Marburg University) of which *Streben nach Glück* is the result. These shrines belong mostly to the Association of Shintō Shrines. (p. 82) After defining the field, the authors come to the heart of the matter of destiny and life-shaping by exploring various religious activities and rituals related to it, which include the aforementioned *o-mikuji*, purification rituals (*o-harae*), or again prayers (*kitō*), amulets and so on. All of these should assure a happy and safe future, remove dangers and bring success. (p. 84) Buying written oracles (*o-mikuji*) is one of the most popular activities related to the interpretation of destiny and life-shaping when visiting a Shintō shrine, and thus the authors analyze it in detail. (pp. 86 ff) The analysis is followed by a description of rituals in which prayers are recited and includes the German translation of some prayers and other material used at different shrines. The chapter concludes with a section dedicated to the practice of choosing names for newborn Japanese children which are related to the issue of determining one's destiny.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with two Japanese new religions, Shinnyoen and Tenrikyō respectively. Chapter 5 ("Ein esoterisch-buddhistischer Weg zum Glück: Shinnyoen") explains the issue of destiny and life-shaping according to the principles of the former, a Buddhist-oriented new religion. In Shinnyoen's interpretation of fate, as seen previously with regards to other established Buddhist traditions, the Buddhist concept of karma plays a fundamental role. (p. 109) According to the founder of this religious community, Itō Shinjō, not only one's own karma but that of the deceased influences someone's life. Those who—because of their bad karma—are not reborn in a Pure Land would bring their unlucky condition to their successors or to other people. (pp. 111-112) Therefore, beside one's own efforts, the function of a religious expert, mostly in the form of mediums (*reinōsha* 靈能者, see pp. 112, 114, 130) plays an important role to communicate with the deceased and thus influence the process of life-shaping and destiny-shaping.

To Tenrikyō, which was established in 1838, is dedicated the subsequent chapter entitled "Lebensorientierung in der Religion Tenrikyō." In particular, it explores directions for life according to this religious tradition, which are closely linked with healing. Chapter 6, as are other chapters in this book, is based on observations and reflections generated from fieldwork and is introduced by an outline of Tenrikyō's main features. (pp. 131 ff) The motif of karma appears once again in the case of Tenrikyō, which teaches that people should purify themselves from the karmic dust through personal activities; participation in religious services

(*tsutome*), work and donations, and through the spread of the teaching (*nioigake*). (p. 141) Bad actions cause diseases and injuries and the concept of cause and effect must be taken into account when explaining one's present condition. The effect as well as the healing is bestowed upon the individual by Oyagami (God the Parent who revealed through the founder Nakayama Miki). (p. 165) After taking into account ancestor veneration, the authors proceed with some sections dedicated to Tenrikyō's healing methods and approaches. A description of healing rituals is reinforced by the section "Institutionalisierte Krankenpflege und -heilung" dedicated to healing approaches and methods carried out at Tenri hospital Iko no ie (pp. 156-158). This is then followed by several interviews with physicians and patients (pp. 158-165) and functions as a link to Chapter 7 entitled "Eine qualitative Befragung" (A Qualitative Inquiry). After an introductory part on methodological issues, the results of a questionnaire of about 50 questions addressed to pilgrims of Minobusan and to Tenrikyō adherents are presented. What emerges, among other things, is the ever-present role played by the concept of karma as "responsible" for one's bad luck, and ancestor veneration as a regular component in everyday life. This "qualitative inquiry" confirms what the authors had observed in the previous chapters.

A minor point as regards the structure of the book: the reviewer has found the choice of inserting the bibliography and the *index* among other items in the appendices not particularly user-friendly and a little bit confusing for the reader.

In summary, *Streben nach Glück* is rich in information, practical examples taken from Japanese religious life, and visual illustrations. The phenomena are well analyzed and interconnected throughout the book. This is the fruit of many years of fieldwork done by the authors in the context of Japanese religions and it offers without doubt a valuable contribution to the study of religions. Moreover, the detailed explanation of Japanese concepts and words makes it accessible also to those who are not specialists in Japanese religions, and the division of chapters into thematic issues renders it an easy-to-use reference for scholars of Japanese religious phenomena.

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Philip L. Nicoloff

Sacred Kōyasan: A Pilgrimage to the Mountain Temple of Saint Kōbō Daishi and the Great Sun Buddha.

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008, 392 pp.

Since the groundbreaking work on Kōfukuji/Kasuga by Allan Grapard (*The Protocol of the Gods*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), several studies

have been published in western languages on specific Japanese sacred sites. However, no one has ever attempted a general description of what is perhaps the holiest of all cultic sites in Japan, Mount Kōya in Wakayama Prefecture. Philip Nicoloff is the first author writing in a western language who has set for himself this daunting task; it is perhaps not by chance that he is a professor emeritus of English and not a specialist of Japanese religion (and I admit that, as a student of Japanese esoteric Buddhism myself, had I to write a general introduction to Kōyasan, I would not even know how to begin.)

Given the importance of Mt. Kōya in Japanese culture and the wealth of documents and secondary material of all kinds on it, I was curious to see how far one could go without relying on Japanese sources. The results in this book are quite surprising; the author has been able to combine bits and pieces of information scattered over a range of sources (mostly in English), and to offer a fairly good picture of the sacred mountain, its history, ritual life, and, especially, its contemporary attractiveness (or, perhaps, attractions?). It should be said straight away that this book does not claim to be a scholarly study of Mt. Kōya; as the subtitle makes clear, this is an account of a pilgrimage written from the point of view of a sympathizer (if not a Shingon adept), as the title "Saint" before the name of Kōbō Daishi in the subtitle suggests. Accordingly, it should be evaluated as such—as an intimate description of the mountain by a sympathetic visitor from abroad.

Indeed, the book is organized around a narrative structure typical of such accounts: the writer leaves the secular world (Osaka's Nanba Station) and travels to a sacred place (Kōyasan). (I should mention that the book is written in the first person plural: "we," "us," apparently referring to the author himself and his wife.) There, he stays at a temple's inn (*shukubō*) and visits the most important spots: temples halls, the cemetery, religious institutions (the headquarters of the Kōyasan branch of the Shingon school), and the town. He also describes rituals, sacred images, and temples and explains their religious meanings. Eventually, in a sort of narrative apotheosis, the writer leaves the top of the mountain on foot, and guided by the moonlight, heads toward the cable car station and back to Osaka. At this point he tells a story, in turn told to him by another pilgrim the previous year, about a "miracle" performed by Kōbō Daishi. Finally, the book narrative fades away, so to speak, in a continuous descending movement, from the sacred mountain to Nanba Station and further down in the frenzy of Osaka subway.

As in most traditional travel accounts, the narrator leaves the contemporary, secular world searching for signs of the sacred and/or "tradition" (the past); this encounter is limited to a specific place and time; and the existence of the profane down below (or, why not, even of the sacred high above) is not questioned. In our case, the author does not tell us whether or not this pilgrimage had a transformative effect on him; to be sure, he reports interviews with other pilgrims (including the one who experienced Kōbō Daishi's miracle) pointing to some sort of quest, but he

never develops on that. In this sense, at least, this book is, rather than the account of a pilgrimage, a travelogue by a respectful tourist. It is true that to the writer, Kōyasan is obviously not just another tourist place, but is infused with countless traces of Japanese history and culture and, of course, of Buddhism; every building, every tree, every feature of the beautiful landscape tells a story about someone or something, including complex Buddhist teachings.

However, the very format of the book generates a strain in the text; this is clearly more than a travel guide, but also clearly much less than a cultural history of the sacred place and of Kōbō Daishi's cult (not to mention the Buddha Mahāvairocana also figuring in the subtitle). For example, the historical sections could serve as useful references, as compact accounts of the long and complex history of the mountain; however, they are clearly written based on limited sectarian accounts, and as such might turn out to be actually misleading especially to college students. (In fact, I wish that at least non-Japanese authors would refrain from playing the role as loudspeakers for what are narrow, and exclusively Japanese, sectarian concerns.) The doctrinal parts are essentially based on apologetic literature, and should be integrated by additional scholarship. A paradoxical effect of this book is that, even though it aims to be a celebration of Kōbō Daishi and Shingon Buddhism (at least, the Kogi branch based on Kōyasan), one would not be aware, by reading it, of the enormous impact esoteric Buddhism has had on the development of Buddhism in Japan and of Japanese culture in general.

On the other hand, the book has limits also as a culturally- (historically-) oriented travel guide, in particular in the number of illustrations (much fewer that can be found in any guidebooks). It is hard to convey the magnificence, cultural stratification, and complexity of the buildings, sacred images, and landscapes on Mt. Kōya, as well as its peculiar interlocking of sacred and profane realms and concerns, as the author attempts to do, without an extensive visual apparatus.

This said, I would like to emphasize that the descriptions of Kōyasan, its landscape, and its temples are well written and informative; I also liked the author's attempt to read the complex teachings of Shingon esoteric Buddhism in specific statues and temple settings, and the links he makes between specific objects and places and specific people or events (objects that had belonged to Kūkai, the place where Kakuban started his renewal movement, places where important people committed *seppuku*). All this makes a very good read. In addition, the descriptions of the temple inns (*shukubō*), the sect headquarters, the training of priests, and of a number of rituals can also be used with profit in the classroom to teach certain aspects of contemporary Japanese Buddhism.

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Charles Taylor

A Secular Age.

Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, 874 pp.

This vast tome is the sort of magisterial summation of a Western intellectual problem, by a Western intellectual heavyweight, which attracts the dramatic praise and admiration of fellow heavyweights, along with the Templeton Prize committee which gave this book its 2007 religion award.

As indicated by its title, the target of the study is the maze of ethical, religious and philosophical thought which has formed around "secularization." (Especially, secularization as understood by the theologically-oriented, not the mere structural differentiation of the sociologists.) Massive, abstract, verbose, muzzy, episodic, anecdotal, digressive, opinionated, riffy, Taylor is interested in three clusters of meanings which have settled around the term: the breakdown of church-state connections, the falling off of religious belief and practice, and finally the underlying shift to a social mentality where "belief in God" is not normal, but rather merely optional. The last indicates a society where the fundamental experiential possibilities have changed, or in other words not just the surface rational intellectual conditions have altered, but the "whole context of understanding." (p. 3) Taylor is skeptical of the idea that modernity has merely allowed some preexisting underlying natural rationality to emerge via disenchantment. Rather, modernity and all its qualities are matters of cultural invention.

Taylor is greatly concerned with a sense of loss. What has been lost or diminished is a sense of religious or existential meaningfulness he calls "fullness." When this erosion is manifest in the modern disenchanted, (over)confident mind, Taylor calls it the "buffered" self. The main argument of the bulky volume comments on the steps by which the old world of the religiosity of fullness shifted to the current state of exclusive humanism and the buffered self. The main transitions are: from enchantment to disenchantment; the loss of mental and spiritual ability to sustain tensions of religious thought and feeling in some equilibrium; the loss of an old "eternal" understanding of time; and the shift from a magical cosmos to a scientifically neutral universe. Taylor is enormously concerned about the Protestant Reformation's role in the overall narrative of the onset of exclusive humanism (i.e. the onset of a pure "this-worldliness"), for as a consequence a world has been created in which naiveté is now "unavailable to anyone, believer and unbeliever alike." (p. 77 et al.) It turns out that Reform Christianity was interventionist, totalitarian, homogenizing, and overrationalizing. (p. 86) The shift from medieval to Protestant orientations caused the rise of the "disciplinary" society, asceticizing and monasticizing the ordinary Christian followers, sobering them up, increasing their civility and industriousness, emphasizing their "self-fashioning." The new notion of willed self-construction plays a huge role in the transformation. (pp. 112-125) This

“Great Disembedding” (which Taylor suggests may have been implicit within the Axial Revolution itself) combined disenchantment and personal religion and has resulted in establishing the modern social imaginary of the rational social agent.

And so on and on. No review can do justice to a book of this size. Essentially Taylor reflects and updates – in extremely detailed and sophisticated fashion – a Catholic (medieval Christian) critique of the Protestant Reformation which is deeply traditional. For this reviewer, it is not entirely clear what he substantially adds to the *core* argument of the centuries-old discussion.

The reader may be wondering what even a short notice of a book like Taylor’s is doing at all in a journal like *Japanese Religions*.

First, while some of the phenomena of modernity are of course apparent in contemporary Japan, such as a breakdown of church-state connections, the falling off of religious belief and practice, feelings of nihilism among twentieth-century intellectuals, and an atmosphere of techno-scientific disenchantment, yet an animist/Buddhist background as in Japan is just not quite the same as a Near Eastern monotheistic background. The inner epistemic-ontological orientation of a religious civilization still has a major effect on outcomes; in spite of its own inner diversity, inherited Japanese mentalities, whether animist or Buddhist, have been simply different overall than in Euro-America. In Japanese religion, it is possible to weaken an old supernaturalism and aesthetics of enchantment without going over in the same way to the kind of hardened isolate self that concerns Taylor. The individual has not become hard-edged and socially disconnected, either now or in the past, on account of religious thought. Japan is not without its significant problems, even of *de facto* personal alienation, but the situation is flexible; its traditions do not basically lead to the pesky polarizations and despairs that tend to be inherent in Christian monotheism. People in Japan today may pay less attention to religion, but perhaps it is because life is somewhat less painful and this-worldliness more tolerable. And institutionally Japan has been secularized for five hundred years without crippling nostalgia for totalization. In short, modern Japanese life does not present the same kind of spiritual “secularization” as in the post-Christian West.

This leads to a second observation, which is that while the high critical praise accorded to Taylor’s writing points up that “human flourishing” in an older European Aristotelian sense may not be blooming in the world, Christocentricism, Eurocentricism and nostalgia are certainly still well-watered in lots of intellectual communities. Here is the proper, if sardonic, slogan for Western Christianity: “something you cannot live with, and cannot live without.” What remains clear above all is that for enormous sectors of the educated Western-oriented world, even inquiring about serious substitutionary alternatives in Asian traditions persists in being out of the question. Thus, in the year 2008, after centuries of interaction, after vast bodies of internal self-critique of the so-called Western tradition, after

a million pages of English-language writing about Zen, Japan is completely absent from the book. Taylor emphasizes that “postmodernism” falls quite outside the structures he mostly talks about in the book (p. 10); and Buddhism, though he makes a few side allusions to it, also does not have the same kind of “human flourishing” in mind as the European tradition with which Taylor is concerned. (p. 17) Well enough. But really, whatever happened to globalization?

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