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**Richard Jaffe: Neither Monk nor Layman**

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## Introduction

MORE THAN a century after the decriminalization of *nikujiki saitai*, marriage by Buddhist clerics is now a familiar part of Japanese life. According to a rough estimate made by Kanaoka Shūyū, today approximately 90 percent of the Buddhist clergy in Japan are married.<sup>1</sup> A comprehensive 1987 survey of the Sōtō Zen school, which has been among the most statistically self-conscious of all the Buddhist denominations in Japan, similarly found that more than 80 percent of Sōtō clerics inherited their temples from a family member and that more than 80 percent of them are married.<sup>2</sup> Surveys of other denominations, for example, the Buzan sect (Buzanha) of Shingon, show that as early as the end of the Taishō era there were similarly high proportions of married clerics and patrimonial inheritance of temples.<sup>3</sup> Today the Buddhist clergy universally keep their surnames after ordination, are listed in a household register (*koseki*), and are subject to the same laws as any other Japanese citizen. As with many small, family-run businesses in Japan, temple succession is largely a domestic affair, frequently with great pressure being brought to bear on the son deemed the most likely successor to the father-abbot. Family ties and issues of inheritance have so thoroughly intermingled with the teacher-disciple relationship that potential successors to the abbacy, even if they are already formal disciples, often additionally become a *yōshi* (adoptive son) of the abbot before assuming control of the temple.

In contemporary Japan, marriage and the family have permeated life at all but the small minority of temples that are reserved for monastic training. Again using the Sōtō Zen school as an example, of some 14,000 temples, only 31 remain reserved for strict monastic training.<sup>4</sup> The overwhelming majority of Sōtō temples are inhabited by a cleric and his family. The same ratio between training monasteries and local temples is true for most other Buddhist denominations today as well. Buddhist clerical marriage has become so entrenched in Japanese life that the majority of the laity prefer having a married cleric serve as abbot of their temple. As a 1993 Sōtō denomination survey demonstrated, only 5 percent of the Sōtō

<sup>1</sup> Kanaoka (March 25, 1990, 4).

<sup>2</sup> *Sōtōshū shūsei sōgō chōsa hōkokusho*, cited in Reader (1993, 155, n. 2). The original is unavailable to me at this time.

<sup>3</sup> Hikita (1991b, 280–81).

<sup>4</sup> Foulk (1988, 164).

laity explicitly preferred an unmarried cleric. An overwhelming 73 percent expressed a preference for a married cleric, with the rest of the survey group not expressing a preference.<sup>5</sup> Although I have not seen similar statistics for other denominations, given the broad similarities between the various denominations when it comes to the distribution of married and unmarried clerics, it is likely that this statistic reflects a general Japanese attitude toward the Buddhist clergy.

The presence of the temple wife is now so taken for granted that today, along with the usual Buddhist doctrinal texts, histories, and popular religious manuals found in Buddhist bookstores, one can also find pan-sectarian works like *Jitei fujin hyakka* (Encyclopedia for temple wives).<sup>6</sup> Written by a Buddhist priest, the book is an instruction manual for temple wives, providing basic information concerning the role of the temple in the local community, the training of one's son to be a future abbot, management of the temple cemetery, and basic Buddhist teaching. Similarly, the Sōtōshū Shūmuchō has issued a guidebook for temple families, *Jitei no sho* (Handbook for temple families), in which the denominational leadership describes how the temple family should serve as a shining example of Buddhist domestic life, with the abbot performing Buddhist rituals and sermons, the wife caring for the education of the children and helping with the parishioners, and the children helping in general temple maintenance.<sup>7</sup> By following the instructions provided in this Sōtō-approved manual, those who have “left home” can become the model of Japanese domesticity for their parishioners. Even more recently, the Sōtō headquarters published a retrospective, containing surveys, discussions, and a brief historical sketch, on the temple family in an ongoing effort to establish legitimacy for a practice toward which the Sōtō leadership itself has had a long history of animosity.<sup>8</sup>

The departure of Japanese Buddhism from the monastic and ascetic emphasis of most other forms of Buddhism is striking. The Japanese Buddhist clergy are unique among Buddhist clerics in that the vast majority are married, but they continue to undergo clerical ordination and are considered members of the sangha (*sōgya*) by both the Buddhist establishment and parishioners alike. In such other Buddhist nations as Taiwan, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Burma, those who receive the ten novice precepts or the full set of Vinaya regulations are expected to refrain from sexual relations, marriage, and family life.<sup>9</sup> Some married clerics do exist in Korea and Taiwan, and their presence is largely a product of late-nineteenth-

<sup>5</sup> Odawara (1993, 95–96), also cited Kawahashi (1995, 162).

<sup>6</sup> Arakawa (1989).

<sup>7</sup> Uesuji (1963); see also Reader (1993, 146–47).

<sup>8</sup> “Jizoku: Hyakunen no kiseki” (1994).

<sup>9</sup> On celibacy in Theravāda Buddhism, see Wijayaratna (1990, 89–108). On the precepts in Theravāda, see Bond, “Theravāda Buddhism’s Two Formulations of the *Dasa Sila* and the

and early twentieth-century Japanese missionary and colonial influence. Although indigenous pressure to legalize clerical marriage in Korea came as early as 1910 from such reformist clerics as the Korean Han Yongun (1879–1944), who looked to Japan as an example of successful clerical modernization, his suggestions were largely ignored. It was not until 1926, when the Korean clergy were firmly under Japanese colonial control, that the prohibition against clerical marriage was repealed. In the wake of the Second World War, the procelibacy clerics, with state support, once again asserted themselves in an effort to purge Korean Buddhism of Japanese influence. Having lost control of the majority of temples, today the married clerics are few in number. According to Robert Buswell, whether the rapidly shrinking T'aego order (T'aego chong) of married Korean clerics will survive for another generation remains to be seen.<sup>10</sup> According to Charles Jones, Japanese colonization had a much less drastic effect on Taiwanese Buddhism than on Korean Buddhism; traditional ordination and precept practices continued during the period of Japanese rule, and the colonial authorities never forced clerical marriage on Taiwanese clerics.<sup>11</sup>

The public emergence of the householder cleric in non-Jōdo Shin and non-Shugendō denominations in Japan is a relatively new phenomenon, dating only from the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912). Judging from the historical record, it is clear that for much of the premodern period significant numbers of clerics broke the bans on sexual relations and marriage, as Bernard Faure has demonstrated.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, such behavior as covert marriage, patrimonial inheritance, fornication, and meat eating was always viewed as transgressive by government authorities and by most of the clerics who set the standards of conduct for the various denominations. Throughout the Edo period (1603–1867), the Tokugawa rulers had attempted, with varying success, to regulate clerical deportment. The array of status regulations backed by the threat of state punishment that the Tokugawa regime adopted had helped to guarantee at least nominal adherence to clerical standards of deportment. Upon ordination, clerics of every denomination abandoned their surname (if they had one; many commoners did not have surnames before Meiji) and received a Buddhist name that they would use for the rest of their life, unless they returned to lay life. Clerics were obliged to observe the precept that prohibited sexual

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Ethics of the Gradual Path,” in Hoffman and Mahinda (1996, 17–42). For an analysis of the varieties of Tibetan Buddhist clerics and a comment on the misunderstood category of so-called married monks in Tibetan Buddhism, see Samuel (1993, 270–89).

<sup>10</sup> On the history of clerical marriage in Korean Buddhism, see Buswell (1992, 25–30). According to Buswell, Han Yongun's arguments, which closely resemble the justifications for clerical marriage advanced by Japanese clerics in the late-nineteenth century, are contained in his *Chosŏn Pulgyo yusillon*, which was published in 1910.

<sup>11</sup> Jones (1999, 93).

<sup>12</sup> Faure (1998).

relations for all ordained clerics. In addition, until 1872 by state law marriage was illegal for any Buddhist cleric, apart from those in the Jōdo Shin or Shugendō denominations. Nor were the clergy to eat meat. The clergy were also expected to wear robes appropriate to their office. Although punishment of clerics by the Tokugawa government may have been sporadic and observance of rules for monastic deportment may have been honored more in the breach than in fact, state support of clerical regulations throughout the Edo period insured that those rules of conduct remained the unquestioned standard of clerical behavior.

The Meiji Restoration radically changed the relationship between the state and the Buddhist clergy. Meiji authorities quickly brought an official end to the Tokugawa state's efforts to regulate clerical deportment. Over a fifteen-year period, as in many modernizing Western nations, the clergy were stripped of privileges peculiar to their clerical status and came to differ "from other men in degree rather than in kind."<sup>13</sup> In short order the Japanese Buddhist clergy were ordered to take surnames, to register in the universal household registration system, and to submit to national conscription. Most problematically, from the perspective of many clerical leaders, in 1872 Meiji officials promulgated a terse law that stated: "from now on Buddhist clerics shall be free to eat meat, marry, grow their hair, and so on. Furthermore, there will be no penalty if they wear ordinary clothing when not engaged in religious activities."<sup>14</sup> Known informally as the *nikujiki saitai* law, this decriminalization measure triggered a century-long debate in the Buddhist world, as clerical leaders and rank-and-file clerics strove to interpret and react to their new legal context.

The formation of the new Meiji order reshuffled the relationship between Buddhist institutions and the state. Beginning with an outright hostility to Buddhism and a prioritization of Shintō, the privileged position of the clergy was destroyed and numerous regulations considered inimical to Buddhism were promulgated. The attacks on Buddhist temples, forced laicizations of the clergy, seizure of temple lands, and abolition of clerical perquisites were the culmination of a growing animosity toward Buddhism that can be traced well back into the Edo period. One manifestation of the state's hostility to Buddhism and the new vision of state-clerical relations was the adoption of the infamous law decriminalizing clerical meat eating, marriage, abandonment of tonsure, and wearing nonclerical garb.

<sup>13</sup> Sommerville (1992, 134). Sommerville notes, "The cleric's role had once been as impersonal as a medium's. Now it was bound up with his individual personality, and human personality is inevitably a distraction in worship. Also, with the redefinition of the role to emphasize the teacher rather than the priest, the critical feature was education rather than consecration."

<sup>14</sup> Date (1930, 621).

Of course, neither clerical fornication nor marriage was new to either the late Edo or the nineteenth century. Examples of violation of the clerical precepts prior to the nineteenth century are plentiful; in particular, the sexual exploits of the Buddhist clergy in the premodern and early modern periods are well documented, as Ishida and Faure have recently demonstrated. In chapter 2 I show the pre-Meiji genesis of the clerical marriage problem and discuss the emergence of the term *nikujiki saitai* as the very symbol of clerical laxity. The early modern problem of clerical marriage emerged against the background of the systematization of the status system by the Tokugawa and domainal authorities and the attempt to assert their control over clerical behavior. As part of that effort the ruling authorities issued and sporadically enforced regulations outlawing sexual relations for clerics from the traditionally celibate denominations. The criminalization of once tolerated activities coupled with precept revival movements among many Edo Buddhist schools triggered a reappraisal of clerical behavior by both the Buddhist clergy and their critics. In particular, growing awareness of the *nikujiki saitai* problem must be traced to the problematization of distinctive Jōdo Shin practices by their opponents, a topic that I examine in chapter 3. The intersectarian debate and the voluminous apologetic literature written by Jōdo Shin clerics during the Edo period helped set the parameters for the post-Restoration struggle over *nikujiki saitai*.

The growing controversy over clerical deportment, coupled with attempts by the Meiji regime to forge a more efficient means for surveilling its subjects, resulted in a break with Tokugawa procedures for dealing with the Buddhist clergy. In chapter 4 I describe the abolition of the Edo status system by Meiji bureaucrats and discuss the implications of that unprecedented social change for the Buddhist clergy. In numerous ways, the institutional and social restructuring of the Meiji period proved as transformative of Buddhist life as the outright destruction of temples and property suffered by Buddhism during the suppression of the Bakumatsu and early Meiji years. The policies put into place by the Meiji rulers were often neither well-planned nor consistent, which meant that the Buddhist clergy found themselves responding to a variety of contradictory imperatives. During the early Meiji years government officials wrestled with how to differentiate religion—newly defined in Japanese with the term *shūkyō*—from the state. Government leaders withdrew from active intervention in clerical life, leaving it largely up to the clergy themselves to decide whether the individual cleric or the denominational leaders would set the standards for clerical deportment. At the same time, the boundaries separating the Buddhist clergy from ordinary subjects were erased, as clerics took surnames, registered in the *koseki* system, and became subject to the draft.

Contrary to the picture painted in much of the scholarly literature, the Buddhist clergy were not merely passive spectators to these changes in state policy. By the midnineteenth century, the criticisms of Buddhism voiced for decades in Neo-Confucian, Shintō, and nativist anti-Buddhist literature had been internalized by segments of the Buddhist clergy. The forced opening of Japan by the Western powers, the reemergence of Christianity as a significant presence in Japan, and the violent suppression of Buddhism induced some Buddhist leaders to propose reforms, which, by including the Buddhist clergy in efforts to build a modern Japan capable of competing with the West, would enhance Buddhist clerical prestige. In chapter 5 I discuss efforts of Ōtori Sessō, a Sōtō cleric, and several other clerics to incorporate the Buddhist clergy in a state moral suasion campaign that aimed to strengthen Japanese national identity and to ward off the spread of Christianity. Using his close connections to such important Meiji leaders as Etō Shinpei and Kidō Takayoshi, Ōtori entered government service as the single Buddhist cleric in the influential Ministry of Doctrine. As part of his plan for the revitalization of the clergy, Ōtori proposed the decriminalization of clerical meat eating and marriage. In chapter 5 I also detail the largely unexamined role of the Buddhist clergy in creating Meiji religious policy, their vision of clerical reform, and the confluence of their efforts with the creation of the Imperial Way (Kōdō) as a civil religion embracing Buddhists, Shintoists, and Nativists.

Despite the rather dismissive attitude of most Meiji leaders toward the Buddhist establishment, the leaders of most Buddhist denominations did not sit idly by while new religious policies were being promulgated. This book is intended to expand our understanding of how Meiji Buddhists contributed to the formation of state policies toward religious institutions and how they tried to control what increasingly were categorized by government officials, intellectuals, and some clerics as private, religious concerns. In chapter 6 I demonstrate how those leading the movement to reinstitute strict precept practice within various Buddhist denominations confronted government leaders and clerics of their own schools in an effort to stop the spread of *nikujiki saitai*. Faced with the end to state control over clerical behavior and its transfer from the government to the individual denominations, such Buddhist leaders as Fukuda Gyōkai, Shaku Unshō, and Nishiari Bokusan, whose lives straddled the Edo and Meiji periods, utilized a two-pronged strategy, defending precept adherence to the Buddhist clergy and petitioning the government to continue its regulation of clerical deportment. When that effort failed, they argued that standards of clerical behavior should be determined by denominational leaders, not each individual cleric. In chapter 7 I continue the story, describing how, following the lead of these proprecept clerics, the leader-

ship of the various denominations enacted a series of measures to ensure that their subordinates continued to abide by the ban against meat eating and clerical marriage. These strategies ranged from appeals to the consciences of the rank-and-file clerics to the formation of two distinct clerical classes, celibate and married.

While some clerical leaders sought to renew Buddhism through the enforcement of pre-Meiji standards of clerical behavior, others tried to harmonize Buddhist doctrine and practice with modernist discourses of science, sexuality, individual rights, and nationalism. Far from slavishly copying Western ideas, such Buddhist intellectuals as Tanaka Chigaku, Kuriyama Taion, Kuruma Takudō, Inoue Enryō, and Nakazato Nisshō wove together together Mahāyāna hermeneutics, older nativist anticlericalism, and new scientific, biological arguments to argue for the dismantling of the prohibitions against clerical meat eating and marriage. Although many of the ideas incorporated into the arguments for *nikujiki saitai*, for example, hereditarian and evolutionary concepts, were of Western provenance, they reached Japan so rapidly that often the implications of these ideas were being simultaneously considered in Japan, Europe, and the United States. In a process similar to that which Frank Dikötter (referring to the changing understanding of sexuality in Republican China) aptly described as “not so much a ‘shock of encounters’ between ‘East’ and ‘West’ . . . but rather the emergence of a plurality of intertwined modernities that have diverse origins and many directions,” numerous reformist Japanese Buddhists tried to build the theoretical and practical foundations for a modern, domestic Buddhism.<sup>15</sup>

In the final chapters I consider the proliferation of pro-*nikujiki saitai* literature from the mid-Meiji until the early Shōwa periods against the backdrop of the intellectual and social upheavals in late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Japan. In chapter 8 I examine Nichiren cleric Tanaka Chigaku’s renunciation of clerical life and his attempt to formulate a new family centered Buddhism. Tanaka’s attempt to revitalize a tradition that he argued was almost exclusively associated with funerals led him to found an independent, lay Nichiren organization. In an effort to establish Buddhist foundations for modern family life, he wrote a treatise on the Buddhist couple and argued that monastic Buddhism was no longer appropriate for Japan. He also created a series of ceremonies, including the first Buddhist wedding ritual, in order to bring Buddhism into the everyday lives of his followers. By the start of the twentieth century some Buddhist clerics from the established denominations followed Tanaka’s lead. Although these clerics held radically different positions from Tanaka

<sup>15</sup>Dikötter (1995, 12).



with regard to clerical marriage, they shared his focus on creating a Buddhist discourse on the family that melded Protestant-style valorization of the conjugal family, Confucian virtues emphasized in such didactic texts as *Onna daigaku* by Kaibara Ekken, and Buddhist ethics. In their heavy emphasis on the conjugal couple, these new Buddhist family teachings departed from older Edo-period tracts on family harmony.

Although many Buddhist leaders contributed to and supported the dissemination of Buddhist family teachings, most did not abandon their opposition to clerical marriage. While explicit denunciation of *nikujiki saitai* was rare after the Meiji era, the literature demonstrates that bureaucratic opposition continued in the monastic denominations well into the twentieth century. In chapter 9 I demonstrate how a new generation of Buddhist clerics advocated the affirmation of *nikujiki saitai*, using arguments based on biologized-medicalized notions of human sexuality and health rather than pre-Meiji moral understandings of the person. I also consider how the rise of social reform movements, statistical analysis, and legions of professional experts fostered growing attention on social problems associated with continued high-level repudiation of clerical marriage by clerical leaders. Ultimately, it was awareness of the social costs of the ongoing resistance to clerical marriage during the late Meiji and Taishō eras that led to a softening of opposition to *nikujiki saitai*. At the start of that period, leaders of most denominations remained doctrinally tied to an anti-*nikujiki saitai* position while begrudgingly making accommodations to the increasing numbers of married clerics. The opposition to clerical marriage by both clerical leaders and some parishioners caused many clerical marriages to remain unofficial. As clerics died, leaving behind widows and children, dispossessed families became a growing social problem for the Buddhist denominations. Embarrassed by reports of destitute widows and children, the leadership of most denominations began to grant de facto recognition to clerical marriage from the mid-Taishō period. Doctrinal affirmation of that practice by the clerical leadership of most denominations never occurred, however. Ultimately, the emergence of a predominantly married Buddhist clergy in Japan was a result of practical problems, rank-and-file clerical choices, and inability to discipline clerics at the local temple level, rather than a deliberate doctrinal shift mandated by Buddhist leaders. As I discuss in the concluding chapter, the contradiction between practice and doctrine that resulted from the partial resolution of the *nikujiki saitai* debate has continued to trouble many clerics until the present day.