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Review of Richard M. Jaffe. *Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism*

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Richard M. Jaffe. *Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism*

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. xxii + 288 pp. \$42.50 cloth. ISBN 0-691-07495-X

CLERICAL MARRIAGE stands alongside changing attitudes towards funerary care as one of the most critical issues in contemporary Japanese Buddhism. In this richly detailed and clearly written work, Richard Jaffe describes how the issue of clerical marriage came to dominate modern Japanese Buddhism. In so doing he provides a valuable contribution to the fields of Japanese Studies and Buddhology. Moreover, through his focus on the interaction between the Meiji state and Buddhist organizations Jaffe provides abundant material for anyone interested in state-religion issues.

Jaffe begins by emphasizing the contemporary prevalence of clerical marriage. He, thus, sets the stage for the following chapters, which explain how this came to be and why it is still an unresolved issue in many ways. Chapter 2, for example, is a survey of pre-Meiji evidence for clerical marriage, and serves to provide the background to the explosive Meiji debate over the legalization of clerical marriage and later debates over what clerical marriage would or could mean for the Buddhist establishment. In particular, Jaffe pays attention to the state's role in overseeing Buddhist deportment. While his brief exploration of pre-Meiji clerical liaisons is interesting, this chapter's major contribution lies in his examination of the Edo period status system and the meaning of state control of clerical celibacy within that system. The question of status is taken up in further detail in Chapter 4. Edo laws on clerical marriage served over time to heighten awareness of clerical infractions of moral codes and, thus, to fuel critiques of established Buddhism.

Jaffe next offers a case study of the debate over clerical marriage. His example, Jōdo Shin Buddhism, the only Buddhist denomination to practice open clerical marriage leading up to the Edo period, had long been attacked by other denominations for its teachings and practices, especially on the topic of clerical marriage. By using Jōdo Shin as his case study Jaffe is able to draw on extensive clerical debate materials. In particular, he draws on the apologetic works of Chiku (1634–1718) to show the manner in which Shin clerics defended their stance on clerical marriage. One critical aspect of their defense was the rhetoric of timeliness: other schools were

failing because their practices, including their views on clerical marriage, were not suitable to the times. In later chapters Jaffe examines arguments by Meiji period clerics who also used the rhetoric of timeliness to support clerical marriage as a properly modern practice. Jaffe closes this chapter by stating that the issue of clerical marriage would be used by anti-Buddhist groups in the late Edo and early Meiji “as a pretext for closing temples and forcefully laicizing clerics.” He, thereby, contributes to the work in this area already done by scholars such as James Ketelaar.

Chapter 4 examines the modern household registration system from the aspect of clerical status and in so doing provides valuable insight into the development of modern Japanese Buddhism and society. There is currently very little information available in English on the modern family registration system, which makes this chapter of interest to anyone concerned with the development of modern Japanese society. As with the earlier chapters and their emphasis on how changes in law have broad-reaching impact on religious life, here Jaffe traces the multiple ways in which the shift to a civil household registration from the Edo period temple household registration system influenced Buddhist practice. For example, under the new system the clergy were required to adopt surnames. This requirement transformed temple practices and relationships. Not only were lineage and temple relationships altered, but also basic questions, such as who owns the temple property, came to light. From problems concerning the adoption of surnames Jaffe draws the reader into a discussion of the Meiji period debate over the meaning of ordination. The end of state recognition of the ordination ceremony, Jaffe shows, was a drastic change from the practice of previous centuries.

Jaffe next moves on to show the ways in which the Buddhist clergy participated in the creation of those laws that affected them the most. The active words in this chapter are compromise and negotiation. In particular, Jaffe brings to the light the work of Ōtori Sessō (1814–1904) who, according to Jaffe, was one of the most influential Buddhists of the Meiji period due to his position within the Meiji government. Jaffe’s study of Ōtori shows how Buddhist, Shinto and state interests, though based at times on differing concerns, were aligned in the early Meiji period against the encroachment of Christianity and for the building of a national identity. Shared concerns such as these led Buddhists to actively seek a role in the state’s national doctrine instructor system. Clergy members such as Ōtori saw a need to do away with outdated customs, such as the ban on clerical marriage, in order to better serve the state as doctrinal instructors. In a perfect world, Jaffe could have included more on local level negotiation of state and Buddhist concerns but, in a project already as fully detailed as this, that may be asking for too much.

Chapter 6 steps back from the active Buddhist-state cooperation seen in Chapter 5 to examine the strong Buddhist resistance to the decriminalization of clerical marriage. Here the underlying question of whether the precepts should be or could be adhered to in the modern age, an issue raised in other chapters, is examined in detail through an exploration of Fukuda Gyokai and the precept revival movement. Just as proponents of the repeal of laws banning clerical marriage argued that Bud-

dhism's problems were its own, brought on by corruption, so too did Fukuda. Rather than arguing for changing with the times, however, he argued for stricter adherence to the precepts. Moreover, he argued that the state must continue its role in helping to enforce adherence to the precepts. Jaffe's examination of the modern precept revival movement is invaluable because so little work on the precepts has been done in English despite their central role within Buddhist practice. His treatment of the precepts helps to bring classical Buddhology into the modern world.

Chapter 7 follows the line of resistance to the denominational level by delineating the manner in which Buddhists were quick to take advantage of changing governmental views towards the state-religion relationship. Jaffe shows the manner in which some Buddhist denominations explored the boundaries of decriminalization by attempting to strengthen internal control over the priesthood through implementing various distinctions between "pure" and "impure" clergy members. Jaffe also demonstrates how other Meiji government actions, such as the abolishment of Shugendo orders and the resultant incorporation of married Shugendo clergy into the Tendai and Shingon sects, further exacerbated the problem of clerical marriage. Jaffe closes by noting that even once state interference through such activities as the failed doctrinal instructor system diminished and clerical leaders were in a stronger position vis-à-vis their subordinates, the growing tide of opinion was that precept adherence had become a private matter. Clerical leaders were thus fighting against the tide of opinion even within their own ranks.

Chapter 8 addresses the reaction to clerical marriage and the hard line position of clerical leaders by Buddhist intellectuals in the period after the fast paced changes and confusion that immediately followed decriminalization. In particular, Jaffe offers an in-depth examination of the writings of Tanaka Chigaku (1861–1939) as they regard family and marriage. The previous chapters introduced a variety of actors who have rarely been examined in previous studies. This chapter, however, takes on Tanaka Chigaku, who has been the subject of numerous works. Yet, Jaffe introduces fresh insight into Tanaka and, more importantly, into the question of clerical marriage and Japanese society through his examination of Tanaka. Echoing long-standing critiques of Buddhists as overly involved with funerals, Tanaka sought to create a Buddhism that was applicable to all aspects of life and approachable by the laity. Jaffe offers a close reading of Tanaka's *Bukkyo fufu ron* to explicate Tanaka's stance on the family, Buddhism, and the state. Jaffe situates Tanaka's arguments within the broader social context of the time, in which the intellectual elite and the state were emphasizing the new family, the "*katei*." Tanaka's views of the family are situated within the state emphasis on the family as the foundation of morals and as the bedrock of the state. Jaffe concludes by stating that Tanaka used the existence of clerical marriage to argue that the only possible Buddhism was that of lay Buddhism.

The title of Chapter 9, "From Doctrinal Concern to Practical Problem," sums up the results of decades of argumentation concerning clerical marriage: it was there to stay and daily giving birth to a full set of practical problems. Here again Jaffe situ-

ates the discussion in the context of the times. The growing view of temple families as a “social” problem, he notes, only truly came to the surface within the creation of a growing middle class and various social forces that created “the social” in late Meiji Japan. Jaffe examines statistical evidence to show that by the early Shōwa period clerical marriage was the norm at the majority of temples. That alone may not have presented a problem had it not also been for Christian attacks on Buddhist views of the family. Such attacks forced Buddhists to reflect not only on doctrinal views of women and the family but also on the practical problem of clerical families.

Perhaps the most important practical problems were those of family life, inheritance, and practice at temples with clerical families. In particular, the standing of the temple-wife drew criticism. They were often hidden away, their children registered as illegitimate, and their sons raised not simply as sons but as disciples. Some critics drew on modern theories of biology to come to the conclusion that by relying on women who would accept such circumstances the genetic pool of the priesthood would be endangered. In order to counter the variety of problems created by clerical marriage most sects eventually adopted “family protection laws.” While Jaffe makes clear that these laws were mostly concerned with clarifying succession, an act that unofficially recognized clerical marriage, his conclusions (repeated in Chapter 10) may leave the impression that temple wives were better off. There is much evidence, however, that the laws did little to protect temple wives, who even today survive precariously unless they are able to produce an heir.

This brings us to Jaffe’s final chapter, which returns us to the issue of the contemporary problems facing Temple Buddhism as a result of clerical marriage. Here Jaffe points out that clerical marriage has blurred the lines between layman and clergy. And that, despite widespread acknowledgement of this fact, the established Buddhist denominations continue to attempt draw a line between clerical status and worldly status. This stubborn effort has resulted in a gap between rhetoric and practice that contributes to contemporary critiques of Temple Buddhism (the subject of my own work).

Jaffe’s book is so rich in detail and insightful analysis of a critical issue that finding points to critique is not easy. The only issue I have with the work is the lack of material on the wives of the clergy themselves. A section or chapter on temple wives in prewar Japan would have made for an even stronger book. However, I know from my own work on this issue that prewar materials on temple wives are few and far between, leaving us to pick through the writings of clerical authorities, a rather biased group, in order to access the lives of these women. So this is less a critique of Jaffe’s book than a call for others to take up this issue in the future. I would recommend this book as a must read for anyone interested in Japanese religious history, Buddhism, or Japanese social history.

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