

## Book Reviews

Haruko Wakabayashi

*The Seven Tengu Scrolls – Evil and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy in Medieval Japanese Buddhism.*

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2012, 204 pp.

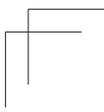
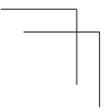


This study, deriving from a dissertation at Princeton University, treats the understanding and role of the mythical figure of *tengu* in Buddhism during the Heian and Kamakura periods. The *tengu* had become a personification of the Buddhist concept of evil (*ma*) in form partly of a bird and partly of a human being with a beak or long nose. Since this study is interdisciplinary research, the author in the beginning acknowledges how her work has been supported by a number of well known scholars on both sides of the ocean. The interdisciplinary approach enables her to “explore through them [the *tengu*] the world in which they were created.” (xv) In other words, she analyses the religious, literary and artistic expressions of *tengu* in the immediate context of social and political history. (Cf. xvii, 6, 14) This methodology proves to be very fruitful.

The book is divided into two parts, consisting together of six chapters. The first part, “Tengu and Buddhist concepts of evil,” shows how Buddhists appropriated the *tengu* from Japanese folklore during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries and how they transformed it into a manifestation of *ma* or Māra, “the enemy of the Dharma or the temptations of passion and desire.” (19) In Ch. 1 “From malign spirit to manifestation of *ma*,” the author examines literary sources which first identified evil spirits as *tengu* and then claimed especially esoteric Buddhism as having power to subjugate this evil. *Tengu* play a liminal role because on the one hand they demonstrate what is anti- or non-Buddhist and on the other hand they provide legitimacy for Buddhist monks and the Dharma. (30 f)

In Ch. 2 “*Tengudō*, the realm of *tengu*” the author traces a new historical development, the emergence of the images of a special “realm of evil” (*madō* or *tengudō*) during the time when the Final Dharma (*mappō*) was expected to have arrived (especially in Tendai circles). Buddhist monks who behaved badly in these evil times were believed to fall into such a realm, which it was thought to be better than the traditional three evil realms of animals, hungry spirits and hell! At the same time, the concept of *tengu* also changed. It did not depict non-Buddhist figures or anti-Buddhist powers as before, but instead Buddhists who had failed in their practice and who were arrogant and attached to secular matters such as fame and power, or new Buddhist groups like Zen or Pure Land Buddhism, or reformers like Hōnen, whose teaching and practice were considered to be “heretical” (*gedō*).

*Japanese Religions* Vol. 38 (1 & 2): 113-133



After having examined developments of the images of *tengu* and *tengu-dō* in historical sources, in Part 2 “Reading the *Tengu zōshi*” the author turns to the main subject of her study, the pictures and texts of the Tengu scrolls. The book contains some color plates as well as many black and white pictures of the *Tengu sōshi* and related art work. In Ch. 3, “Structure and relationship to existing variant scrolls,” the author explains that the seven scrolls treat the monastic centers (resp. schools) of Kōfuku-ji (Hossō), Tōdai-ji (Kegon), Enryaku-ji (Tendai, Sanmon), Onjō-ji (or Mii-dera; Tendai, Jimon) and Tō-ji (Shingon), as well as the two religious groups of mountain ascetics (*yamabushi*) and recluses (*tonse-sha*). According to the *Tengu zōshi*, the members of these seven groups exhibit pride and ego-attachment, struggle for superiority over the others, and therefore turn into *tengu* and fall into the realm of evil. However, one scroll shows the way out of such a realm: if the *tengu* quickly build a temple where they can practice Buddhist teachings, they may attain buddhahood. The doctrinal background for such way of liberation can be found in the expression “one-suchness of *ma* and Buddha” (*mabutsu ichinyo* [or: the ultimate unity of evil and Buddha]), which the author considers to be an example of Tendai *hongaku shisō* (“original enlightenment thought”). (80)

In Ch. 4 “Critique of Kamakura Buddhism,” the author refutes the hitherto dominant research which treats the Seven *Tengu* Scrolls as a kind of *jisha engi* (religious records of temples and shrines) because it ignores “the critical attitude of its author” concerning the monks’ “ego-attachment” (*gashū*) and “arrogance” (*kyōman*). (91) In the Kōfuku-ji scroll, e.g., one picture of the temple’s famous *Yuima-e* (Festival of the [lecture and debate] of the *Vimalakīrti* [*nirdeśa sūtra*]) depicts the main lecturer (*kōshi*), traditionally a distinguished scholar monk, as a *tengu*! Examining contemporary historical sources and comparing these pictures with a *Yuima-e* painting from the *Kasuga gongen genki-e*, the author demonstrates convincingly that the scroll’s artist criticized the decadence of high-ranking monks of that time, particularly their attachment to fame and power. Similarly, the author interprets the other parts of the scroll according to contemporary events and developments. Apart from pointing at abuse in traditional schools, pictures of one scroll also criticize practices of Ippen and his Ji-shū, e.g. their distribution of donations among poor people. Also her comparison with other picture scrolls and examination of contemporary sources are illuminating, even though her statements that Ippen and his followers were not “respectful and generous with food donations” (110) or that purple clouds attracted the people, not the *nenbutsu* dance (112), have not yet convinced me. In any case, whereas according to the scrolls the *tengu*-turned monks of established schools still had the chance to attain buddhahood (see above), the *tengu* incorporated in Ippen and Zen monks remain enemies of the Buddha; in the latter, the original *tengu*-image is maintained. For the scrolls’ artist, there was a fundamental difference between the evil of decadence in the established schools and the evil of “heresy” in the new schools. (122)

In Ch. 5 “The Onjōji scroll and the question of authorship,” the author discusses the dominant hypothesis among art historians that the scrolls’ artist must have been affiliated with Enryaku-ji. She first examines the old conflict between Enryaku-ji and Onjō-ji, their claims for supremacy over each other, and the dispute about establishing an ordination platform in the latter. Then she compares the Onjō-ji scroll with a petition by that temple addressed to court and *bakufu* in 1319 (cf. Appendix pp. 169-172) and arrives at the conclusion that text and pictures of the scroll “support the hypothesis that the author of the *Tengu zōshi* was sympathetic to Onjōji ...” (140) And: “Although a specific author has yet to be determined, enough evidence indicates that the *Tengu zōshi* was composed by someone with close ties to Onjōji.” (140)

In Ch. 6 “The definition of *ma*,” the author investigates the different forms of evil, especially in the visual representations of *tengu*. In pictures of the Enryaku-ji scroll, e.g., she detects a “gradual transformation of monks into birdlike *tengu*.” (141) The two main types of *tengu* were monks who were arrogant and attached to secular matters, and the anti-Buddhist *tengu*. But there were also ranks among *tengu*, and they were even categorized as “good” or “bad *tengu*.” However, the above mentioned idea of *mabutsu ichinyo* suggests a non-discriminating worldview which attempts to ultimately overcome worldly dichotomization or duality.

In her final “Conclusion” the author states: “Images of evil evolve with a society and its view of the world. Images of *tengu* were created to legitimize the Buddhist-oriented social order of medieval Japan and were transformed to accommodate the changes that took place within that order.” (168) The author pursued her methodological approach consistently and the results of her research are very illuminating for a better understanding of the Heian- and Kamakura-periods.

In one point, though, the author is inconsistent in her methodology when she follows some Japanese and American studies on the so-called *hongaku shisō* (“original awakening thought” or “idea”). (Cf. 80) Elsewhere I have proposed a social, economic and political reading for the dogmatic expression *hongaku*, in other words, not to treat this concept as an “idea” (*shisō*), which is a modern historiographic invention, but as “dharma gate” (*hōmon*), which is the original historical term. (*Japanese Religions* Vol. 27 No. 1 (2002): 105-110) When contextualizing the Tendai *hongaku hōmon* texts, it becomes impossible to claim anymore that they would not justify evil in Buddhist communities. (Cf. 153) And one would not need to end in contradictions concerning *mabutsu ichinyo* by stating, on the one hand, that there is “no need for transformation” of *ma* and, on the other hand, that there is a call “for change and reform.” (158-160)

I would like to add some remarks concerning a few linguistic issues. As for translations, Inoue Enryō’s *Tengu-ron* should not be rendered as “The *Tengu* Theory” (xiv), but “*Tengu* Treatise,” *ōjō* not as “rebirth” (35, etc.), but as “birth into (the Pure Land),” and *satori* (or *gaku/kaku*) not as “enlightenment” (36, etc.), but

as “awakening.” There are a number of careless expressions created by dropping significant nouns, such as “Heian” or “Kamakura” [*period*] (throughout), or “Pure Land” [*Buddhism*] (15, etc.). I do not understand the meaning of the expression “mystic(al) power(s).” (17, 19, 25 f) Instead of employing the term “biography” of monks (17, 20), the use of “hagiography” would be more adequate. For readers not so much familiar with Japanese temple names it would have been helpful in the beginning to explain that Mii-dera and Onjō-ji are two different names for the same monastic institution (as one can find out later in the Index). There were at least two cases where the author quotes *translations* from the *Shaseki-shū*, which the translator Robert Morrell (*Sand and Pebbles* 1985: 130, 253; cf. x f) had marked only as English *summaries*; however, both passages incidentally proved to be adequate translations. These remarks do not affect at all the appreciation of this work, which confirmed the high scholarly standard of the author’s earlier publications.

Finally, excellent research like the present example does not only open up hitherto unknown worlds, it also inspires further explorations. One suggestion (if this may be permitted here) would be to compare the *Seven tengu scrolls* with the *Chōjū giga* (Cartoons of birds and beasts), a monochrome ink-picture scroll which portrays monks as animals and which can be understood as humorous or even ironic criticism of contemporary Buddhist practice. (Cf. *Japanese Religions* Vol. 31 No. 2 (2006): 188-195) This raises at least two questions: First, could the *Seven Tengu Scrolls* also be understood *formally* as a parody or satire of Buddhist monks? And second, since the *Chōjū giga* (like the latter scroll) was probably also created by a monk from Onjō-ji (Mii-dera), it may be asked whether the *Seven Tengu Scrolls* may be characterized also as parody or ridicule of a stronger party (Enryaku-ji) by a member of the weaker counterpart (Onjō-ji)? In any case, considering the author’s present study, the possibility for the liberation of evil monks seems to be easier according to the *Seven tengu scrolls*; the *Chōjū giga*’s portrayal of the monks as beasts provides a darker outlook.

Martin Repp  
Frankfurt

Paula Arai  
*Bringing Zen Home: The Healing Heart of Japanese Women’s Rituals.*  
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011, 261 pp.

*Bringing Zen Home* by Paula Arai uses an anthropological approach to analyze the domestic ritual lives of devout Zen Buddhist laywomen. Arai carried out long-term fieldwork on twelve Sōtō Zen Buddhist women during a fourteen-year span. Most of the women in this generation had difficult youths during World War II and are considerably older now. Arai’s research thus contains valuable stories of the

domestic religious lives of a generation that are not often heard, and that will be heard even less in the near future. In this book, Arai tries to reveal not only domestic Japanese Zen rituals but also “how Zen ritualized activities help with healing” (4). Arai believes that Zen Buddhist rituals “respond to the inevitable challenges of human existence—love, loss, birth and death, and longing to belong” (4).

At the beginning of Chapter 1, “Mapping the Terrain,” Arai relays a personal episode concerning the terminal illness and death of her own mother. On the occasion of her mother’s death, Arai performed the ritual of her journey of death according to the guidance of a Sōtō Zen nun she calls Kitō Sensei. Through the ritual, Arai seemed to be healed of confusion and the sense of loss that came with the death of her mother. Arai mentions that “at that moment, the healing power of ritual became a visceral reality” (2). After that, Arai began a relationship with twelve Sōtō Zen Buddhist laywomen by sharing this event in her life. Arai calls them “consociates” in this book, and first she tries to “establish a balance of power between each of” them and herself, resonating “with principals found in feminist ethnography” (3). Moreover, Arai explains that she uses the method of “the second-person, or relational, approach...to understand people’s healing experiences” (7). In Chapter 2, “The Way of Healing,” Arai gives the ten principles in the way of healing. They are: experiencing interrelatedness; living body-mind; engaging in rituals; nurturing the self; enjoying life; creating beauty; cultivating gratitude; accepting reality as it is; expanding perspective; and embodying compassion. Arai explains any factor of each principle “can initiate an increase in any of the other factors. The more this happens, the more quickly and thoroughly a person heals” (32). Chapter 3, “Personal Buddhas,” discusses in detail the daily rituals held at the Buddhist home altar, which enshrines personal Buddhas of deceased loved ones. Arai mentions how rituals in honor of her consociates’ dead facilitate expansive awareness, for there is an intimacy found in their relationship to the dead who are now called “hotokesama” (personal Buddhas, 107). In Chapter 4, “Domestic Zen,” Arai illustrates how daily tasks like cleaning, cooking, childrearing, and caring for elders are raised “as supreme acts of importance” (109) in a Zen context. Arai points out that her consociates “lead ritualized lives that make healing a daily activity” (166). In Chapter 5, “The Healing Power of Beauty,” Arai applies the theme of the discussion to the healing power of creative activities like calligraphy, poetry, flower arrangement, and tea ceremony. However, on the other hand, Arai introduces “beauty in daily living” (201) through the teachings of a well-known Zen nun, Aoyama Rōshi. In other words, daily domestic tasks are completed and “as beauty-making activities, they become healing activities” (201). Chapter 6, “Revealing the Healing Realm of Zen,” is the concluding chapter of this book. Here Arai explains again that “this study demonstrates how ritualized activities transform emotionally intense moments—charged with fear, pain, and untamed anger—into healing” (204).

*Bringing Zen Home* is a rich source of English-language ethnographic data that documents the domestic ritual lives of Zen Buddhist laywomen. It is unlike conventional studies that provide “text-based historical and philosophical views of Zen” (210). Therefore, Arai’s study is useful for readers who want to know about domestic Buddhist practices in Japan.

Unfortunately, however, there are a few questionable points. First, the organic and inevitable connection of each chapter is unclear. Second, the Buddhist aspects of the lives of the twelve laywomen introduced in this book are not necessarily limited to Zen Buddhist practice. For example, it is common for devout Buddhist Japanese laywomen, not only from Zen Buddhist sects but also Shingon and Pure Land, even True Pure Land (which has very simple rituals), to place their hands together in prayer and chant sutras in front of their Buddhist home altar every day. Also, many laywomen not a part of Zen Buddhist sects are in some way involved in some creative activities connected with Buddhism. Presumably, these women may also experience the healing effects through the rituals based on the teachings of their own Buddhist sects. It is thus difficult to conclude that only the ritualized lives of Zen Buddhist laywomen are special.

However, as mentioned above, most of the author’s consociates are of an advanced age. This book includes valuable records of domestic religious lives of Buddhist laywomen of this older generation. Moreover, Arai notes that Sōtō Zen Buddhist women chant the name of Amida Buddha, a practice based in Pure Land traditions, and perform the Hyakumanben ritual, a rite during which prayer beads are passed around, performed primarily among believers of Pure Land. Therefore, this book shows the traditional and actual situation of Japanese folk religion in that Japanese Buddhist laypeople participate in various kinds of religious events regardless of the Buddhist sects to which they belong. *Bringing Zen Home* is a useful resource that reveals one facet of Japanese domestic religious customs and rituals, which are actually quite amalgamated and complicated.

Naoko Kobayashi  
Nanzan Institute for  
Religion and Culture, Nagoya  
koba\_tn@sf.commufa.jp

Kiri Paramore

*Ideology and Christianity in Japan.*

Routledge/Leiden Series in Modern East Asian Politics and History Vol. 4.

London and New York: Routledge 2009, 230 pp.

This book, based on a dissertation at Tokyo University, treats anti-Christian texts and their political use in Japan's intellectual history between ca. 1600 and 1900. The first peak of such "anti-Christian discourse" occurred in the early Tokugawa period (ca. 1620-1650) – after Christianity had actually been primarily suppressed – and the second during the final decades of the Tokugawa shogunate and the Meiji period (ca. 1800 – 1900). The new approach of this study, the author emphasizes, is to treat both periods together. Furthermore, he claims, up to now "the history of the anti-Christian discourse in the early Tokugawa period had always been narrated in a religious paradigm emphasizing a clash between Eastern and Western religious cultures, leaving its [domestic] political implications often ignored." (2) The author does not provide reference for such a claim. In any case, he wants to investigate the role which the anti-Christian discourse played in the formation of the nationalist ideology during the Tokugawa and Meiji periods. By referring to Maruyama Masao's research, he perceives the persecution of Christianity as part of a newly emerging "early-modern system of [domestic political] control." (4)

In Ch.1, "Japanese Christian thought: doctrinal diversity or civilizational clash?," the author introduces early Christian writings in Japan, such as Habian Hukan's (Fabian Fukun) *Myōtei mondō*, the *Dochirina kirishitan*, and Matteo Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi*, which had been imported from China. He observes here a "diversity" of Catholic teachings, including different attitudes towards authorities, as well as Confucian influence on such early texts, in other words, "syncretistic tendencies." (6) Accordingly, in Ch. 2 the author treats "parallels and interactions" between "Japanese Confucianism and Japanese Christianity." As far as I know, this seems to be a fresh approach to the intellectual history of early Tokugawa Japan. His observation of the diversity of contemporary Neo-Confucian thought and its overlapping with Christian thought lead him to the conclusion that both traditions were not so much in conflict with each other as rather involved in an "intellectual change across traditions, linked more to the massive changes in political culture at the time." (6)

In Ch. 3, "Early Tokugawa anti-Christian discourse: proclamations, populist literature and diplomacy," the author approaches the core of his study. First he investigates popular anti-Christian texts of the period between 1640 (i.e. after the Shimabara rebellion) and 1670, such as *Kirishitan monogatari*, Suzuki Shōsan's *Ha-kirishitan*, and *Hayaso*. Next, based on his claim that "nearly all these 'anti-Christian' texts were produced after the annihilation of Christianity in Japan was complete," he draws his decisive conclusion: "This fact alone directs our inquiry

towards other motivations for the production of anti-Christian discourse in the Japan of this time.” (6 f, cf. 55 f) This means that “most arguments presented in anti-Christian literature were not doctrinal or religious but focused on issues of political order and conservatism.” (7) The author develops this argument further in Ch. 4, “Attacking non-Christian ‘Christians’: ideological uses of early Tokugawa anti-Christian discourse.” Examining the writings of Hayashi Razan, he demonstrates that his anti-Christian discourse had become a “rhetorical weapon against any individual or trend that challenged Razan’s intellectual orthodoxy or the Tokugawa shogunate’s political authority.” (79) Ch. 5 treats the “Mid- and late Tokugawa anti-Christian discourse” under the perspective of “continuity and change.” During the mid-Tokugawa period, “Japan’s stability and the lack of any perceived threat from Western or Christian empires” led to a more “rational assessment of Christianity” than in early Tokugawa. (112) Arai Hakuseki’s anti-Christian discourse, e.g., focused on the issues of governance and loyalty. In this chapter the author treats also Ogyū Sorai and Miura Baien. During the late Tokugawa period, when the second peak of anti-Christian discourse began, the Mito School formed the ideas of *kokutai* (“fundamental character of our empire,” cf. 194) and *sonnō jōi* (“revere the emperor and expel the barbarians”) which became important expressions of the political ideology of the early Meiji period.

Ch. 6 treats the “Meiji anti-Christian discourse” and the creation of a “modern national ideology.” Here, the author demonstrates the lasting impact of the Tokugawa anti-Christian discourse especially on the understanding and interpretation of the *Imperial Constitution* and the *Imperial Rescript on Education*. This chapter also treats the thoughts of Inoue Enryō and Inoue Tetsujirō, as well as Uchimura Kanzō’s refusal to bow before the *Rescript*. New in this period is the import of modern Western criticism of Christianity which exerted considerable influence on the political thinkers of Meiji Japan. In his Conclusion, the author states: “there is no doubt that in the construction of new regimes both in the early Tokugawa period and during the early Meiji anti-Christian discourse was used to justify a continued process of increasing the authority of the central government by bringing the religious sphere completely under the dominion of the state.” (164) For him, one of the “most striking things revealed in the study presented in this book” is “the extent of similarities in the ideological employment of anti-Christian discourse in two discrete historical periods during the construction of two different states.” (166)

This remark leads us to some critical comments on this study. First, the author tends to neglect historical contexts, as the last quotation indicates. The similarities in the anti-Christian ideological discourse of these two periods were caused by the simple fact of similarities between their two historical settings or broader contexts: in both cases, early Tokugawa and Meiji, Western countries politically, economically and militarily were pressing hard on Japan while Christian missionaries attacked

Buddhism severely. Unfortunately, there are a number of significant cases in this book where the intellectual historian neglects facts of social history in spite of his initial claim to provide a “solid history.” (5) The most striking case is the downplaying of the continuous presence of Christians, even in their hidden form. As the author states: “There are also a number of incidents of repression of so-called *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians) through the late-seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The main period of actual anti-Christian action, however, had pretty much ended by the 1640s. By this time Christianity had been effectively wiped out.” (53) From here, the author claims that “most anti-Christian literature and discourse emerged after the complete annihilation of Christianity.” (55, cf. 58, 65, 162, etc.) The stated absence of Christians permits him to argue that the anti-Christian discourse was (a) not religious (overlooking, for example, that Suzuki Shosan and Ugai Tetsujō were Buddhist priests) and (b) that the discourse did not consist of a “clash of civilizations,” but (c) was completely a political, ideological discourse. However, such hypothesis can be stated only when one neglects, or negates, a number of historical facts, such as the following: as late as 1654 and 1674 the rewards for informants about Hidden Christians were increased; persecutions of *kakure kirishitan* occurred at least in 1657-58, 1661-73, 1790-91, 1805-07, 1842, 1856, and 1867-69; foreign missionaries continued with their attempts to enter Japan in 1630, 1643, 1708, 1844, 1855, 1859 ff.; and finally, the Tokugawa Bakufu’s laws dealing with problems related to *kirishitan* were plentiful all through the 17<sup>th</sup> ce., decreased considerably only during the 18<sup>th</sup> ce., and then increased remarkably again from 1788! (Cf. *Kirishitan Kenkyū* Vol.17)

Related with such neglect of historical facts is the author’s treatment of the “so-called ‘invasion theory.’” (114; 27, 64 f) This “theory” did not refer to military action, he claims, but to intellectual, religious and political threats! (60, cf. 114) Hideyoshi, whom the author for unknown reasons neglects earlier in ch. 3 (cf. 53), knew well of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism in South-East Asia and in South America. He was worried about the loyalty of Christian daimyos, samurai and other retainers, and, after all, had issued the first edict of prohibition of Christianity *the next morning* after the Jesuit Vice-Provincial Coelho had shown him his ship equipped with cannons (1587). The internal explication of his edict (for his retainers) associates the Christian movement with Ikkō Ikki, the peasant uprisings of True Pure Land believers. In other words, Hideyoshi feared a compound threat consisting of religious, military and political factors within the country combined with an external threat of the foreign powers behind the missionaries. The Ikkō Ikki-modeled fear of Japanese leaders later indeed materialized in the Shimabara peasants rebellion (1637-38), among whom were many Christians. Besides, concrete fears of an invasion were fed continuously by accidental or planned arrivals of foreign ships in 1597 (*San Felipe*), 1600 (*Liefde* with pilot William Adams), 1636, 1640, 1647, and increasingly again since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> ce.

In the category of missing facts, the author frequently provides only scarce biographical information about important persons whose writings he treats, such as Suzuki Shōsan (61-64), Shimazu Hisamitsu, “leader of the conservative party at the time” (151; he helped the Meiji Emperor to gain political power!), Hirata Atsutane, or Gyōnen (not “Gyōzen”; 158).

Secondly, a number of linguistic problems of this book must be mentioned. The author provides only occasionally Japanese words for important terms in his translations. I personally would have been interested to know the Japanese originals, e.g., for “religion” (131, 136, 149), “superstition” (106), “ethics” (120), “nation” (131, 138), “(law of) nature” (120, 140), or “mutations of Christianity” (198). The same incompleteness is found in the translations of Japanese titles in the text where they occur only occasionally; the bibliography on the other hand does not contain the English translations at all. There are a number of inaccurate or nonstandard translations, such as “Christian revision” for *kirishitan aratame* (54 cf. 55; I do not know of such an expression in original sources; normally it is *shūmon aratame* which Elison (*Deus Destroyed*) fittingly translates with “reformed in religion”), the “nature of reality” for *shinnyo* (62; there are some Japanese-English dictionaries for Buddhism which should be consulted, also in the next case), “nonsentient unthinking” for *musō munen*, “reintroduction of Confucianism” for *jukyō fukkatsu* (156), or “The Great Hall of Philosophy” for *tetsugaku-dō* (157). Besides such linguistic mistakes are careless renderings of quotations, such as “disordered masses” for “disordered arguments of the masses” (131) or “our people” interpreted as “stupid masses” (135). Often, English technical terms for religious phenomena are used sloppily (21, 37 f), the leading example being the expression “a mystical and superstitious religion, a kind of heretical, esoteric faith”! (62) It should be mentioned that Aristotle’s “four causes” are not a “doctrine” (27, 29, 30), but constitute his methodology.

When I checked a few of the author’s translations, two texts of *Ha-kirishitan* proved to be completely unacceptable. (62; cf. NST 25: 451 and 456 f) Why did the author not consult Elison’s rendering (*Deus Destroyed* 1988: 379 f and 387 f)? Translations are always disputable, and consultation of previous translations can lead to improvement – but why should one need to reinvent the wheel?

These linguistic problems lead to my last criticism, from the standpoint of religious studies. The author does not seem to be sufficiently acquainted with Buddhist and Christian traditions. This becomes a grave problem when he wants to write a chapter of Japan’s “intellectual history.” When treating texts of the Jesuit mission in Japan and China, it is not sufficient to drop in important terms of Scholastic Theology (as the author does), without knowing the underlying structure of the ideas. Thomas Aquinas’ distinction between Natural Theology (*cognitio Dei naturalis*, i.e. *qua ratio naturalis*) and Revealed Theology (*cognitio Dei supernaturalis*, i.e. *cognitio gratiae* or *ex revelatione divina*) led Jesuits in their mission practice to

design at least two kinds of Christian didactic literature. The first one are apologetic texts such as *Myōtei mondō* and *Tianzhu shiyi*, which try to lead non-Christians via rational reasoning to the Christian truth, whereas catechetical (and doctrinal) texts, such as *Dochirina kirishitan*, treat the “revealed truth” of Jesus Christ for those who have converted to Christianity (i.e. who have “faith” already), or are in the process of doing so. Considering such theological and practical-theological backgrounds the author’s analyses and interpretations (31 f, 50 f) – e.g. by applying labels such as “human / humanist / humanistic [!] ethics” (14, 17 f, 24, 68, etc.) and “doctrinal diversity” (Ch. 1) – prove to be arbitrary and misleading. Moreover, when the author constructs a relationship of “competition,” “opposite way[s]” or even a “conflict” (24 f, 31 f, 41, 45, cf. 36) between these *different genres of Christian literature* at this time, he is just fundamentally mistaken. A polarisation between the two theological approaches behind such texts did occur, but it happened much later, and not in Japan, but in China and Rome (this led to the fatal “Chinese rites controversy” which ended in the persecution of Christianity in China). Similarly, the Buddhist anti-Christian discourse by Suzuki Shōsan and others cannot be adequately understood if there is no knowledge of the respective Buddhist schools of that time. The author’s awkward renderings of Buddhist technical terminology indicates this lack. (Since I am not acquainted sufficiently with Confucianism, I leave the critique to scholars in this field.) The author’s claim that there can be found no research on Chinese anti-Christian texts (79) again shows his limits (for Western languages see the work by Edward Kelly (1971) and Iso Kern (1992)). On the other hand, the author’s repeated self-assertive emphasis of having translated “a good number” of hitherto unpublished texts (ix, 7, 85, 95) is embarrassing; for a professional historian this should be a matter of course.

In the end there remains one crucial question: why should the anti-Christian discourse during the Tokugawa period be explained in a mono-causal way when there was a combination of several factors in history at work – religious, cultural social, economic, domestic and foreign political, and military?

Martin Repp  
Frankfurt

Yuki Miyamoto

*Beyond the Mushroom Cloud: Commemoration, Religion, and Responsibility after Hiroshima*

New York: Fordham University Press, 2012, xiv + 234 pp.

This volume written by Yuki Miyamoto, Assistant Professor of Religion at DePaul University, is an inquiry of the experiences and message of the 1945 atomic bomb survivors (*hibakusha* or *kataribe*) of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It attempts to identify forms of commemoration of these tragic events which may remember the victims while acknowledging the atrocities perpetrated by Japan during the war. According to Miyamoto, the message of the hibakushas strongly contributes to an ethics of reconciliation, but it has been obscured by mainstream interpretations generally focusing on guilt and dividing between victims and victimizers. As the title of the book suggests, it is therefore necessary to go “beyond the mushroom cloud,” which symbolizes these divisions, in order to fully appreciate the idea of a world community not divided by national boundaries and free of nuclear weapons emerging from the hibakushas’ testimony.

The book is divided into three parts dealing with commemoration, religious interpretations, and responsibility, respectively. Part 1 begins with a brief note on the Smithsonian debate (concerning the 1995 exhibition at the National Air and Space Museum to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II) in the United States, which shows how the atomic bombings may still be considered within the framework of a sacred mission and the consecration of the (American) war dead as “a representation of group ideology and identity” (p. 20). Miyamoto then takes her cue from the scholarship of the Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit to argue that the atomic bombings are memories that should be shared by humanity at large, and illustrates the efforts by Hiroshima mayors after the war to create an inclusive community transcending national boundaries. The author notes how the postwar rhetoric of uniqueness (the Japanese being “the only people who truly acknowledge the horror of the nuclear attacks”) was already called into question in the 1960s, leaving room for an ethics of reconciliation and the idea of an inclusive community, in which “whoever supports and shares the hibakushas’ desire for a nuclear-free world may participate” (p. 44). This element, Miyamoto observes, clearly emerges from Hiroshima commemoration practices, where the refusal to impose a predetermined interpretation on the dead (the “meaninglessness of violence”) produces a narrative that goes beyond national borders. The author contrasts this approach of promoting a dialectical relation with the dead with the Yasukuni Shrine and museum’s narrative, which is characterized as a monological discourse in the interest of nationalist ideology (p. 71).

Part 2 of the book focuses on the religious influences underlying the hibakushas' ethics of reconciliation. In particular, the author is interested in the resources for self-reflection (presented here as the basis of hibakushas' ethics) offered by local religious traditions. The first case analyzed is that of the True Pure Land tradition (Jp. Jōdo Shinshū), to which the large majority of Hiroshima residents belong. Miyamoto summarizes the main features of this Buddhist tradition and introduces the figure and thought of Kōji Shigenobu, a Hiroshima priest presented as "the major voice in interpreting the bombing from within True Pure Land Buddhism" (pp. 96-97). In Kōji's interpretation, the atomic bombing was the accumulation of three mistakes. The first mistake consists in the fact that Hiroshima residents failed to attend the needs of other victims and to accept the teaching of impermanence. The second mistake is that of Japanese people, who collectively supported Japan's imperialism and wars. The third mistake is that of humankind as a whole promoting war. According to the author, the relevance of Kōji's interpretation to the hibakushas' ethics lies mainly in his religious understanding of the helplessness of human beings. In True Pure Land Buddhist terms, human conduct is determined by karmic conditions, and dependence on Amida Buddha's grace (other-power) leads naturally to a deeper understanding of the relativity of good and evil. This, in turn, supports the hibakushas' ethics of "not retaliation, but reconciliation" (p. 107). In this case, self-reflection and transformation are rooted in Amida's grace transcending national boundaries.

The second case presented by the author in Part 2 is the Roman Catholic interpretation of the bombing by the Christian thinker Nagai Takashi. Nagai's religious interpretation of the atomic bombing developed through the course of conversations within the Roman Catholic community of Nagasaki, a traditional stronghold of Japanese Christianity with an old tradition of martyrdom. Nagai's thought found full articulation in a speech at a Requiem Mass held in 1945 a few months after the atomic bombing of the city, when he affirmed that the atomic bomb was an act of divine providence which would put an end to the war. Within this providential plan, Nagasaki Catholic victims play the role of sacrificial lambs that saved, with their sacrifice, the lives of many other potential victims of war. On the other hand, the survivors are seen as those who "failed the test to be accepted into Heaven," and who "will continue to be tested in their sufferings, having the opportunity to reflect on their mistakes" (pp. 132-136). As Miyamoto acknowledges, Nagai's characterization of Nagasaki Catholics as "chosen" by God may conflict with the universality of the Christian message. Moreover, presenting wartime destruction as a manifestation of divine will inevitably obscures the role played by humans in relation to war crimes. However, the author notes how Nagai's interpretation, despite these problematical aspects, ultimately focuses on the necessity of self-reflection in the midst of suffering, thus countering the impulse to retaliation and contributing to the ethics of the hibakushas (p. 139).

The third and final part of the book focuses on a Japanese television drama, *The Diary of Yumechiyo* (Jp. *Yumechiyo nikki*), and two films, *The Face of Jizō* (Jp. *Chichi to kuraseba*) and *Yūnagi City, Sakura Country* (Jp. *Yūnagi no machi, sakura no kuni*), in order to show representations of hibakusha women in popular culture. Building upon the analysis of feminist thinker Maya Morioka Todeschini, the author argues that since the 1980s films about hibakusha women have revolved around the topics of beautiful women's premature death and inability to become mothers, thus contributing to the aestheticization of the atomic bombings and the creation of a victim narrative. However, Miyamoto thinks that even the 1981 production *The Diary of Yumechiyo*, if interpreted within a hagiographical framework, discloses an ethical interpretation of the atomic bombing in which the transformation of the lowly into the holy is made possible by overcoming fixed social roles and being compassionate to the suffering of others (p. 163). However, it is in more recent atomic bomb films, as Miyamoto observes, that a noticeable shift in the representation of hibakusha women has occurred. In films such as *The Face of Jizō* and *Yūnagi City, Sakura Country*, not only is happiness unrelated to fertility, but the dialogue with the dead provides the living with the courage to lead a happy life. According to the author, these representations provide "resources for constructing a community of memory that transcends national, religious, and gender boundaries" (pp. 174-175).

Miyamoto concludes her work by noticing that although the hibakushas themselves are not a monolithic community (it is possible to find among them even groups calling for a remilitarization of Japan through nuclear weapons), most of them would support the ethics of "not retaliation, but reconciliation" presented in the book. Failing to take into account their message, she argues, means to "remain lost within the mushroom cloud;" that is to say, to remain entrapped within the nation-state framework and unaware of the ultimately indiscriminate nature of nuclear weapons.

As should be clear from this short summary, this book is positioned at the crossroads of philosophy and religion. This said, it is possible to comment on some aspects of the book from the specific viewpoint of religious studies. Miyamoto's characterization of religious interpretations of the atomic bombing in chapters four and five is certainly of interest, not the least because she shows how the same tragic event may be interpreted in different ways by different religious sensibilities. Extending her analysis beyond the writings of Kōji and Nagai to include the voices of other members of the two religious communities would have no doubt enriched her work. In the chapter on True Pure Land Buddhism, the author relies perhaps too heavily on secondary sources in English, which are hardly representative of the doctrinal debate within this tradition of Japanese Buddhism. A more nuanced distinction between the thought of Hōnen and Shinran would also have been welcome. Similarly, in chapter two, Miyamoto's analysis of the Yasukuni Shrine

seems too dependent on the work of Thomas Kasulis, but one also finds here a very interesting section critically approaching the wartime-ideology-oriented Yūshūkan Museum attached to the shrine. One also wonders if in her presentation of religious interpretations of the bombing as being related to “a transcendent being” (the Christian God or Amida), Miyamoto is implicitly presenting these traditions as purely universal, applicable to all humankind and devoid of any inclusivist tendencies. Religious discourses in Japan and elsewhere are not intrinsically pluralistic (Nagasaki Catholics “chosen” by God are just an example of this) and may reproduce boundaries at various levels, including the national one.

Those who are looking for a study on this subject written from the value-free standpoint of religious studies will probably be disappointed. Indeed, the author does not conceal her personal support for the cause of the hibakushas’ ethics, and overtly affirms that it “will enrich our earthly lives” and will “compel us to critically examine our own ethical values.” But this is, of course, a matter of perspective. Miyamoto’s normative approach should not be a problem if one considers her book (as this reviewer does) an interesting contribution to contemporary ethical thought.

Ugo Dessì  
University of Leipzig

James Mark Shields  
*Critical Buddhism: Engaging with Modern Japanese Buddhist Thought*  
Ashgate: Surrey, 2011, 212 pp.

This study revisits a vigorously debated movement in Buddhological academia considered by most to have ended around the start of the present century—a movement which, as the study itself admits, “seems to have had little effect beyond the academy; even within such, its lasting effects seem minimal” (2). This is, of course, the movement known as Critical Buddhism, identified with Hakamaya Noriaki (1943- ) and Matsumoto Shirō (1950- ), scholars who launched this initiative from the Sōtō Zen-affiliated Komazawa University. These specialists in Tibetan and South Asian Buddhism argued vociferously that many forms of Buddhism in East Asia are not, in fact, true Buddhism at all. They attacked a wide range of ideas particularly influential in the Japanese Buddhist tradition— notions articulated in Buddhist language, such as those of the “womb of the Thus-Come-One” (Tathāgata-garbha), Buddha-nature, “original enlightenment” (*hongaku shisō*), as well as such “indigenous” ideas as shamanism and animism—as warping the true nature of Buddhism, which they identified in notions of strict causality, discriminative and critical thinking, and a resistance to apparently “tolerant” or all-embracing systems. Their joint project originated in the mid-1980s, and they attracted significant controversy in Japanese publications through the 1990s. It

terminated with Matsumoto's very public disavowal of Hakamaya in print, at the end of an article of his in the 1999 issue of the *Journal of the Faculty of Buddhism of Komazawa University* (*Komazawa Daigaku Bukkyō Gakubu kenkyū kiyō*): "I ... have had no choice but to cut off relations with Mr. Hakamaya Noriaki. I believe that his irresponsible theories and actions are inexcusable."

But Critical Buddhism did not remain a domestic squabble. It first arrived in the world of Anglophone Buddhist Studies with a panel discussion at the American Academy of Religion conference in 1993, which later produced an important edited collection of *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism* (ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, University of Hawai'i Press, 1997). Readers interested in the specifics of the Critical Buddhist controversy, including the nature of its objections to Japanese (East Asian) Buddhism, are urged to consult its fine essays for details. Since then, the *furor* over Critical Buddhism has died down in English-language writing, at least. In an article of 2001, titled "After the Storm" (*Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 28-1/2), Steven Heine observed frankly that the "factors driving the broader mandate of Critical Buddhism have faded" (135). At least in the Anglophone world, the storm would appear to have blown over.

*Critical Buddhism: Engaging with Modern Japanese Buddhist Thought* seeks to reverse that development, intending "to provoke a second wave of Critical Buddhism, by emphasizing in particular the epistemological and ethical components of criticalism..." (16). It pursues those "epistemological and ethnical" components into new and unknown territory. Valuing Critical Buddhism as a "heuristic or form of medicine" (14), the present study eschews treatment of it "in terms of a highly specific ... debate about the meaning of certain Buddhist doctrines" (15). This is a striking choice, since so many scholarly replies to Critical Buddhism from outside Japan have engaged deeply with its treatment of doctrinal issues. For instance, in an article subtitled "Some Reflections on Critical Buddhism" and in portions of the monumental study *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, both published in 1999, Jacqueline I. Stone examined the Critical Buddhist treatment of one of its key targets—"original enlightenment" (*hongaku*) thought. These works showed that, at least in its medieval form, "original enlightenment" thought was neither as coherent nor as intellectually totalizing as Critical Buddhist characterizations presumed—and further, that "original enlightenment" thought did not even necessarily espouse the ideas attributed to it in Critical writing. Shields has clearly studied Stone's work with care, but his work largely steers clear of the kind of historicist engagement that it represents.

Though largely neglected in Anglophone scholarship, investigation into the doctrinal stance of the Criticalists has continued in Korean and Chinese. In 1999, the Research Institute of the Tripitaka Koreana (Koryō Taejanggyōng Yōnguso), located in Seoul, held a series of seminars concerning Critical Buddhism. Including a response from Matsumoto himself, these culminated in the published anthology

*The Paradoxes of Critical Buddhism* (Pip'an Pulgyo üi p'aradoksü, 2000). Essays collected in it challenged Critical readings of such issues as Tathgāta-garbha thought, Mādhyamika philosophy, the Rinzai lineage of Zen, and the Sōtō Zen patriarch Dōgen, sometimes rather severely. Scholars in the Sinophone world have offered similar critiques: To give one example from the People's Republic of China, the June 2007 issue of the journal *Academic Monthly* (*Xuéshù yuèkān*) published a special collection of articles about Critical Buddhism. These pieces challenged the Critical Buddhist attack on Tathgāta-garbha thought as "uncritical," pointed out an attitude of essentialism in Critical Buddhism itself, and criticized its valorization of just one criterion, "criticism," as the single marker of true Buddhism. Similar questioning of the Critical grasp of the history of Buddhist thought has also graced the pages of academic journals in Taiwan.

Instead of following this line of inquiry into the content of Critical Buddhism, Shields's study attempts a kind of reboot of its entire epistemological and ethical program. This choice may explain why it eschews a narrow focus upon the work of Hakamaya or Matsumoto in favor of invoking a galaxy of thinkers and writers hailing from a wide spectrum of traditions. Its final chapter alone, for instance, discusses the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty (1931-2007), the scholar of hermeneutics Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), the Zen scholar and activist Hisamatsu Shin'ichi (1889-1980), the analytic philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), and the phenomenologist Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995), among others, while it cites Matsumoto's work just once. As in the recent past decade-plus of television and film reboots emanating from the United States (*Charlie's Angels*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Melrose Place*, *Superman*, etc.), then, what the author here means by "Critical Buddhism" may startle readers who approach it with expectations shaped by the original version.

In its first chapter, the book provides a very broad overview of the now-familiar ethical failings of Buddhism, particular Zen Buddhism, in Japan—particularly from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, and particularly its endorsement of various forms of violence and oppression, against both non-Japanese and persecuted groups within Japan. The presentation in this survey comes down on the side of emphasizing the continuity of such ethical failings with the premodern period rather than postulating any radical break with the coming of modernity. It expresses doubt toward those who have emphasized such a historical break—Robert Sharf and Stuart Lachs—characterizing them as holding a "thesis of Buddhist 'decline' [that] has the corollary danger of suggesting that the modern lapses of Zen social ethics are historically anomalous..." (45). Whether either Sharf or Lachs actually did espouse such a "prelapsarian" idea of Japanese Zen merits more scrutiny than it receives here; but, *prima facie*, to observe that some Zen figures and institutions committed themselves to the distinctly modern projects of nationalism, high imperialism, or production of a citizenry need not imply any kind of "decline,"

unless the project of modernity as a whole is construed as a kind of fall from grace. In any case, the author welcomes the Critical Buddhist willingness “to pronounce upon doctrines, ideas, schools, and sects that they declare not only problematic or distorted, but decidedly non-Buddhist” (48).

The second chapter sets the basic pattern for all the remaining chapters of the study, each of which takes up one piece of the Critical Buddhist arsenal and seeks to replace or refurbish it. In particular, the second chapter takes on the notion of “topicalism,” the Critical Buddhist term of criticism for positions that assume a monist or essentialist substance at the base of all phenomena, and which are held to oppose discriminating ratiocination. In Critical Buddhist writing, this leads to a rejection of such pivotal notions as the Tathagāta-garbha, the “Buddha nature” (*Busshō*), or “original enlightenment” as un-Buddhist. As it turns out, though, topicalism itself may not be the problem. Taking a cue from Ichikawa Hakugen (1902-1986), the author suggests that “topicalism” “appears to be less of a threat than the law of *karma*, or at any rate a certain very common reading of *karma* as justification for injustice and social discrimination” (77). Thus, the “task of a truly Critical Buddhist is to work out ... a version of *karma* that may best fit with the most significant Buddhist ideas and ethical teachings” (80). This task does not explicitly resurface for long later in the book, but this study might have profited from engagement with the work of the British writer Stephen Batchelor (1953- ), who has also proposed a normative reworking of Buddhism, and who has been engaged in controversy since suggesting in his *Buddhism Without Beliefs* (1997) that it might be possible for Buddhist practitioners to dispense with notions like karma and rebirth.

The remaining chapters follow this pattern of scrutiny and reworking. The third chapter takes aim at the “continuance of *hongaku* inspirations in modernist readings of Zen—particularly those that emphasize enlightenment as a form of non-conceptual, aesthetic, or ‘pure’ experience” (83). This chapter seeks to develop criticisms of the Kyoto School offered by Hakamaya, Sharf, Ichikawa, and others. Here too the author seeks to challenge accounts of appeals to “pure experience” as innovations of the modern period. The objects of study are the work of Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960), and Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962). Shields endorses Tanabe’s critique of Nishida and suggests the perspective of *aesthesis* (“a perceiving”), derived from Watsujian ethical theory, as “an alternative vantage-point from which to understand the Kyoto School” (123). Likewise, the fourth chapter considers the uses to which Hakamaya put the thought of René Descartes (1596-1650). This chapter contends that Hakamaya unfairly discounted the potential contributions to the Critical project offered by the counter-rationalist critic of Descartes, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), who did not see *topos* in conflict with criticism. Following Jamie Hubbard, this chapter argues, “Vico’s topicalism may play a constructive role in the issue of Buddhist ethics

and religious criticism” (150). Finally, the fifth chapter takes as one of its themes Buddhist theories of language, including (but not limited to) the Critical Buddhist attack upon the traditional Zen claim to transmission of a truth “beyond words and letters.” Ultimately finding that some Buddhist traditions share “a number of the same metaphysical dualisms ... that the West has been struggling with for over a century” (173), the author here finally suggests a turn to Darwin, with his theory of contingency in biological development, and *pratītya-samutpāda* or “conditioned arising” as a locus in which “the broader implications of contingency that a truly Critical Buddhism must find its home” (173).

As in the case of any reboot of a previously canceled program—particularly a program that had its share of intense fans and detractors in the past—the reboot of the *fin de siècle* program of twentieth-century critique represented by *Critical Buddhism* may well polarize its audience. Some will doubtless be excited by the prospect of salvaging something productive from Critical Buddhism, and they will be stimulated by the active incorporation of Euro-American philosophy into the project of reimagining Japanese Buddhism. On the other hand, readers familiar chiefly with received notions of “Critical Buddhism,” and lacking specialized knowledge of “Western” intellectual history, might be daunted by the invocation of so much Euro-American philosophy of the post-medieval period, and vice versa. This specialized study will be of interest chiefly to students at the graduate level or above, though individual sections of it could find a place in an advanced undergraduate seminar treating twentieth-century Japanese Buddhist thought more broadly. For now, we await Critical Buddhism’s second wave.

Micah Auerback  
University of Michigan

Mutō Kazuo

*Christianity and the Notion of Nothingness – Contributions to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue from the Kyoto School*

Ed. by Martin Repp, tr. by Jan van Bragt.

Leiden: Brill, 2012, 227 pp.

Those who were fortunate to have been acquainted with Professor Mutō Kazuo (1913—1995) will probably remember him as a soft-spoken and humble personality who in spite of his low-key style managed to enrich the predominantly Buddhist-inspired Kyoto School of Philosophy with insights from his deep-rooted commitment to Christianity. The Kyoto School is generally regarded as a philosophical tradition rooted in Buddhist philosophy, and dominated by such towering figures as Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime, Nishitani Keiji and others. They were certainly deeply influenced by Buddhist thought, and to a great extent

leaned on Buddhist concepts to express their ideas, but it should not be forgotten that Christian philosophy was one of the major partners in the philosophical dialogue. Mutō Kazuo's predecessors in the Chair of Christian Studies at Kyoto University, Hatano Sei'ichi and Ariga Tetsutarō, contributed to this dialogue with Christian perspectives, but no other Christian thinker has been so consistently involved and respected as a member of the Kyoto School as Mutō. It is unfortunate that his contribution only to a limited extent was recognized outside the circle of philosophers and theologians who in various ways were involved. There are apparently few Western students of the Kyoto philosophy who have been interested in Mutō's work, perhaps because they were more interested in its Buddhist roots and hence ignored the Christian voices. One reason is also the fact that Mutō's writings were available in Western languages only to a limited degree.

It is, therefore, an important contribution to Western students of Buddhist-Christian relations in general, and of the Kyoto School in particular, that Martin Repp, former Associate Director of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto, has taken the initiative to present a number of Mutō Kazuo's central articles in one volume, *Christianity and the Notion of Nothingness*. Martin Repp's introduction gives a thorough presentation of Mutō's life. In more than fifty pages he provides the reader with the context that shaped the philosophical challenges that Mutō faced as a Christian thinker in critical dialogue with his own Christian tradition, Buddhist philosophy, and the Japanese society of which he was a part. Repp also analyzes the central themes in Mutō's interaction with the Kyoto School in a way that prepares the reader for further grappling with Mutō's writings.

The other important contribution to the volume is, of course, the work of the translator, Jan van Bragt. Only those who have grappled with the challenges of translating this type of philosophical and religious reflections from Japanese will understand how difficult it is to find expressions and concepts that adequately convey the concerns of the author. Jan van Bragt belonged to a generation of missionaries and priests who pioneered the modern Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Japan, and prepared for a wider international involvement in that interaction. With his own studies of the Kyoto School and his earlier translation of Nishitani's *Religion and Nothingness* (*Shūkyō to wa nani ka*) he was well prepared, and his translation of Mutō's articles also shows his familiarity with the issues. I do not know whether the following statement is true for all, but it is interesting to note that a Japanese scholar familiar with Mutō's works once remarked that their English translations were easier to understand than the Japanese originals.

I am not sufficiently familiar with Mutō's writings to evaluate whether or not the selected articles are representative for the scope of his interaction with the Kyoto School, but they certainly cover a wide range of perspectives. The first article, "Problems Facing Japanese Christianity Today," was published in the 1960s, and may seem somewhat dated almost fifty years later. It is, however, a

classical expression of the challenges facing a Christian Japanese thinker in the tension between East and West, grappling with the question of identity, the need of indigenizing Christianity, the relationship to non-Christian religions, and the problems involved with national identity and nationalism in the decades after the Pacific War with its extreme nationalism. In “Theologism and Religionism” he deals with the claims of exclusive absoluteness of Christianity as the “only truth”, and draws the lines from Schleiermacher via Troeltsch to Barth and Tillich, and searches for ways to negotiate between exclusivism and pluralism. The subsequent articles are gradually directed more towards Japanese theologians and philosophers from the Kyoto School: “A New Possibility for a Philosophy of Religion,” “Immanent Transcendence in Religion,” “Christianity and the Notion of Nothingness,” “Watch Your Step!” and “Nothingness in Love.” While the former of these articles tend to relate to Nishida and Nishitani, the last article is primarily directed toward Tanabe Hajime.

The book is an enjoyable read, primarily as a well-written presentation of a Christian philosopher who brought new insights into the dialogue with Buddhism, and still deserves to be heard and read. It also serves as an important reminder of a philosophical dialogue that actually began more than a hundred years ago—Nishida published his *Zen no kenkyū* (A Study of Good) in 1911, and even before that Buddhists and Christians in Japan had made their first stumbling steps toward a meaningful dialogue.

Notto R. Thelle  
Senior Professor of Theology,  
University of Oslo, Norway