

Kindai no bukkyō shisō to Nihon shugi 近代の仏教思想と日本主義 (Modern Buddhist Thought and Japanism). Edited by Kondō Shuntarō 近藤俊太郎 and Nawa Tatsunori 名和達宣 under the supervision of Ishii Kōsei 石井公成. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2020. xiii + 556 pages. Hardcover. ISBN-13: 978-4-8318-5560-2.*

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As Kondō Shuntarō, one of the editors of this volume, points out, studies on wartime Japanese Buddhism have focused on pursuing the responsibility of Buddhists in abetting and supporting the Japanese war effort. Such studies condemned wartime Buddhist monks and organizations for distorting the original nature of Buddhism under the influence of “Japanism” (*Nihon shugi* 日本主義). This approach was dominant among scholars in the field long after the end of the war. Their research praised the exceptional people who “resisted” the system while consigning the rest to the dark “history of submission to the emperor-centered Japanese state” (p. ii). Defined by the two extremes of “resistance” and “submission,” studies on wartime Japanese Buddhism were forced into an impasse without being able to engage in any productive arguments.

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Such is Kondō's analysis and he has hit the nail right on the head. The promotional blurb that accompanies this book calls it an attempt to overcome the dualistic thinking based on “resistance” and “submission.” As this suggests, this collection of essays, the result of a joint research project by a total of sixteen scholars including the supervising editor Ishii Kōsei as well as editors Kondō Shuntarō and Nawa Tatsunori, seeks to break through the rigidly dualistic narrative that has hampered studies on wartime Japanese Buddhism. This is a volume that we have long been waiting for.

The volume takes its cue from the argument made by Nakajima Takeshi in his *Shinran to Nihon shugi* 親鸞と日本主義 (Shinran and Japanism, 2017) that Pure Land Buddhism is closely related to Japan's *kokutai* 国体 (national polity) discourse. Nakajima's argument served as an inspiration for Nawa, who belongs to the Kyōgaku Kenkyūsho 教学研究所 (Research Center for Doctrinal Studies) of Higashi Honganji 東本願寺. In his contribution, “Shinshū Ōtani-ha no kyōgaku to Nihon shugi” 真宗大谷派の教学と日本主義 (The Doctrines of the Ōtani Branch of Shin Buddhism and Japanism), Nawa took seriously Nakajima's sharp criticism concerning “the danger inherent in Shinran's thought” (p. 46, paraphrased) and confronted the doctrinal position of Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深 (1875–1971), whose thought many people feel reluctant to criticize because his influence is still strong in the Ōtani Branch (i.e., Higashi Honganji). This essay, brimming with Nawa's acute awareness of the issues involved, is well worth reading.

On the other hand, in his essay “Nihon kaiki no shisō kōzō” 日本回帰の思想構造 (The Philosophical Structure of the “Return to Japan”), Ōmi Toshihiro discusses the “conversion” (*tenkō* 転向, or the recantation of socialist thought under duress) by Kamei Katsuichirō 亀井勝一郎 (1907–1966), a literary critic who wrote on Shinran, among other things, and carefully refutes Nakajima's criticism of Kamei. Similarly, Saitō Kōta, in his “Motoori Norinaga to Nihon shugi” 本居宣長と日本主義 (Motoori Norinaga and Japanism), takes up Nakajima's argument that since Pure Land Buddhism gave birth to Motoori Norinaga's thought, and Norinaga is closely associated with modern Japan's *kokutai* discourse, Shinran's thought has affinity with the *kokutai* discourse as well. Saitō interprets this as a kind of syllogism and critically examines the validity of Nakajima's argument. The different approaches that the authors of the essays in this volume take towards Nakajima's arguments are in themselves indicative of the diverse ways in which Shinran's thought and Japanism are related to each other.

Why was Buddhist thought taken over by Japanism? Although Nakajima's book focused specifically on the relationship between Shinran's thought and Japanism, in the volume under review, Nakajima's perspective is applied to a wider range of thinkers. Moreover, this volume does not only deal with the ways in which Buddhism was incorporated into the dominant ideologies of *kokutai* and Japanism. Its distinguishing characteristic is that it attempts to clarify the specific ways in which the thinkers and intellectuals that lived in wartime Japan interacted and struggled with the currents of

their time and, in addition, how their intellectual struggles are related to Japanism. In other words, the aim of this volume is to elucidate “the reference points useful for identifying the characteristic features of the interaction between Buddhist thought and Japanism” (p. viii). Hence, this volume does not offer any definition of Japanism, on the premise that it is more important to clarify the features of wartime Japanese Buddhist thought—which has long been treated as a “painful festering boil” (*haremono* 腫れ物) that should not be touched—through the lens of Japanism.

For this reason, the topics taken up in the chapters in this volume are not limited to Shinran’s thought. Since it is impossible to speak about Japanism without reference to Nichiren 日蓮 Buddhism, it contains two chapters devoted to the connection between Nichirenism and Japanism. A variety of other topics are taken up as well, including Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574–622), Zen 禪, the rightist organization Genri Nihonsha 原理日本社, the Kyoto school, Nihon shinwaha 日本神話派 (a group of wartime philosophers that developed distinctive interpretations of Japanese mythology and morality), and Marxism. Likewise, a wide range of thinkers appears in this volume: Kaneko Daiei 金子大栄 (1881–1976), Umehara Shinryū 梅原真隆 (1885–1966), Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学 (1861–1939), Inoue Ukon 井上右近 (1891–?), Kurokami Shōichirō 黒上正一郎 (1900–1930), Minoda Muneki 蓑田胸喜 (1894–1946), Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966), Seki Seisetsu 関精拙 (1877–1945), Furukawa Gyōdō 古川堯道 (1872–1961), Ichikawa Hakugen 市川白弦 (1902–1986), Kihira Tadayoshi 紀平正美 (1874–1949), Mitsui Kōshi 三井甲之 (1883–1953), Akegarasu Haya 暁鳥敏 (1877–1954), Yoshikawa Eiji 吉川英治 (1892–1962), and Sano Manabu 佐野学 (1892–1953). In addition, Ishii’s introduction provides a comprehensive survey providing relevant background information from the Meiji 明治 period (1868–1912) through the Shōwa 昭和 period (1926–1989).

The chapters in the volume explore “the thought and experiences, ranging from opportunistic support to vacillation, cooperation, inner struggle, dismay, and self-reproach, on up to philosophical disguise and appropriation” (p. viii) of the people mentioned above as they confronted the wartime situation. In trying to deal with the situation they were placed in, they ended up opening Pandora’s box, and the readers are confronted with a picture of Buddhist thought yielding to the onslaught of Japanism. The readers are also made painfully aware of the fact that Buddhism was itself deeply involved in the creation of various discourses concerning Japanism and the *kokutai* that arose in wartime Japan. For some time, Sueki Fumihiko, the leading figure in the study of modern Japanese Buddhist thought, has been arguing that “Buddhism is not at the periphery of modern thought but is rather at its center” (*Meiji shisōka ron* 明治思想家論, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, he concludes, there is a need to reexamine the history of modern Japanese thought from a Buddhist perspective. The chapters in this

volume also eloquently show that studies on wartime thought and Japanism can no longer be pursued without reference to Buddhism.

Among the conditions that made it possible to compile this epoch-making volume, perhaps the most important is that Japanese scholars have been liberated from their obsession with pursuing the wartime responsibilities of Japanese Buddhists. This is due in large part to the fact that the contributors included in this volume are relatively young: both of the editors were born in 1980 and many of the contributors were born after 1975. Moreover, the fact that the contributors do not necessarily locate themselves in a discursive field that intersects with established Buddhist schools has also made it possible for them to approach their subject critically. Describing the editorial policy of the volume, Nawa writes, “We tried to distance ourselves as much as possible from the sort of arguments about war responsibility that are found in earlier studies. This is because, even if we pursue the matter of Buddhist war responsibilities, it is hard to see how it would contribute to solving the problems of the present” (p. 540). This, of course, does not mean that the problem of the war responsibilities of Japanese Buddhists is being ignored. Rather, without glossing over the fact that many problems of the postwar Japanese system have been carried over from wartime Japan, the aim of the volume is to advance the study of war responsibilities to a higher level. There is no question that this volume will have a major impact on future scholarship in the field.

(Translated by Robert F. Rhodes)