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In this issue we focus on Japanese religious thought, philosophy and ideology, covering Japan's two main religions (Buddhism and Shinto) as well as Christianity and some lesser known ideologies. Sir Hugh Cortazzi examines the ideology surrounding the tea ceremony which is explored by Tim Cross in a thought-provoking new study. While superficially the tea ceremony seems an innocuous, sedate affair the symbolism underpinning some aspects of it have been used in the past to promote and reinforce nationalist ideologies and the concept of Japanese uniqueness. Ben-Ami Shillony analyzes Jacob Kovalio's work on Japanese anti-Semitic thought in the 1920s, a topic many readers will probably know little about. The Japanese brand of anti-Semitism lacked the religious and social dynamics of its more toxic Western counterpart, so evolved differently in Japan. As its title suggested the study focuses on the forged documents known as **The Protocols of the Elders of Zion** and their impact in Japan. For example, in 1924 a Buddhist nationalist leader actually ran for the Lower House of the Diet on an anti-Semitic platform, astonishingly accusing both the Jews and the Freemasons of being part of an international conspiracy. Kovalio also looks at those Japanese academics who vigorously challenged these views. We next turn our gaze to Shinto. John Breen and Mark Teeuwen's excellently researched **A New History of Shinto** furnishes us with a masterfully constructed and stimulating overview of Japan's indigenous religion. The authors take us from its misty origins and earliest recorded writings in the Kojiki (古事記) and Nihon Shoki (日本書紀) to present day issues. Andrew Webb looks at a new volume of essays and commentaries on the Japanese spiritual classic, the Tannisho (歎異抄), which is the most famous text of the Jodo Shinshu (浄土真宗), more commonly known as True Pure Land School or 'Shin Buddhist' tradition. Remaining in the realm of Buddhism we explore **Portraits of Chōgen, The Transformation of Buddhist Art in early Medieval Japan** by John M. Rosenfield. This impressive new study explores the development of Buddhist art and meticulously charts the changing styles of Buddhist sculpture. It is packed full of beautiful pictures and excellent commentaries. Fumiko Halloran rounds off this issue with an in-depth and highly stimulating review of the insightful and best-selling Japanese language novel by Yasuhisa Ebisawa about the lives of descendants of Japanese Christians in the 1860s.

Sean Curtin

New reviews

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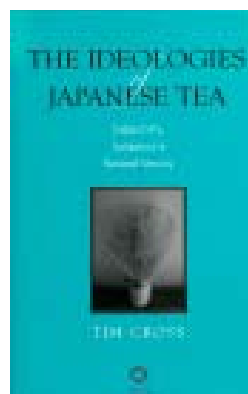
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We are grateful to our regular reviewers:

Sir Hugh Cortazzi	Susan Meehan
Simon Cotterill	Takahiro Miyao
William Farr	Ian Nish
Fumiko Halloran	Ben-Ami Shillony
Mikihiro Maeda	Tomohiko Taniguchi

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The Ideologies of Japanese Tea: Subjectivity, Transience & National Identity

by Tim Cross

Global Oriental, 2009, 312 pages including index, bibliography and notes, €77

ISBN 978-1-905246-74-8

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

Tim Cross, who teaches courses related to tea, noh and contemporary literature in Kyushu, is a practitioner of tea as well as of noh singing and dancing.

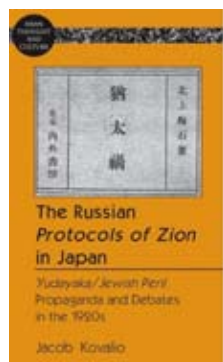
Cross explains that his book "maps how the pleasures of tea were useful in the invention of a particular form of Japaneseness. Tea precepts such as purity, harmony and respectful appreciation of social stability will be shown to be coercive forces that became keywords in the official definition of wartime Japanese identity, a sacrament that demanded the ultimate sacrifice." This thought is further explained by Andrew Cobbing of Nottingham University who has written an introduction entitled "Tea, Aesthetics and Power." In this he says: "At first glance, the aesthetic imagery surrounding the tea ceremony seems innocent enough: transience, ephemerality, purification and the beauty of cherry blossoms falling in their prime. Yet in the context of military conflict, embodied within this symbolism is a potentially lethal discourse of transience with a practical application in the theatre of war."

Cross begins with a description of "twenty-first century tea." This is followed by a chapter entitled "Inventing the nation, Japanese culture politicizes nature" in which he notes that for tea masters "all flowers are not created equal." Tea masters do not care for flowers that remain long in bloom. The next chapter is headed "Lethal Transience" in which Cross argues among other things that "This other world of tea allowed Japaneseness to be defined in a manner that blurred the boundaries between the worlds of nature and society." He notes that the famous cherry blossom at Yoshino not only announce the arrival of spring but "link imperial power, martial struggles for power and natural divinity."

The next chapter entitled “Japanese Harmony as Nationalism: Grand Master Tea for War and Peace” is based on the premise that “tea operates as cultural nationalism inside the discourse of state nationalism.” Chapter 5, which is headed “Wartime tea literature, Rikyū, Hideyoshi and Zen,” recounts the relationship between Rikyū and Hideyoshi and Sen no Rikyū’s ritual suicide which was regarded as “the embodiment of the calm decisiveness of Zen.” Cross describes war-time Japanese propaganda as an “early twentieth century appeal to the role of Japan as an agent of global harmony at the point of a sword.” On page 115 he writes: “The ideological linkage between Zen and tea as patriotic forces commences with the 1906 rendition by Okakura [Kakushin] of Rikyū smiling as he took his own life in 1591. The 1915 invention of war Zen is compounded by the 1943 appearance of combat zazen [kamikaze pilots were sent to do zazen [坐禪] before their final suicidal mission]. The image of Rikyū facing his own death was a role model for members of the Imperial Forces who were conscripted into Soldier Zen.”

Chapter 6 on the “Grand Master: Iemoto” and chapter 7 headed “The Teachings as Power Questioning Legitimate Authority” are critical of a system which is open to corruption and abuse, but which reflects the Japanese penchant for hierarchy and respect for age and position. Chapter 6 also discusses the way in which tea is dealt with in Yasunari Kawabata’s [川端康成] novel *Thousand Cranes* [千羽鶴]. The next two chapters deal with films and take up some controversies in which Cross has been involved. The final chapter on “National Identity and Tea Subjectivity” takes as its theme the following opaque question: “Could it be that a post-modern subject for nation may be emerging for whom nation as independent nation state matters somewhat less than nation as culture?”

The value of this book lies in its exposure of the way that the tea ceremony and its concomitant philosophy has been exploited to boost Japanese nationalism and the concept of Japanese uniqueness. Unfortunately the book is written in a dense style with many convoluted sentences. This means that some long sentences need to be read at least twice before their meaning becomes apparent.



The Russian Protocols of Zion in Japan: Yudayaka/Jewish Peril Propaganda and Debates in the 1920s

by Jacob Kovalio

Peter Lang Pub Inc, 2009, 114 pages, ISBN 978 1 4331 0609 5 £39.00

Review by Ben-Ami Shillony

The 1920s were a crucial period in modern Japanese history, when new and revolutionary western ideologies, like

communism and fascism, entered Japan and found adherents there. Anti-Semitism was one of those western ideologies to arrive at that time. It offered a simplistic explanation of the perplexing turmoil of the world. It appealed to conservatives alarmed about communist subversion and to those attracted by conspiracy theories. Few publications have dealt with the strange phenomenon of Japanese anti-Semitism (see note 1), and this thin volume is an important addition to that literature.

Japanese anti-Semitism lacked the religious and social roots which fed the animosity toward Jews in the west. It remained an intellectual fad that did not produce the physical attacks and other measures against Jews, which characterized western anti-Semitism. Moreover, Japanese anti-Semitic writers sometimes expressed admiration for the rich and clever Jews, who allegedly control the world, and advocated befriending them and learning from them.

In search of scapegoats

The Russian Protocols of Zion in Japan: Yudayaka/Jewish Peril Propaganda and Debates in the 1920s focuses on the appearance and acceptance of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Japan in the decade broadly known as Taishō Democracy. As Kovalio points out, the Protocols were a forged document, concocted by the Paris branch of the tsarist secret police (Okhrana) at the beginning of the 20th century. The aim of the forgery was to deflect popular Russian discontent from the government toward the Jewish conspiracy to subvert the state. The document carried the minutes of an alleged conference of world Jewish leaders, in which they worked out their grand strategy to control the world. The purported author of the document was Sergey Nilus, a Russian occultist and a former anarchist who reverted to Russian-Orthodox Christianity. The Protocols were translated into many languages and gained considerable notoriety in many countries in the years following the First World War and the Russian Revolution. They provided an easy explanation to millions of bewildered people, looking for scapegoats to exorcize their miseries. The enigmatic, rich and influential Jews presented a perfect scapegoat. Even in the US, which had not been ravaged by war and revolution, the Protocols gained a wide audience. As Kovalio shows, prominent American figures, such as Henry Ford and Thomas Edison, were outspoken anti-Semites, promoting the Protocols and blaming the Jews for the evils of the world.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion were introduced into Japan by Japanese army officers who had participated in the Siberian Expedition of 1918-1922, helping the fiercely anti-Semitic White Russian troops who blamed the Jews for the Russian Revolution. As Kovalio shows, in the Japan of the 1920s, as in the West at that time, anti-Semitic ideas were voiced by respectable people and appeared in reputable journals. In 1921, the liberal monthly magazine *Chūō Kōron* [中央公論] welcomed the return of Crown Prince Hirohito from his European tour with the words: “We are elated to welcome back His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince, confident now that our serious fears that He might be hurt by violent Koreans or Jewish plots did not materialize” (page 2). The first publicised Japanese edition of the Protocols

appeared in the March 1920 issue of the magazine *Shinrei*, the organ of the religious sect Ōmoto-kyō. In 1924, the Buddhist nationalist leader Chigaku Tanaka [田中智學] ran for the Diet's Lower House on an anti-Semitic platform. In the anti-Semitic literature, based on the Protocols, the Jews and the Freemasons were accused together of being part of the same international conspiracy.

Forgery and fantasy

Yet, as Kovalio shows, not all Japanese intellectuals subscribed to anti-Semitic ideas, and there were those who criticized the Jewish-conspiracy theory. Professor Sakuzō Yoshino [吉野作造] of Tokyo Imperial University, the leading liberal thinker of the 1920s, attacked the anti-Semitic writings of this time. In essays in *Chūō Kōron* in 1921, he dismissed the Protocols as an absurd fabrication unworthy of Japanese intellectuals. Himself a Christian and a Freemason, Yoshino ridiculed the identification of the Jews with the Freemasons, showing that until the late 19th century Jews were not admitted to the Masonic Order. Another liberal Christian scholar from Tokyo Imperial University, Tadao Yanaihara [矢内原 忠雄], rejected the childish accusations of the Jews, pointing out that only a few of the world's capitalists were Jews and only a few of the Jews were capitalists. Yanaihara dismissed the accusation that Zionism was a Jewish tool to control the world, and expressed support for the Jewish return to Palestine. Other critics of anti-Semitism included Kanzō Uchimura [内村 鑑三] and Nyozeikan Hasegawa [長谷川 如是閑]. Kovalio translates a roundtable symposium on "The Jewish Question," which appeared in *Heibon* magazine in 1929. In that symposium, the participants praised the Jewish financier Jacob Schiff who had extended help to Japan during the Russo-Japanese War. The conclusion of the symposium was that the Protocols were a forgery, Zionism did not aim to subvert the world, and the Jewish conspiracy was sheer fantasy (pages 50-57).

In the last chapter of his book, Kovalio discusses current Japanese anti-Semitic literature. He claims that in postwar Japan, the Jewish-conspiracy theory has been replaced by an Israeli-conspiracy theory. He regards Professor Yūzō Itagaki [板垣雄三] of Tokyo University as the leading exponent of this leftist-Islamic form of anti-Semitism. He laments that in today's Japan no brave intellectuals, like Sakuzō Yoshino and Tadao Yanaihara, have come out to challenge the Israel-conspiracy theories. However, Kovalio seems to overstate his case, when he claims that the demonized image of the Jews in the last 150 years was created by the "conspiratorial minds" of Sergey Nilus, Pope Pius IX, Karl Marx, Henry Ford, Adolf Hitler, Nobutaka Shiōden [四王天 延孝], Yūzō Itagaki, Anis Mansour, Mahathir bin-Mohamad, Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, Masami Uno [宇野 正美] and others (p. 68). Lumping together all these names into one anti-Semitic block may sound as fantastic as the accusations of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Eccentricities

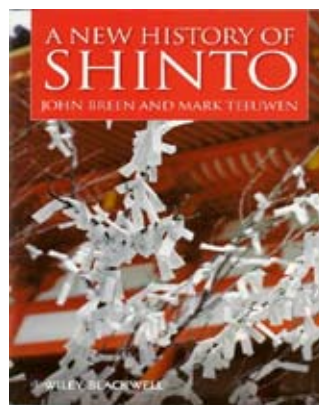
Kovalio uses both the terms "Judeophobia" and "anti-Semitism," but often prefers the lesser known Japanese phrase "Yudaya-ka" (Jewish peril). As a result, anti-Semitic writers become "Yudaya-ka ronja" (Jewish peril advocates).

He also uses the self-made acronym CSA (Conspiracy and Scapegoating Anti-Semitism). Such unfamiliar terms make the reading less fluent. The transliteration of some Japanese words does not follow the standard system. Thus, the suffix "shita" is spelled throughout the book as "shta." One also wonders why Karl Marx is constantly referred to as Karl Heinrich Marx, which is factually correct but not the standard form. These small eccentricities do not detract from the value of the book as an important source for the study of prewar Japanese anti-Semitism

Note

See for instance: Goodman, David G. and Masanori Miyazawa. 1995. *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype*. New York: The Free Press; Rotem Kowner, 2006. "On Symbolic Antisemitism: Motives for the Success of the Protocols in Japan and its Consequences," *Posen Papers in Contemporary Antisemitism*, No. 3. Jerusalem: The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and my own, Shillony, Ben-Ami. 1991. *The Jews and the Japanese: The Successful Outsiders*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle.

A different and shorter form of the above review first appeared in The Newsletter of the International Institute for Asian Studies (Spring 2010) and is reproduced here with the permission of the author.



A New History of Shinto

by John Breen and Mark Teeuwen

Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 264 pages including index and list of references, £19.99, ISBN 978-1-4051-5516-8 (soft back)

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

The first two chapters of *A New History of Shinto* provide a perspective of the development of Shinto in Japan. The book then has a full account of the Hie shrine near Kyoto. This is followed by a description of the myth of the Sun-Goddess and the Rock-cave and by a discussion of The Daijōsai [大嘗祭]: A "Shinto" Rite of Imperial Accession. The final chapter before some concluding remarks deals with "Issues in Contemporary Shinto."

The authors start from the premise that Shinto is a construct which came into being at some time in the past. This means that there must have been a 'pre-Shinto' time. In present-day Japan they note that Shinto is the religion of shrines which are distinguished from Buddhist temples by their characteristic architecture but "Seen through the eyes of the average patron of shrines, Shinto remains a very vague concept (page 1)." Shinto shrines, they point out, perform three categories of rituals. One is personal prayers for individuals or families. Another category "is of an imperial nature. These rituals which are standardized across the land"

include the niinamesai [新嘗祭], a form of harvest festival. A third category is that of shrine festivals.

In Pre-Meiji Japan Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines had not been clearly divided. This changed under the post-Restoration regime but it was then argued by some that Shinto was not a 'religion.' Participation in Shinto rituals "could not be anything more than a simple expression of respect for the Great Men who had built the nation." The Meiji period, however, "also saw the emergence of a number of 'Shinto sects' that were officially recognized and administered as religious groups (page 17)." In post-war Japan three different roles for Shinto have been postulated. One of these "stressed Shinto's role in uniting the Japanese people under the spiritual guidance of the emperor. Another emphasised 'the spiritual value of local traditions of worshipping local kami.' A third called for Shinto to develop 'from an ethnic religion into a universal one' (Page 6)."

The second chapter covers "Kami Shrines, Myths, and Rituals in Premodern Times." The authors argue (page 45) that "the category of kami as opposed to other higher beings, ranging from buddhas to devas, star deities, and powerful animals such as foxes and snakes, was ... fluid." They note that the word Shinto first used in the *Nihon shoki* [日本書紀], (circa 720) had Buddhist connotations. The term was used by Kanetomo Yoshida [吉田兼俱] in the late fifteenth century who conceived of *kami*, shrines, and their priests as "constituting a new religion called one-and-only Shinto, distinct from, superior to, and the very source of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, even as it accommodated these creeds (pages 51/52)." The religious nature of Shinto shrines was underlined by the large number of pilgrims attracted to shrines especially those at Ise.

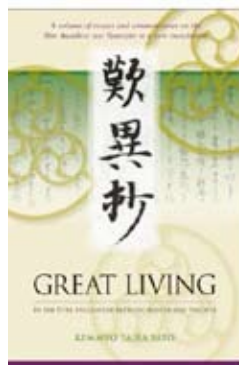
Visitors to Japan often ask about the origin of torii at the entrance to Japanese shrines. The authors note that in one document of 1513 all torii represent "the entrance to 'the palace of the rock-cave'" in the Sun-Goddess myth (page 147). The chapter on the Daijōsai describes the ritual as "an exercise in power," and notes that "its function is to produce and reproduce a particular emperor-centred order (page 175)." Some influential Japanese see "the purpose of the daijōsai" as "none other than to unify the state, the imperial court and the people (page 198)."

John Breen has done much research on the Yasukuni shrine [see our review of Breen's *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past* in Issue 26] and the authors conclude that Yasukuni rites have come to "consign much of war's reality to oblivion and leave no scope to reflect on its brutality and cruelty (page 217)."

In their conclusion the authors stress that Shinto "appears not as the unchanging core of Japan's national essence but rather as the unpredictable outcome of an erratic history (page 228)."

In a brief review it is not possible to do more than highlight a few points such as those which I have cited above but I hope that I have shown that this book contains many interesting and thought provoking insights in its account

of Shinto. I think, however, that a better title would have been "Some new perspectives on Shinto." It is not a comprehensive history. Nor does it attempt to describe the various modern Shinto sects and their teachings. It is not the ideal introduction to Shinto for anyone without prior knowledge of Japanese religion and history. The authors rightly do not describe kami as gods but it might have been helpful if a definition of kami had been attempted.



Great Living – In the Pure Encounter Between Master and Disciple

by Kemmyo Taira Sato

American Buddhist Study Center Press, 2010, 206 pages, £25.95
ISBN-13: 978-0976459477

Review by Andrew Webb

Great Living – In the Pure Encounter Between Master and Disciple – is a volume of essays and commentaries on the Japanese spiritual classic, the Tannisho (歎異抄), in a new English language translation for a western audience. The Tannisho is the most famous text of the Japanese Jodo Shinshu [浄土真宗] – True Pure Land School or 'Shin Buddhist' tradition and as such has seen several translations into English over the last 80 years. With Rev. Professor Sato's translation and commentary, however, we have a meticulously detailed examination and profound appreciation of the text from the perspective of the living encounter between teacher and student that lies at the heart of the Shin Buddhist faith.

The Tannisho (A Record of Lament over Divergence) itself is a collection of the sayings of Shinran [親鸞] Shonin (1173-1262) compiled by his close disciple Yuien. It is a brief work consisting of eighteen chapters divided into two parts, each with a short preface, followed by a postscript together with an historical endnote. Rev. Sato remarks at the beginning of the work, "The Tannisho is neither an academic work nor a mere historical document; it is, rather, the record of a living encounter that took place between master and disciple in medieval Japan". 'Encounter' is a word that occupies a very special place in this work and has a completely different emphasis from how we may ordinarily understand the term. As Rev. Sato states at the beginning of his commentary,

"Encounter can serve as the very source of spiritual light in our lives, provided it is realised purely... We arrive at this newfound situation through the spiritual light of self-awakening that breaks down the barriers that we have thrown up between ourselves and others. In the Tannisho we can see this taking place in the genuine encounter between Shinran Shonin and Yuien."

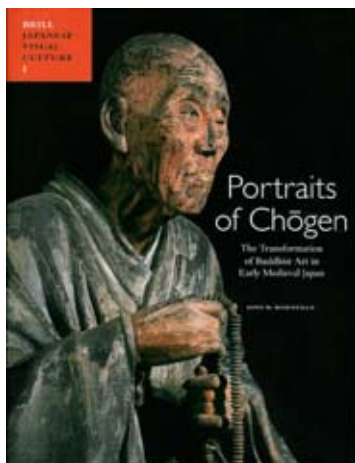
The 'living encounters' reflected in the work are several. There are the two formative encounters between Shinran Shonin and his own master Honen [法然] Shonin and between Shinran Shonin and his disciples including of course Yuien. Next from the inner dimension of Shinran Shonin's own religious experiences there are a further two encounters, namely Shinran Shonin's encounter with the nature of his true self as an ordinary being burdened with "bad karma" and his encounter with Amida Buddha [阿弥陀仏] who saves all beings without any form of discrimination. These are the two inseparable aspects of the Shin Buddhist faith-experience which Shinran Shonin received through his own encounter with his master Honen Shonin and which Yuien wished to transmit through the Tannisho to later generations.

It is through the lens of spiritual encounter that Rev. Sato focuses on the Tannisho not as an ancient academic work but as a vivid and dynamic record of a living spirituality concerned with the realities of everyday life. The Tannisho was originally compiled to make people aware of the many challenges that confront Shin Buddhist followers and to show them the way to go beyond these problems. In his commentary Rev. Sato brings out the relevance of these problems to the modern audience and also shows us the way to go beyond them through faith in Amida Buddha.

Rev. Sato first arrived in London from his parent temple, Shogyoji [正行寺], in 1993 and since then, with his wife Hiroko, has tirelessly been involved in the creation of a Shin Buddhist centre called Three Wheels. A major part of his activities has been in translating and commenting on core Shin Buddhist texts like the Tannisho. Originally the essays which make up this work were given as talks at the London Buddhist Society. However, these were much more than just talks given to an audience, they were also dialogues with those who came to listen and to ask questions of him. It is this open spirit of dialogue which shines through the entire book and makes it such a joy and treasure to read.

The title of this book gives only a hint of the scope of this masterly study. It focuses on the life and work of the Buddhist priest Chōgen 重源 (1121-1206). It covers the development of portraiture in East Asia and the revival of realism. It then describes the Great Buddha of Tōdaiji 東大寺 and the efforts to rebuild the temple after its destruction in 1180 in the war between the Minamoto 源 and the Taira 平 clans. The development of Buddhist sculpture in Nara and Kyoto is described together with an analysis of the methods used. This is accompanied by an account of some of the leading sculptors. A chapter on icons, rituals and paths to salvation and another on relics and ritual implements provide valuable insight into the various strands of Buddhism in the twelfth century. These are followed by a chapter on Buddhist paintings and illuminated sutras. The final chapter consists of an annotated translation of Chōgen's memoir. The appendices include notes on Buddhist doctrine and ritual as well as short biographies of some of the leading figures with whom Chōgen was associated as well as a valuable list of characters.

Chōgen was born in the Heian capital, now Kyoto into the Ki family, made famous by the poet Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 whose preface to the Kokinshū 古今集 is, to quote Professor Rosenfield, "a foundation document of Japanese literary aesthetics." He was thus "born into the middle levels of an elite court society." At the age of 13 he entered religious life at Daigoji 醍醐寺 "a vast monastery in the verdant hills south-east of the Heian capital" where he began to study esoteric Buddhism of the Shingon 真言 school and was taught to meditate on mandalas and perform various Buddhist rituals. By the age of thirty-five Chōgen had gained the status of Master Priest. Daigoji was a major centre of ritual mountain climbing and asceticism and Chōgen seems to have been an enthusiastic participant in various austerities especially at the Shingon complex of temples on Mt Koya 高野山. He became an itinerant monk (hijiri 聖). His reputation as a holy man came to the attention of the court and following the destruction in 1180 of the great Nara temples of Tōdaiji 東大寺 and Kōfukuji 興福寺, he was appointed as "Solicitor for the rebuilding of the Great Buddha" at Nara and this became the focus of the rest of his life. He was also instrumental in the building of some seven special sanctuaries or bessho 別所 for hijiri in which a number of important works of art came to be located. For the rebuilding of Tōdaiji he travelled to Suō 周防 province in western Honshu (now Yamaguchi 山口 prefecture) to find suitable cypress trees for the temple. These had to be cut down, floated to the sea and transported to the Yodo River 淀川 for delivery to Nara. One hundred and fifty timbers were eventually brought to Nara. This was a huge task which took two years and involved one to two thousand workmen. Chōgen in later life became associated with the 'Pure Land' school of Buddhism which emphasized the role of Amitabha (Amida 阿



**Portraits of Chōgen,
The Transformation of
Buddhist Art in early
Medieval Japan**

**by John M. Rosenfield,
Brill, Leiden, 2010**

**296 pages incl appendices,
notes, bibliography and
index, copious illustrations
in colour and black & white
ISBN 9789004168640 €93**

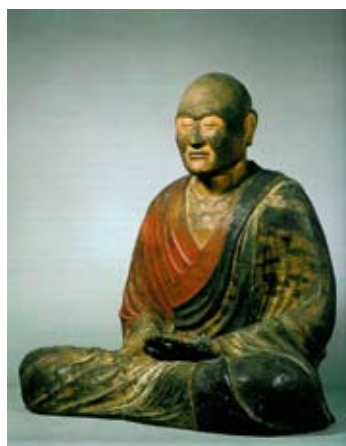
Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

弥陀) Buddha. He lived to see the completion of the Daibutsuden precinct at Tōdaiji in 1203.

Chōgen was an ascetic with a determined character. This is apparent from the striking facial features reflected in the portrait on the cover of this book which includes a number of fine illustrations of statues of him. The following two photographs from different angles are of the same statue, made in 1206 shortly before he died. The right hand image is a close up view of his face.



Professor Rosenfield in his account of the development of portrait sculpture in Japan shows that while portraits of Chōgen were particularly fine examples of Japanese realism there was a long tradition of depicting prominent persons especially holy men. The oldest extant image in East Asia is that of the Chinese monk Ganjin 鑑真 in Tōshōdaiji 唐招提寺 in Nara. Rosenfield describes this statue as “rather artless and straightforward” in comparison with the much later portraits of Chōgen:



The early eleventh century statue of Rōben 浪辯, one of Chōgen’s venerable predecessors at Tōdaiji, is another impressive portrait. The head and trunk were carved from a solid block of hinoki 檜 cypress. As it was kept hidden for a long time it is particularly well preserved.

Another striking portrait sculpture of 1201 which Professor Rosenfield illustrates is that of Hachiman Bosatsu 八幡菩薩 at Tōdaiji, a reminder of the way in which Shinto deities (in this case of the god of war) were absorbed into the Buddhist pantheon.



Hachiman Bosatsu
八幡菩薩 at Tōdaiji

Professor Rosenfield demonstrates that the production of Buddhist images and portrait sculpture were similar arts. He takes as his first example and as a forerunner of the Great Buddha of Nara that of the seated Buddha in bronze of about 742 in the little visited temple of Kanimanji 蟹満寺 in Kyoto.



Rosenfield describes this image, despite the ravages of time, as retaining “powerful aesthetic impact.”

It is not possible in a short review to give an outline of the development of Japanese Buddhist sculpture or to do justice to Professor Rosenfield’s scholarship, but



the following, which are some of the examples which Professor Rosenfield illustrates, will, I hope, tempt readers to get hold of a copy of the book.

Amida by Jōchō 定朝 of about 1053 in the Byōdōin 平等院 at Uji 宇治.

Amida statues from the mid 12th century in Jōruriji 浄瑠璃寺 a temple in southern Kyoto near to Nara.



The series of statues of Kannon 観音 from the workshop of Tankei 湛慶 dating from the 12th-13th centuries in the Sanjūsangendō 三十三間堂 in Kyoto.



The Amida from the Amida triad by Kaikei 快慶 of 1195 at Jōdōji 浄土寺 in Hyōgo 兵庫 prefecture.



And as an example of power we might cite the fearsome west guardian of 1203 in the gateway to Tōdaiji by Unkei 運慶.



Students of Japanese art will want to study this magnificently illustrated and fascinating book.



The Blue Sky: A Tale of Christian Descendants at the end of Tokugawa Era [青い空 幕末キリシタン類族伝]

by Yasuhisa Ebisawa
[海老沢泰久]

Bunshun Bunko [文藝春秋], 2009,
Volume One, 431 pages, 743 yen,
ISBN-10: 4167414120 & Volume
Two, 478 pages, 790 yen
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Review by Fumiko Halloran

The Meiji Restoration in 19th century Japan not only overthrew the Shogun's rule but rewrote the nation's religious map. That propelled the emperor into a deity whose absolute authority was crafted by the founders of the new regime for political purposes. Prior to that transformation, no traditional belief held that the emperors were gods; that was so even among scholars who believed in the Way of the Gods. This is the basic theme in Yasuhisa Ebisawa's best-selling novel that got rave reviews in 2004 and is now available in paperback.

Even during World War II, when Japanese military leaders relentlessly sought to indoctrinate the public with the emperor's status as a deity to legitimize their actions, many Japanese sensed the artificiality of that assertion. The imperial system and the Shinto shrines were inseparable then and the emperor remains the chief Shinto priest in present day Japan.

Ebisawa's tale revolves around a sixteen year old boy, Toemon, whose ancestors were Christians in Dewa, the present day Akita Prefecture in north-eastern Japan. This novel is set in 1863, ten years after the American black ships appeared near Edo to divide the nation into a bitter conflict between those who pushed for opening Japan and those who rejected it.

Toemon's ancestors were Christians who went into hiding after the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637. That revolt was triggered by anger of peasants toward the greedy clan lord in Shimabara domain in Kyushu because he had imposed heavy taxes on people already in extreme poverty. Since almost all of the 30,000 rebels who fought the Shogun's army of more than 120,000 soldiers were Christians, the Shogunate soon banned Christianity and closed the country to foreigners except for the limited trade of the Dutch and Chinese in Nagasaki. Persecution of the hidden Christians when they were exposed was thorough and ruthless. Yet even after the ban, for thirty years, more than one hundred European missionaries secretly entered Japan to baptize, preach, and say Mass for the surviving Christians. These missionaries were all caught, tortured, executed, or imprisoned for life.

That persecution did not stop with those who were discovered. A law was imposed on the surviving

descendants of the Christians to discriminate against them in every way, from being prohibited from leaving their clans to being required to report any change in their lives such as employment, marriage, birth of children, and death. They were required to belong to Buddhist temples to prove they had recanted the Christian faith of their ancestors. They were not allowed to be educated at community schools called *juku*. Even in death, families had to get permission to bury the deceased. The surviving descendants of Christians were called "Ruizoku" [類族] or groups associated with Christians, with a separate *koseki* or family registry.

In the novel, Toemon no longer practices the Christian faith, after five generations, but is keenly aware of injustice and is angry with exploitation of the Ruizoku by Buddhist temples. He kills a man who raped a sister of his best friend and flees from his village without identity papers. With the help of an underground network that helps men and women without permits to move through check points, he manages to arrive in Edo and finds a job as a servant to a sword master.

He changes his name to Ugenta to hide from the authorities. In the rapidly changing political situation with the Shogunate at the brink of collapse, Ugenta is thrown into chaotic and bloody struggles between supporters of the imperial court and the Shogunate. He kills another man who had murdered his close friend, a Shinto priest who openly criticized the Buddhist establishment. Ugenta cannot shake off his sense of guilt even though he justifies his action. He asks for forgiveness to a Higher Being whom he cannot name, yet feels His presence.

Ugenta comes to distrust promises of those who were pressing to overthrow the Shogunate that they will liberate the Christian Ruizoku. The Meiji government turns out to be just as oppressive as the old regime, accelerating the persecution of Christians who had come out believing that the new regime would protect them. Not only that, the Meiji Government persecuted the Buddhist establishment that was the backbone of the Shogunate. By ordering the registration of every person at a Buddhist temple, the Shogunate controlled the census, taxation, and labour for public works.

As a state religion, the Buddhist establishment became powerful and corrupt. The Buddhist monks thought nothing of breaking the code of conduct that prohibited drinking, fornication, and eating meat. They became wealthy by owning vast estates. The public's anger against the Buddhist establishment reached a boiling point and it welcomed with vengeance the new government's persecution of Buddhism. Crowds ran amok destroying temples, looting statues of Buddha, burning texts, and beating up monks. In addition, the Meiji government targeted the powerful influence of Confucian teachings that required people to follow the moral code of absolute respect for elders by the young, loyalty to masters by their vassals, obedience of wives to their husbands, and of children to parents. That was a convenient tool for the Shogunate to control the nation. Confucian scholars became official advisors to the Shogun and the elite samurai class.

Scholars of national studies, or *kokugakusha* [国学者], such as

Norinaga Motoori [本居 宣長] and Atsutane Hirata [平田 篤胤], asserted that Buddhism was a foreign religion imposed on Japanese since the 6th century by the ruling class to amass power. They also attacked Confucian teachings as unrealistic and hypocritical in light of Chinese history that experienced constant warfare, making the winners to be as virtuous rulers when in fact they were bandits of low origin who were skilful in warfare and power struggles.

Both Motoori and Hirata returned to Shinto as the core of true Japanese soul. While Motoori's life was devoted to criticism of Buddhism and Confucianism, Hirata was dedicated to raising Shinto to a level that would be powerful enough to eradicate Buddhism and Confucianism. Hirata searched for a concept of peace for the soul after the death of the flesh. In ancient times, Japanese believed in the permanent existence of the soul. They also believed that this world was "exposed" and one in which souls after death resided was a "ghostly twilight" one. Both Motoori and Hirata read the Chinese text of a book written by the Jesuit priest, Matteo Ricci, whose Chinese name is Li Madou [利瑪竇]. That book on Christian teachings, "Tien-chu-she-i," [天主隆盛] or "The True Doctrine of God," was published in Beijing in 1630 and Hirata found the Christian idea of the permanent existence of soul and the importance of life beyond death resonant with his own interpretation of Shinto teaching.

Both scholars promoted the emperor as the embodiment of the Shinto spirit but the Meiji government went further by making the emperor the head of state, a political presence, rather than the symbol of history, tradition, culture, and spirit. The novel argues that the founders of the Meiji government were lower class samurai who, in the eyes of the imperial court and the Shogun, had no legitimacy. The founders had to come up fast with evidence of legitimacy and authority. Their solution was to make the emperor the supreme leader of both spiritual and political spheres of Japanese life, claiming that this was the form of rule in ancient Japan.

The era of the emperor's infallibility whose conflicting identity dragged modern Japan onto a troubled path was implied in remarks by Kaishu Katsu, a hero in this novel. Ugenta was sent by opponents of the opening of Japan on a mission to assassinate Katsu. But Ugenta found he could not do it and was persuaded by Katsu to become his loyal agent. Katsu, a *hatamoto* of the Shogun's security guard, had an enlightened view of the world. His meeting with Takamori Saigo [西郷 隆盛], the commander of the imperial army advancing to Edo to overthrow the Shogun, resulted in a bloodless transfer of power from the Shogun to the emperor. Katsu agreed to the Shogun family's moving out of the Edo Castle that prevented civil war in Edo.

This novel is yet another example of how spiritual faith can be transformed into an organized religion that goes along with state power to create discrimination and oppression of those who have dissenting beliefs. Yet the author Ebisawa finds hope in a faith in a Supreme Being, from whom Ugenta asks forgiveness for his sin of killing two human beings. Ebisawa succeeds in weaving the personal pursuit of a soul finding peace with a historical drama of modern Japan.