

The Clerical Marriage Problem in Early Meiji Buddhism

PHAM THI THU GIANG

IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE SOCIETY, it is seen as quite natural that priests eat meat, have wives, and follow the same customs as people in the secular world. From the perspective of a foreigner, including myself who came here from Vietnam, upon first witnessing this custom one may experience it as contradictory and get the impression that this is a rather un-Buddhist form of Buddhism.

However, if Japanese Buddhism is seen as a degenerate Buddhism, how should we think about the fact that Buddhism has played a major role in Japan's history, become established in its society, and contributed to its culture? The problem of why *nikujiki saitai* 肉食妻帯 (eating meat and marriage) by priests has become common sense in Japanese society is extremely important for our understanding of Japanese Buddhism. How should we view this example of the peculiarity of Japanese Buddhism? Seen from the perspective of the custom of eating meat and taking wives, it is possible to view this as a degenerate Buddhism. However, the fascinating problem is by what beliefs did these priests, who often affirmed the important meaning of the Buddhist precepts, come to practice *nikujiki saitai*?

When we consider the reality and the philosophical background of the *nikujiki saitai* problem in Japanese Buddhism from antiquity to the modern period, although one can see instances of attempts by the imperial court to enforce the precept against fornication in the ancient period, from the end of the Heian period onward, the marriage of priests was not particularly problematic, as the succession of priests' sons as their disciples was legally recognized and it became clear that eminent priests were even keeping family

lineages. Entering the early modern period, the Tokugawa *bakufu* prohibited clerical marriage in its legal code for temples, and only Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 priests were permitted to eat meat and get married. Based on the ideas presented by Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), Shinshū scholar priests such as Saigin 西吟 (1605–1663) argued in favor of clerical marriage and meat eating, holding that they were unique customs particular to Jōdo Shinshū.

However, in the modern period the Buddhist world's *nikujiki saitai* problem approached a turning point. During the chaotic period from the late Edo period until after the Meiji Restoration, the environment was certainly not ideal for priests to maintain the precepts; however, circumstances were decisively changed by the release of the Grand Council of State's Proclamation 133 on the twenty-fifth day of the fourth month of Meiji 5 (1872):

Henceforth priests may voluntarily engage in activities such as consuming meat, marrying, and growing their hair; the wearing of lay clothes when not performing a Buddhist ritual will no longer be penalized.¹

It is but a brief sentence, but based on this proclamation, priests not only in Jōdo Shinshū but throughout Japanese Buddhism became able to “voluntarily” grow out their hair, eat meat, take wives, and wear the same clothes as everyone else when not performing a Buddhist ritual. In the next year, on 22 January 1873, the Grand Council of State's Proclamation 26 was issued, extending the policy to nuns as well as priests. According to this, from this point forward nuns were also allowed to “voluntarily” grow their hair, eat meat, marry, and “laicize” (*genzoku* 還俗).² Needless to say, these proclamations had a historically unprecedented impact for the Buddhist world, becoming a central problem and having an enormous impact on the subsequent development of Japanese Buddhism. The goal of the present study is to analyze the circumstances of the promulgation of Proclamation 133, the thinking of those who were involved in the process of its enactment and the policy aims of the government, and to consider the Buddhist world's response to the edict.

¹ Monbushō Bunkakyoku Shūmuka 1968, p. 802.

² Monbushō Bunkakyoku Shūmuka 1968, p. 1.

THE HISTORICAL PROCESS THAT GAVE RISE TO THE GRAND COUNCIL OF STATE'S PROCLAMATION 133

Proclamation 133 and the Change in Policy toward Buddhism in the Early Meiji

As stated above, as a result of the issuing of the Meiji 5 (1872) Grand Council of State's Proclamation 133, and the 22 January 1873 Proclamation 26, the entirety of Japanese Buddhist nuns and priests were thereafter able to "voluntarily" eat meat, marry, keep their hair, laicize, and wear the same clothes as the general public. Needless to say, this had an extremely strong impact on the Buddhist world. However, it is necessary to consider what laws the Meiji government had used to police clerical customs before those two proclamations were released.

Just after the Restoration, in order to limit the laicization of priests, on the eighteenth day of the ninth month of Meiji 1 (1868), the Grand Council of State issued a measure stating, "It is prohibited for priests to frivolously request laicization, or to maintain their hair before the Buddha."³ According to this law, the government took the position that while having the status of "priest," vainly expressing the wish to laicize was not reasonable. Further, wearing long hair before the Buddha was not permitted. However, the law also states that priests had other capacities that could benefit the state, and so if they said they wished to laicize, the individual's abilities would be investigated and they would possibly be granted permission to do so, leaving some leeway for priests to laicize. In other words, even though priests were prohibited from frivolously requesting to laicize or growing out their hair, we can see from this law that ultimately the Restoration government's position was to privilege its operation and the advancement of the nation over the Buddhist precepts. Moreover, on the twenty-sixth day of the twelfth month of Meiji 3 (1870) the Grand Council of State issued a proclamation that "Each sect's rules and monastic codes shall be observed, and the Restoration's aims shall be served,"⁴ requesting that as each individual monk consciously observed the monastic codes, he should diligently serve the aims of the Meiji Restoration. Seen from the perspective of the government's policy aims, these two laws were consistent.

³ Daijō ruiten 太政類典, call no. 本館-2A-009-00, 太00135100, National Archives of Japan (Kokuritsu Kōbunsho Kan 国立公文書館).

⁴ Daijō ruiten, call no. 本館-2A-009-00, 太00135100, National Archives of Japan (Kokuritsu Kōbunsho Kan).

Thus, before the issuing of the Grand Council of State's Proclamation 133, the government had forbidden laicization and the growing out of hair, but on the twenty-fifth day of the fourth month of Meiji 5 (1872) it lifted this ban. This change in the policy toward the Buddhist precepts certainly had an extreme impact on not just the Buddhist world but on society at large. The Ministry of Doctrine (Kyōbushō 教部省), which had jurisdiction over religious matters at the time, published a response to opinions critical of Proclamation 133 in its daily journal on the fourteenth day of the sixth month of Meiji 5 (1872), stating that it had turned over all problems internal to Buddhism to the discretion of doctrinal instructors (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職) and each sect's chief administrator, and beyond this, the Ministry would not interfere.⁵ The next year, in November of 1873, the Shingon 真言 priest Shaku Unshō 釈雲照 (1827–1909) submitted a petition to the government requesting that priests who violated the precepts be regulated in the same way as regular people. In response to this, however, the government's Criminal Justice Department replied that they respected Shaku Unshō's intentions, but noted that since the question of whether the Buddhist Dharma would progress or not was up to the efforts of religious teachers and their disciples, it was not the government's place to provide encouragement with laws, and Unshō's assertion was that of someone who did not understand the law. The petition was returned to Unshō without being adopted.⁶ In short, the Criminal Justice Department and the Ministry of Doctrine shared the same opinion. Then, on 2 February 1878, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs issued a notice stating that the decree that priests could voluntarily eat meat and marry signified that the laws of the state that had previously prohibited such behavior were thereby abolished, and articulating clearly that the rules of each individual sect were unaffected.⁷ Many scholars, such as Kawaguchi Kōfū, have judged that this notice was an "order of repeal."⁸ However, while the government repealed the national law that had regulated the breaking of precepts by priests, they emphasized that the independent laws of each religious organization were unaffected. In this sense, we can imagine that this notice and Proclamation 133 were completely consistent.

⁵ "Kyōbushō nisshi" 教部省日誌 (Kitane and Suzuki 1997, p. 193).

⁶ Shaku Unshō, "Sōritsu no gi" 僧律之議 in Uchida and Makihara 1990, p. 945–47.

⁷ Daijō ruiten, call no. 本館-2A-009-00, 太00662100, National Archives of Japan (Kokuritsu Kōbunsho Kan).

⁸ Kawaguchi 2002, p. 242.

Ōtori Sessō and the Proposal to Release the Ban on Nikujiki Saitai

From before the Meiji Restoration, Ōtori Sessō 鴻雪爪 (1814–1904)⁹ was a faithful imperialist and, although a former priest, he had secretly participated in the Restoration's planning. When the Restoration occurred, he supported the imperial cause in various ways, as well as providing assistance in governmental affairs for the sake of the nation's operation. Ōtori was a man who, after casting off his robes and beginning to research Shinto, was deemed by the Imperial Household Minister Hijikata Hisamoto 土方久元 (1833–1918) to have attained major achievements in his diligent and unceasing work as a doctrinal instructor. As a result, on 16 April 1896, with the approval of Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841–1909), Ōtori received the lower fourth rank (*jūshii* 從四位). During his lifetime, he was greatly respected by the debaters of the time for his erudition, but unfortunately, as for material written by his own pen, only “Sankō suichō zuki” 山高水長図記¹⁰ remains. Neither the original text of the first petition he submitted to the government regarding Buddhism since the Restoration, nor the motion he wrote in Meiji 4 (1871), has been found at this time.

Ōtori was extremely active in the cause of religious reform. As noted above, the original text of the petition he submitted to the government in the first year of Meiji has not yet been found, but according to Hattori, “The teacher [i.e., Ōtori Sessō] came to the capital directly after the deregulation, and in the third month of that year, soon after the Charter Oath (‘Gokajō no goseimon’ 五箇条の御誓文) was issued, he submitted a petition to the imperial court. The gist of this is detailed in one line of the ‘Hōkyō kengi’ 法教建議 in the ‘Zuki’ [i.e., the ‘Sankō suichō zuki’].”¹¹ We can gather from Ōtori's autobiographical writings, such as the aforementioned “Hōkyō kengi,” what he thought about religion. While he respected the government's policy of treating Shinto as the national religion, he spoke from the standpoint of a

⁹ Ōtori Sessō's name was Seisetsu 清拙, and his sobriquets were Sessō and Kōkoō 江湖翁. He was born in Innoshima 因島 in Bingonokuni 備後国. From the time he was born, he possessed an unsurpassed talent, studied Buddhism and Confucianism, and was extremely skillful at Chinese writing. Since he was small he had wandered around the country, possessing a love for the landscape, and he would visit great men and debate with them. When he was six, he took ordination at Daijōin 大定院 in Iwaminokuni 石見国, under the Zen master Mutei 無底 (n.d.). He received the ordination name Tetsumen Seisetsu 鐵面清拙, and after that he moved to Zenshōji 全昌寺 in Ōgaki 大垣 province along with Master Mutei. In the winter of Tenpō 14 (1843) he became the abbot of Gidaji 祇陀寺 in Kashū 加州.

¹⁰ The manuscript of “Sankō suichō zuki” is currently extant in several libraries, including Komazawa University Library.

¹¹ Hattori 1938, p. 34.

Buddhist priest and indirectly requested a halt to the suppression of Buddhism. It is worthy of note here that nearly all of his important religious policy proposals, beginning with his appeal to suspend the suppression of Buddhism, and including the lifting of the ban on Christianity and the revival of the Buddhist teachings, were adopted by the government of the time.

As stated previously, while Ōtori recognized Shinto as the foundation of the national religion and also demanded a removal of the ban on Christianity, he continued to argue for the significance of the existence of Buddhism. If that was the case, however, why should he himself have made such a grand appeal to the government to recognize *nikujiki saitai* by priests? According to Matono Hansuke, from Ōtori's perspective the situation of the Buddhist world of the time was that the crop of priests was weak, and Buddhism had already decayed. We can gather much about his view from the "Ōtori Sessō den" 鴻雪爪伝, which relays Ōtori's feeling of desperation that priests were of poor quality, and were unable to preserve the national religion. In order to remedy these conditions, in a Meiji 4 (1871) petition Ōtori urgently requested that the government establish a new department in the Ministry of Doctrine, attempt to encourage scholarship and morality, and select a few excellent individuals to send overseas to study, which he argued was the only way to reform the degenerate Buddhism of that time.¹²

In addition, he gave one further argument about the reasons for permitting *nikujiki saitai* for priests. Hattori quotes a passage from Ōtori's petition, which states, "To apply a law that cannot be executed to people who are incapable of executing it is utterly fruitless."¹³ Based on this logic, it was not only the fault of the priests that Buddhism was degenerate; the Buddhist precepts themselves were also problematic. Ōtori pointed out that because human beings are incapable of fully upholding the precepts, and priests are of course human beings, it was unreasonable to try to force them to carry out the Buddhist precepts.

With this thinking, he recommended to Etō Shinpei 江藤新平 (1834–1874), an official at the Ministry of Doctrine at the time, that *nikujiki saitai* be publicly permitted for priests. As a result of Etō's consultation with Minister Saga Sanenaru 嵯峨実愛 (1820–1909) of the Ministry of Doctrine, the Grand Council's Proclamation 133 was enacted.¹⁴ We can thus see that this proclamation was enacted according to Ōtori's proposal to Etō to remove the ban on *nikujiki saitai*. To someone else, Ōtori's suggestion might have appeared

¹² "Ōtori Sessō den" in Kobayashi 1936.

¹³ Hattori 1938, p. 34.

¹⁴ Matono 1968, p. 633.

extremely shocking, so why did Etō agree to it? Regarding this, Matono has made an important point:

For Nanpaku [Etō], who was filled with the ideal of free human rights, his detest for customs such as the prohibition of women (*nyonin kinsei* 女人禁制) was tremendous, and so he offered his opinion to Minister Saga of the Ministry of Doctrine forthwith. As a result, we see the abolition order eventually came to pass, but along with permitting *nikujiki saitai* by priests, it would also cause a great uproar.¹⁵

Although Etō agreed with Ōtori's opinion to recognize *nikujiki saitai* by priests, the ground for that was "the ideal of free human rights." Ultimately he did not necessarily share Ōtori's intention of Buddhist reform. Several leading figures in the administration at the time also agreed to his suggestion. However, Ōtori also asked the government to lift the ban on Christianity, which was thought to present a threat to Buddhism, and to recognize priests' *nikujiki saitai*, and thus he could certainly have been seen by the Buddhist world as a suppresser of Buddhism despite his being a priest. With regards to that, soon after he sent his petition, the government appointed him as a commissioner and then made him laicize.¹⁶ According to Hattori's reading, leading figures such as Matsudaira Shungaku 松平春嶽 (1828–1890) and Kido Takayoshi 木戸孝允 (1833–1877) supported Ōtori's position, and in order to help him realize his proposals and give him a standpoint from which he could participate in debates about policy, they had no choice but to laicize him. Concerning that official notification and how Ōtori responded to it, Hattori concludes, "it must have come as a great surprise to him."¹⁷ However, it is also recorded that, "[Ōtori] knew quite well at the time, and definitively threw off his robes and began researching Shinto. Since then, he occupied the position of doctrinal instructor and never lacked in diligence."¹⁸ In other words, we can see that before the official notification was made, Ōtori was already prepared for his laicization and afterward put all his efforts into religious activities. He exerted himself in reforming the fallen Buddhism of the time, but conversely, he was persecuted by the Buddhist world and ultimately laicized, which might be seen as an expression of

¹⁵ Matono 1968, p. 631.

¹⁶ Hattori 1938, p. 65.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ōtori Sessō tokushi ikai shojo no ken 鴻雪爪特旨位階初叙ノ件, call no. 本館-2A-016-00, 叙00040100, National Archives of Japan (Kokuritsu Kōbunsho Kan).

his desperation concerning the Buddhist world. However, after returning to lay status and until the end of his life, Ōtori continued preaching Buddhism to his many disciples. In other words, although he criticized the current state of Buddhism and the impossibility of the precepts, this did not mean that he denied Buddhist doctrine itself, and it is possible to think that he chose laicization to further his goal of the revitalization of Buddhism.

Thus, there was a diversity of thought behind the establishment of the Grand Council of State's Proclamation 133. Ultimately, Ōtori, the Meiji government, and the official at the Ministry of Doctrine Etō, all advocated the recognition of eating meat and marriage by priests, but their respective points of departure were quite different. Ōtori, steadfast in his desire as a priest to create a new Buddhism, boldly brought the problem to the attention of the authorities. Etō, however, received Ōtori's suggestion from the perspective of "the ideal of free human rights," and in turn submitted the request to the Ministry of Doctrine. Here, the government recognized Ōtori and Etō's opinion from the modern determination of the separation of church and state, and consequently excused *nikujiki saitai* for priests throughout Buddhism. This variety of opinions that brought about the promulgation of this proclamation may be said to reflect the diverse movements which shaped government policy in that era.

The Opposition Movement to the Grand Council of State's Proclamation 133

As stated above, the Grand Council of State's Proclamation 133 had a strong impact on the Buddhist world, but it is necessary to consider the problem of how the priests themselves interpreted it. Fukuda Gyōkai 福田行誠 (1806?–1888), who was known as the "great authority on the eight schools of Buddhism," submitted a petition to the government that speaks to this frame of mind.¹⁹ Fukuda's petition was submitted in 1878, six years after the release of Proclamation 133, but despite that he could not conceal a sentiment of "unbearable shock." His petition indicates that he was not just surprised but utterly unable to comprehend the pronouncement and could not conclude whether it ought to be followed. But when speaking of the government's intention in front of his disciples, he said that one must understand it to mean that those who wanted to laicize should do so voluntarily. In Fukuda's interpretation, there was no sense for one to remain a priest and be allowed to marry and eat meat, and he preached this to his disciples.²⁰

¹⁹ Fukuda 1931.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Like Fukuda, the Shingon priest Shaku Unshō also submitted a petition in the year after Proclamation 133 was released.²¹ According to Shaku Unshō, the government's intention was that priests should support the Meiji Restoration while observing the Buddhist precepts. But he complained that the Buddhist world had not understood this. Because Proclamation 133 had been released amidst these circumstances, priests were misunderstanding it, breaking the sectarian rules and becoming dissolute. In spite of—or simply ignoring—this new proclamation, Shaku Unshō tried to argue that even after the release of Proclamation 133, the government's policy had not changed since the Meiji 3 (1870) law stating that priests should “observe the rules of the individual sects and heed the warning of the government.”²² As noted above, although the 1872 Proclamation 133 represented a total turnaround from the government's treatment of the Buddhist precepts in the 1870 law, Shaku Unshō focused his criticism on the relationship between the needs of the government and the demands of the Buddhist precepts.

Shaku Unshō had considered the policies of the secular administration, but since the matter of whether precepts were observed or violated should inherently be penalized by Buddhist codes, he also stated that it was not necessary to wait for penalties from politicians.²³ He argued that priests ought not to have sexual relations and even if the imperial court did not punish them, priests ought to abstain from meat until the end of their lives.²⁴ In effect, he held the belief that priests should not be disturbed from the outside, but rather should autonomously uphold the Buddhist precepts in their hearts. In addition to this, he was active in support of the nation. As to the independence of priests, Shaku Unshō asserted that “the path is not carried out by itself; it is in the person who carries it out.” We can see this spirit, that the Buddhist path depends on the person who treads it, in both Fukuda's argument and in the Buddhist revival movements, as well.

Although critical of this proclamation, Fukuda did not necessarily see it as a serious threat to Buddhism in Japan. Concerning the movement of the Buddhist world at the time, he writes that even after Proclamation 133 was pronounced, priests labored daily, kept the precepts, and held the maintaining of an unblemished appearance to be fundamental, and also formed groups such as the Alliance of Buddhist Sects (Shoshū Dōmei-kai 諸宗同盟会) that aimed to promote the revitalization of Buddhism. Fukuda wrote

²¹ Shaku Unshō, “Sōfū risei kengen” 僧風釐正建言 in Uchida and Makihara 1990, p. 917.

²² Daijō ruiten, call no. 本館-2A-009-00, 太 00135100, National Archives of Japan (Kokuritsu Kōbunsho Kan).

²³ Shaku Unshō, “Sōritsu no gi” in Uchida and Makihara 1990, p. 946.

²⁴ Ibid.

that priests in each of the sects were gradually becoming more earnest in their practice, as each sect established disciplinary guidelines and training curricula with the mutual cooperation of the most senior priests all the way down to the youngest.²⁵ Indeed, as a representative of the Alliance of Buddhist Sects, Fukuda was quite active in movements for the preservation of the teachings and the revival of Buddhism.

Concerning Proclamation 133, both Shaku Unshō and Fukuda were initially shocked by it and for a time, appeared to have trouble interpreting its content, but in the end they determined to hold to the precepts. In order to keep the priests in line, they each submitted petitions requesting policing by the government. The reason they so intensely opposed Proclamation 133 was that, from the perspective that the precepts were the life of Buddhism, they reproached those priests who would openly practice *nikujiki saitai* as having no moral discipline. They asserted that if priests broke the precepts, the three treasures of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *saṅgha* would be lost, leading to the suppression of Buddhism and the extinction of the Dharma.

According to Fukuda the temple was a place for keeping the precepts and a stage for lecturing on the national religion. Because it was priests who were to protect the temples, it was their actions that would determine the rise and fall of the head and branch temples, Buddhism, and the national religion. In this way Fukuda emphasized the importance of the independent role of priests and their actions.²⁶ On the other hand, according to Shaku Unshō, the reason the Buddhist precepts were made was that priests were doing things they should not do. But beyond that, the precepts were originally established because people in society were reproaching members of the *saṅgha*. Thus, the precepts were made not only to remonstrate against errant priests, they were also for the sake of society.

In response to this argument, the criticism arose that the Buddhist precepts were therefore inhuman. Shaku Unshō thus clarified himself, advocating a revised proposal. In a more civilized era, he wrote, one could preach according to the deep and solemn counsel of the patriarchs, and everyone would become good. While affirming the supremacy of the Buddhist doctrine, he voiced the opinion that by choosing only those who were inclined toward the Buddhist Dharma, and then employing those people as priests in accordance with their original motives, one could change useless priests into useful ones. In effect, Shaku Unshō opened up a path to resolving the contradiction between the Buddhist world and those critical of the

²⁵ Fukuda 1931, p. 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

precepts with the argument that, instead of forcing people to conform to the precepts, one should bring only those people into the priesthood who were suited for it.

Shaku Unshō's argument that observing the precepts was not for the secular public, but rather only for those who were so inclined was expressed even more clearly by Fukuda, who argued about the difference between priests and laity. According to him, priests and laity could be distinguished by whether or not they ate meat, married, and grew their hair, but if priests were allowed to do these things voluntarily, then they would no longer be distinguishable and confusion would ensue.²⁷ Thus, Fukuda held the firm belief that priests should absolutely observe the precepts.

Regarding the criticism that the Buddhist precepts ran counter to human nature and secular ethics, Shaku Unshō and Fukuda responded from different perspectives, but they shared the view that priests had a special vocation, and could not lead a lifestyle identical to that of secular people. As a result, one could not apply secular ethics to the morality of priests.

In prior research, we mainly find the interpretation that Proclamation 133 was made with the intention of suppressing or secularizing Buddhism, but in this paper I have considered the government's own remarks regarding the process of enacting this proclamation, making clear the intentions of the government that were included in the edict.

Ultimately Proclamation 133 of 1872 was released to the world and priests became able to "voluntarily" grow out their hair, eat meat, and marry; however, that did not mean that opinions among people were uniform on the matter. Shaku Unshō and Fukuda, representatives of the Buddhist world at the time, argued for the difference between the Buddhist world and secular society, and between priests and laity, indicating that they were of the mind that in order to protect Buddhism, priests must uphold the precepts. We can guess that this reflects the movement of the Buddhist world at large up until around 1882. In the next section, I would like to analyze the manner in which the *nikujiki saitai* debate was argued after that point.

THE *NIKUJIKI SAITAI* PROBLEM DURING THE PERIOD OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SECTARIAN RULES

As stated above, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs' 1878 notice clearly indicates the policy that the matter of whether or not to uphold the precepts was up to the priests themselves, and that the government would not interfere.

²⁷ Fukuda 1931, p. 13.

Six years after this, on 11 August 1884, the Grand Council of State's Notice 19 was released, whereby the occupation of "doctrinal instructor," which had until then been an official of the government with jurisdiction over the religious realm, was repealed. Free religious activity was allowed in accordance with each religious organization's own sectarian rules. In the process of determining these rules, each organization was confronted with various problems, and amidst these a resolution to the problem of *nikujiki saitai* was sought. In addition, since the rules were continuously revised even after they had been established, at each revision the *nikujiki saitai* problem was raised and heatedly debated.

In the midst of this, the problem of military service and eligibility for elections appeared on the stage in 1884. The problem of priests' involvement with military and political power is not just one of the modern era, but until this time it was not properly recognized by the law. In running into this problem of secularized society, priests were placed in the position of rethinking the difference between themselves and lay people, the relationship between Buddhism and the secular world, and the very meaning of the continued existence of Buddhism. From there, problems such as how priests should live, how Buddhism should be reformed to continue to exist in this new era, and how to receive support from the lay people, naturally arose. In the course of this period, the *nikujiki saitai* problem was raised and debated.

Calling for a New Priestly Image

At the beginning of the Meiji Restoration, the government regarded military conscription as "the urgent work of protecting the nation" and conducted recruitment nationally, with the number of recruits from each prefecture being determined by its level of agricultural production. From the earliest stage of the draft, priests were not among those exempted in the Conscription Order. The first time priests were considered in the conscription law was in the Grand Council of State's Proclamation 46 of 1879, issued in that October.²⁸ Item 6 of Article 28 of this proclamation states that even among priests, only doctrinal instructors, or those ranked above probationers, would be exempted from the draft.

Four years after this, the Grand Council of State's Proclamation 46 of 1883 was released on 28 December of that year.²⁹ It was the second round of comprehensive revisions to the Conscription Order, and according to this revision of Article 18, priests who were "doctrinal instructors ranked

²⁸ Naikaku Kanpōkyoku 1974–94, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 89–90.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 75–83.

above probationer” were removed as exemptions to the draft, and instead, a provision was introduced that those doctrinal instructors ranked as authorities on orthodoxy (*kyōshō* 教正) would be given a deferral from recruitment. Further, in Article 20 of the revised Conscription Order, priests would not be required to appear for roll-calls or training exercises regardless of their status as reservists, but in the event of a wartime emergency, priests would be included in those who could possibly be drafted according to the Grand Council of State’s determination.

In addition to military service, the existence of priests became a topic of debate in the discussion of eligibility for elections. As is well known, the abolition of feudal lands and the establishment of prefectures were carried out in Meiji 4 (1871). Seven years later, in 1878, the government provided rules for prefectural government elections aimed at the reform of local government, and elections began to be held at the local level. At this stage, those eligible for candidacy and voting rights were limited to a very narrow range of people, with regulations based on age, sex, residential registration of the family, and tax bracket. The requirements for candidacy were even stricter than those for voting rights. In order to become a candidate for local representative, one had to be “a person of means,” who was “familiar with the conditions of the area and its people, capable of earning their trust.”³⁰ Based on these regulations, religious professionals in general had no place to participate in the elections, whether as a candidate or as a voter. Even doctrinal instructors possessed of these qualifications—the highest-ranking priests in government—were excluded from voting and election rights. Further, on 17 April 1888, Law 1 was promulgated, wherein Article 15 of Chapter 2 read that all religious professionals, including Shinto shrine priests and Buddhist temple priests, had no right to run for election.³¹

In 1889, with the completion of another major revision to the Conscription Order and the establishment of the Parliamentary Member Election Law, on one hand priests were treated as secular people with regards to the draft, but on the other hand the government stipulated in law that they were unqualified to run for office. As a result, priests submitted a petition to the government to be exempt from conscription and to receive candidacy rights. The reasoning was that as long as priests did not violate their Buddhist obligations, they should carry out their duties as civilians and participate in secular society. Amidst this contestation of the relationship of priests to secular society, the *nikujiki saitai* debate also faced a turning point.

³⁰ Hirano 1948.

³¹ Naikaku Kanpōkyoku 1974–94, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 6.

Trends in the Nikujiki Saitai Debate during the Period of the Establishment of Sectarian Rules

In the Ministry of Domestic Affairs' extra notices which were promulgated in February 1878 (Meiji 11), the government eliminated the national law by which it had previously prohibited marriage and meat eating by priests, and asserted that it would not interfere in each sect's own rules. As a result, the issue of whether or not to marry and eat meat would be up to the priests themselves. Thus, the time had come for each individual sect to decide whether to permit *nikujiki saitai* for its priests. Having received this notice from the Ministry of Domestic Affairs, the Jōdo 浄土 sect quickly warned that although the government had permitted the voluntary practice of growing out hair, eating meat, and taking wives, in the Jōdo sect priests would serve the "pure rules of the Buddhist patriarchs," and would take care not to do anything shameful to their priestly position. They would establish an "adamantine mind" (*kongōshin* 金剛心), uphold the sectarian laws, practice purely so as not to lose the trust of sentient beings, and repay their debt to the country and the Buddha.³² At this stage in 1878, as seen with Fukuda and Shaku Unshō, admonishments to uphold the Buddhist precepts were prevalent.

On 11 August 1884, Notice 19 from the Grand Council of State was enacted, wherein Article 3 ruled that instead of doctrinal instructors each sect would choose a chief administrator who would create a draft of a new constitution based on the traditional rules of the organization. It also required that the constitution be reviewed and certified by an official from the Ministry of Domestic Affairs.³³ Through these changes, each sect could become independent from the government, having chosen its own representative and operating according to sectarian rules.

Thus, each sect set to work creating sectarian laws; in the process, each was forced to face the problem of *nikujiki saitai*. We can see from contemporary records that the time had come for the Buddhist world to decide whether to prohibit, or instead to recognize, *nikujiki saitai*.³⁴ The Sōtō 曹洞 sect's laws, enacted in 1884, strictly ruled that even though the government did not prohibit clerical marriage, the sect prohibited it "as always." Besides that, it also forbade Sōtō nuns from providing lodging to men.

³² "Sōryo nikujiki saitai no ken setsuyu" 僧侶肉食妻帯の件 説論 (Ono 1892, p. 225).

³³ Naikaku Kanpōkyoku 1974–94, vol. 17, no. 1, p. 142.

³⁴ Washiyama Itsurō 鷺山逸郎, "Sōryo saitai ron" 僧侶妻帯論, *Tōyō shūkyō shinbun* 東洋宗教新聞, 10 February 1886.

Beginning in 1884, each sect repeatedly made amendments to its laws. In an 1890 document, “Jōdoshū seizanha shūsei kaisei shōan no kōryō” 浄土宗西山派宗制改正案の綱領 (A Summary of Amendments to Jōdoshū Seizan-ha Sectarian Rules), the problem of whether “to strictly prohibit the general practice of *nikujiki saitai* by priests within the sect, or to amend the rules on public *nikujiki saitai*”³⁵ was raised. In fact, each time the sects’ rules were amended, the debate on the *nikujiki saitai* problem was renewed. At the time, despite the prohibition of *nikujiki saitai* by the sects, some temples were nonetheless housing women. Thus, even if it were prohibited by the sect’s rules, this bad habit was unlikely to be eliminated and priests would still practice fornication. What’s worthy of attention here is the expression “observing in the sunlight, transgressing in the shadows” (*yōshu inbon* 陽守陰犯), which was used frequently in the magazines and newspapers of the time concerning the *nikujiki saitai* of priests. This referred to priests’ observing the precepts in public, while fornicating behind the scenes, and reflected the opinion that in reality the problem could not be easily solved merely by restricting it in the sects’ laws.³⁶

At the time, there were many different views on the problem of how to resolve this contradiction, and what kind of Buddhism should be sought for this new era. Here, questions emerged regarding Buddhism’s precepts and customs. Some raised the issue of whether priests, in this new era, ought to be observing the precepts and secluding themselves in the mountains to concentrate on Buddhist practice, and argued that the precepts were the same as the laws of secular society, and just as those secular laws had to be revised along with changes in society, so the Buddhist precepts should also be reformed.³⁷ But voices even more staunchly in favor of reforming Buddhism by recognizing *nikujiki saitai* could be heard, as well. They held that it was not the proponents of *nikujiki saitai*, but those who “observed the precepts in the sunlight, and transgressed them in the shadows” who were actually “the sinners against the patriarchs,” “the sinners against morality,” and “the sinners against society.” One could not respond to a new era in the old ways, as the current *mappō* 末法 (latter days of the Dharma) era was different than that of Śākyamuni and that of the founders.³⁸

³⁵ *Meikyō shinshi* 明教新誌, no. 2741, 8 July 1890.

³⁶ Washiyama Itsurō, “Sōryo saitai ron,” *Tōyō shūkyō shinbun*, 10 February 1886.

³⁷ Okada Hakumeishi 岡田白鳴子, “Sōryo saitai ron” 僧侶妻帯論, *Meikyō shinshi*, no. 2843, 8 February 1891.

³⁸ Ochi Ruiko 落涙子 and Arika Yūzō 有木雄三, “Bukkyō dokuritsu saku shoron shuppan no yokoku ni tsuite dōkan no shoshi ni tsugu” 仏教独立策諸論出版の予告に就いて同感の諸氏に告ぐ, part 2, *Meikyō shinshi*, no. 2638, 2 December 1889.

Some who supported the idea that the precepts should be reformed according to the times advised that the eminent priests of the other sects now ought to study Jōdo Shinshū. One reason offered was that if priests were to take wives, temples would be fully furnished, complete with a household and biological children who could succeed to the temple according to blood relation; thus, in their old age priests could be free of worry. Clerical marriage would serve not only the “protection of the priest’s body,” but also the spread of Buddhism.³⁹ The opinion that Buddhism should be reconstructed by recognizing *nikujiki saitai* grew steadily more common from the end of the second decade of the Meiji period.

At the beginning of 1890, Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) contributed the article “Saitai kinsei shū shoshi ni nozomu” 妻帯禁制宗諸師に望む (Hopes for the Leaders of the Schools That Prohibit Clerical Marriage)⁴⁰ to the magazine *Nihonjin* 日本人, wherein he appealed that in order to reconstruct Buddhism one should pay attention to the heredity of priests. In his piece, Inoue separated Jōdo Shinshū, which recognized *nikujiki saitai*, from the “schools that prohibit clerical marriage.” According to his argument, these sects should pay attention to the issue of heredity in the education and training of disciples. Pointing out that educators of the time were also paying attention to heredity in their activities, he held that heredity should be closely related to education.⁴¹ The article went on to inquire into the causes of the rise and fall of Buddhism viewed from the standpoint of heredity, which he argued was essential to its flourishing. Therefore, Inoue wrote, when choosing a disciple, he hoped that the Buddhist schools would investigate his family lineage, and establish a standard regarding what kind of lineage initiates should have.⁴²

In the next issue of this magazine, Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911) quickly registered his agreement that the cause of the decline in the quality of priests lay in the handling of heredity. While Inoue was concerned with the heredity of disciples, Shimaji focused on priests’ marriage partners. Pointing to the phenomenon of “observing in the sunlight, transgressing in the shadows,” he argued that the current necessity for priests to conceal their relations with women would directly affect the quality of priests in subse-

³⁹ Okada Hakumeishi, “Sōryo saitai ron,” part 2, *Meikyō shinshi*, no. 2844, 10 February 1891.

⁴⁰ Inoue 1890.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

quent generations. Since priests could not choose their wives publicly, they could not fully evaluate a woman's character, education, and class.⁴³ Shimaji's argument extended beyond just the biological issue of heredity, and into the consideration of the emotional needs of children for a nurturing home environment, which he argued would be facilitated by a priest lovingly raising his own child with a good wife, whom he had married openly.⁴⁴ He argued that this sort of arrangement would provide Buddhism with superior human resources, in terms of both genetics and cultivation.

These articles by Inoue and Shimaji sparked much discussion on this issue. Hiraoka Junryō 平岡順亮 (n.d.) argued that, outside of Shinshū, what these two described could not be easily implemented. He stated that by marrying, priests could be criticized from three fronts: they could be punished according to the sect's laws, they would be diffident inside the home, and outside the temple they would be criticized by the laity. Since they could not even marry properly, they could not make demands on the character and educational level of their wives.⁴⁵ Hiraoka also made the argument that priests, as human beings, must abide by secular ethics, in particular making reference to the five virtues espoused in Confucianism, which he argued were necessary in order for priests to be effective teachers of both Buddhism and morality.⁴⁶

Thus far, I have outlined the *nikujiki saitai* debate up through the third decade of the Meiji period. The sectarian laws were established, and in the process of revising these, representatives from each organization expressed the intention to forbid meat eating and marriage and continue to maintain the Buddhist precepts. However, the voices for recognizing priestly marriage gradually grew stronger, based upon a consideration of the realities of the Buddhist world, the movement of the times, and the heredity of priests. As a result of that movement, from the latter half of the fourth decade of the Meiji period, the provisions regarding *nikujiki saitai* in each organization's sectarian laws were repealed.

⁴³ Shimaji 1890, p. 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Hiraoka Junryō, "Shimaji Mokurai shi ga 'Kinsai shū shoshi ni nozomu' no bun o yomu" 島地黙雷氏が「禁妻宗諸師に望む」の文を読む, *Meikyō shinshi*, no. 2684, 12 March 1890.

⁴⁶ Okada Hakumeishi, "Sōryo saitai ron," part 2, *Meikyō shinshi*, no. 2844, 10 February 1891.

TANAKA CHIGAKU AND HIS DISCUSSION OF BUDDHIST HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Tanaka Chigaku: His Life and Religious Activities

Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学 (1861–1939) is known as a Buddhist reformer of the mid-Meiji period. He was born as Tomoenosuke 巴之助 on the thirteenth day of the eleventh month of the first year of Bunkyū 文久 (1861) in Edo's Nihonbashi Ishimachi 日本橋石町. His father, Tada Genryū 多田玄竜 (n.d.–1869), was a doctor who attended a lay confraternity associated with the Nichiren Minobu-ha 日蓮身延派 and possessed a fervent faith in the Lotus Sutra. However, when Tomoenosuke was nine years old both his parents died of illness one after another, and in Meiji 3 (1870) at the age of ten he was ordained under the priest Chikyō-in Nisshin 智境院日進 (n.d.) at the Nichiren sect's Myōkakuji 妙覚寺, located in Tokyo. He received the name Chigaku there and took the family name Tanaka in 1872. He studied at the Nichiren school's Great Academies at Iidaka Danrin 飯高壇林 in Chiba Prefecture and Shiba Nihon Enoki 芝二本榎 in Tokyo. He had some reservations about the doctrine, however, so he began to study independently, resolving to "return to the founder." In 1879 he received treatment for an illness in the Yokohama home of his brother, a doctor, and in the second month of the same year he laicized in order to receive medical treatment. He was nineteen years old at the time.

After laicizing, Tanaka immediately began activities as a lay Buddhist, and a year later he established the Rengekai 蓮華会, devoting his efforts to the reform of the sect and the restoration of the founder's path. In 1883 the name of this group was changed to Goji Shōhōkai 護持正法会, which became centered in Tokyo, and the following year he renamed the organization as the Risshō Ankokuikai 立正安国会, based on the spirit of the *Risshō ankoku ron* 立正安国論 by Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282). In this way, he engaged in proselytizing activities aggressively. After that, in order to revive Nichiren's doctrine, he created the Shishiō Bunko 獅子王文庫 at Kanameyama 栗山 in Kamakura 鎌倉. In 1914 he unified the various groups with which he had been affiliated and created the Kokuchūkai 国柱会 (Pillar-of-State Association), in order to gradually broaden his religious activities. One can say that Tanaka's thought and religious activities throughout his life were entirely devoted to attempts to return to Nichiren's doctrine and to reform the sect itself. To fulfill these goals, Tanaka advocated "Nichirenism" (*Nichiren shugi* 日蓮主義), a set of ideas that ultimately extended beyond the scope of his own activities to many intellectuals of the time.

The Birth of Tanaka's Nikujiki Saitai Theory

Ten years after entering the priesthood, when Tanaka told his teacher Chikyō-in Nisshin that he wanted to return to lay life, it surprised those around him. By his own account, the reason he left the priesthood was to receive medical treatment, but it is possible that the image of his father as a layman who believed fervently in Buddhism also had some influence on him. According to his first son and disciple, Tanaka Kōho 田中香浦, Chigaku would often recount the words of his father: “You can read poems, but don’t become a poet. You can study Buddhism, but don’t become a priest. *Miso* that smells of *miso* is not fine *miso*.”⁴⁷ The year after he laicized, 1880, Tanaka married Kirigaya Mine 桐カ谷みね and after that he poured even more of his energy into religious activities.

In December of 1886, Tanaka delivered the lecture *Bukkyō fūfu ron* 仏教夫婦論 (Treatise on Buddhist Couples) at Risshōkaku 立正閣, which was later published in the second volume of *Shishiō ronsōhen* 獅子王論叢篇⁴⁸ and in the seventeenth volume of *Nichiren shugi kenkyū* 日蓮主義研究.⁴⁹ One could say that this was the first time Tanaka’s discourse on *nikujiki saitai* was released to the world. In addition to the influence of his lay Buddhist father, Tanaka’s life experience, independent philosophical study, and proselytizing activities led to the formation of the belief that not only should *nikujiki saitai* be accepted, but that if priests did not marry, Buddhism would not be revitalized and would not contribute to the progress of the nation. In his *Bukkyō fūfu ron*, Tanaka primarily discussed the relationship of the path of priestly marriage to the rise and fall of Buddhism, and to the chaos and prosperity of the nation.

In 1889, Tanaka wrote “*Bukkyō sōryo nikusai ron*” 仏教僧侶肉妻論 (Treatise on Marriage and Meat Eating by Buddhist Priests), which was serialized in a journal entitled *Shishiō* 師子王. However, because *Shishiō* itself was only published until its eleventh issue, only eight chapters of “*Bukkyō sōryo nikusai ron*” were carried in it. There are apparently ninety-two chapters in all, but only seventeen additional chapters were later discovered in the *Shishiō Bunko*. These twenty-five chapters were printed by Tanaka Kōho in the first volume of *Nichirenshugi kenkyū*. Unlike *Bukkyō fūfu ron*, in which Chigaku discussed the role of priestly marriage in the relationship between

⁴⁷ Tanaka 1974, p. 41.

⁴⁸ Tanaka 1931.

⁴⁹ Tanaka 1994.

Buddhism and society as a whole, “Bukkyō sōryo nikusai ron” treated the path of marriage for priests as a way of overcoming the problems within Buddhist doctrines and precepts that had become apparent in the new era.

Because of works like these, Tanaka has been judged by most previous scholarship as having built the foundation of the theory of lay Buddhism.⁵⁰ However, since the philosophical trademarks of his theory of husband and wife have not been analyzed, this article will examine and position Tanaka’s independent theory of *nikujiki saitai* in the context of the controversy within the Buddhist world at the time.

The Path of the Buddhist Husband and Wife

In order to understand the philosophical basis of Tanaka’s theory of husband and wife, we should first consider his view of religion. According to him, the power of religion was such that it could move everything under heaven and influence all of history. He argued that because of the immense power of religion to affect every level of human relations, from that of the state to that of the individual, the misuse of its doctrines could have disastrous consequences for society.⁵¹ Tanaka based his argument regarding the source of that power on the idea that “The origin of a country is the people. The origin of people is the heart. The origin of the heart is religion.”⁵² From this standpoint, Tanaka began with the assertion that “religion is taken to be the direct foundation of the state,”⁵³ and then moved on to present his own theory of religious reform.

Here, the question becomes how Tanaka viewed the role of religion in this construct. In *Bukkyō fūfu ron*, Tanaka wrote that for religion to fulfill its role to the greatest possible extent, it should provide religious education for the society and state.⁵⁴ He held that religion “for the sake of society and state” was the “greatest necessity of human affairs” and had the capacity to create “a perfect society and state,” which he said was the “first principle” of the education of religious people. From here, he turned to the issue of marital relations, which he argued was not only the “source of morality” in society, but ultimately determined the hearts of human beings. Tanaka’s assertion that in order for religion to exercise its greatest power, the path of married partnerships must be rectified deserves our closest attention, as it is

⁵⁰ See, for example, Yoshida 1970, Ikeda 1976, and Ōtani 1999.

⁵¹ Tanaka 1894.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

a contention that did not appear in previous discussions of clerical marriage. With this stance Tanaka took one step forward, clearly elaborating his intentions in developing this theory of married partnerships for priests in other works. That purpose was, internally, to strive for the development of Buddhism, and externally, to make society and the state prosper.⁵⁵ Here, Tanaka focused on the central element in his thesis that: “The origin of a country is the people. The origin of people is the heart. The origin of the heart is religion.” In order to achieve the ultimate goals of making the nation prosper and advancing religion, he advocated rectifying the path of husband and wife, which he saw to be the most important moral principle animating the human heart.

In this way, in presenting his theory of the Buddhist husband and wife, Tanaka stressed very strongly its importance in human society, because he held that the relationship between husband and wife was the most fundamental of human relationships.⁵⁶ For him, the path of husband and wife was the source of all happiness and misery among human beings, and was “representative of the greatest force in the nation.” Thus, he argued that the maintenance of the proper relationship between married partners had immense power, both to control the interests of the nation and even to damage society as a whole.

Tanaka also asserted that this path of husband and wife was a central issue for Buddhism and Buddhist priests, as well. He went so far as to say that whether or not priests practiced *nikujiki saitai* was directly related to the prosperity or decline of Buddhism, because if a religion could not make effective statements about married partnerships, which were “the greatest force in the nation,” then it was a useless religion. Therefore, concerning *nikujiki saitai*—the biggest problem in the Buddhist world at the time—Tanaka actively argued that Buddhism would be useless if priests did not follow the path of husband and wife. He held that in order for priests to fulfill their duties to both Buddhism and the nation, they ought to exhibit the true nature of Buddhism and promote the morality of men and women by entering into married relationships.⁵⁷ He went so far as to argue affirmatively that the quickest and most direct way for priests to save sentient beings was by taking wives.

Tanaka asserted that the path of married partnerships was important in both the secular and Buddhist worlds, but besides that a further reason to

⁵⁵ Tanaka 1894.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

recognize *nikujiki saitai* was the philosophy of having no precepts for the latter age of the Dharma (*mappō mukai* 末法無戒), which he discussed in “Bukkyō sōryo nikusai ron.” According to Tanaka, in Buddhism there was the fixed “absolute truth” and the changeable “expedient means.” Taking “absolute truth” to be doctrine, and “expedient means” to refer to the precepts, he wrote that clearly expressing the “absolute truth” while freely changing the “expedient means” during the *mappō* period was completely in accord with “the strict exhortations of Śākyamuni.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, Tanaka elsewhere emphasized that the precepts which prohibited *nikujiki saitai* were “empty precepts.” He stated that prohibiting *nikujiki saitai* by priests went against the original nature of human beings. When humans were forbidden from doing something, they would naturally end up breaking that precept. Tanaka stated that the precepts had no consideration for this aspect of human beings, and that humans could not uphold the precepts. Therefore, the precepts would day by day bring about the downfall of the Dharma, as they were “empty precepts” that corrupted the morality of human beings.

In this way, Tanaka not only developed a theory of Buddhist couples as a necessary requirement for the restoration of Buddhism and the prosperity of the nation, but he also argued that the path of husband and wife that he presented was in accord with the original form of human beings and that the precepts against having such a relationship were in contradiction with the principles of nature. Tanaka took the position that in the path of husband and wife the relationship between man and woman was both an “inherent right” and a “natural duty” (*hōnen no gimu* 法然の義務) from the perspective of the principles of nature. Making reference to evolution, Tanaka stated that the path of husband and wife was a foundation not just for society, but for the world of nature as a whole.⁵⁹

Further, Tanaka offered male-female relations as the “great basis,” the foundation of human ethics, stating that if there were no relations between man and woman, there would be no ethics among human beings. Since male-female relationships sprung from feelings of love, which were a source of morality, if these were lost, the values holding families together would fall apart and the path to saving sentient beings would also be lost.⁶⁰ Thus, in order to uphold societal ethics and advance the Buddhist teachings, human beings’ natural desires for sex first had to be fulfilled. Regarding

⁵⁸ Tanaka 1894.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Tanaka 1968, p. 24.

Tanaka's thought, Ikeda Eishun has written that "he held that in the realm of the individual's heart, no matter how much one sought rebirth or peace of mind, if the proper conditions for the body which contained this heart and the environment which supported it were lacking, then the realization of one's religious ideals would be difficult."⁶¹ In Tanaka's discourse, the path of husband and wife was precisely such a condition for "supporting the heart." Only by fulfilling that natural requirement could priests exercise their power, revitalize Buddhism, and advance the nation.

Further, in "Bukkyō sōryo nikusai ron," Tanaka emphasized that "meat eating and marriage do not necessarily violate the precepts," but he also asserted that the precepts were something which would only cause trouble for human beings, and were inconsistent with the original intention of Buddhism.⁶² On this point, Tanaka seems to be in agreement with the philosophy of human liberation presented by the early modern Jōdo Shinshū thinker Saigin.⁶³

From the perspective presented above, Tanaka looked back upon Proclamation 133 and judged that the Meiji government's lifting the ban on priests' meat eating, marriage, and growing of hair according to the trend of the period was "a great reform, decisively executed" and "a tremendously resolute step."⁶⁴ Stressing the importance of the path of husband and wife, complaining that the precepts were lacking in humanity, and asserting that Buddhism was useless if priests did not take wives in this new age, Tanaka actively debated the *nikujiki saitai* problem in an original argument that was hitherto unseen.

Criticism of Conventional Buddhism and the Call for a Secularly Oriented Buddhism

At the root of Tanaka's argument was the idea that if priests were offered the path of husband and wife, they could take part in society, and from there revive Buddhism and advance the nation. From this perspective, he became critical of conventional Buddhism. In his view, Buddhist clerics generally had preached exclusively about eternity, doing their best to distance themselves from secular forms, and were utterly unconcerned with matters such as marriage. They only participated in funerals, and took no part in

⁶¹ Ikeda 1976, p. 132.

⁶² Tanaka 1968, p. 36.

⁶³ See Pham 2004.

⁶⁴ Tanaka 1968, p. 16.

marriage-related rituals. Tanaka asserted that priests had an awareness of themselves as elevated, expounding on esoteric matters, and never speaking of secular ethics.⁶⁵ In short, in Tanaka's thinking weddings were more important than funerals, living was more important than dying, and the secular society which was before our eyes was more important than eternity or the Pure Land. It is no exaggeration to say that this was Tanaka's signature stance in favor of this-worldly Buddhism. As opposed to the conventional wisdom of most of the Buddhist world at that time, he was critical of a Buddhism that withdrew from the world.

Although Tanaka was originally a believer in the Lotus Sutra and a Nichiren school priest, in his argument for priests' marriage he appreciated the ideas of Hōnen and Shinran.⁶⁶ While they had claimed that one could be reborn in the Pure Land by just saying the *nenbutsu* 念仏 and had connected with the hearts of the people by not avoiding secular society, the various sects of Nara 奈良, Mt. Hiei 比叡, and Zen 禪 Buddhism had preached a far-off and lofty teaching, without discussing the things which were urgent for the people, instead viewing them coldly and teaching only about the death of human beings. As a result, Japanese Buddhist doctrine was vast and its teachings profound, but it was detached from human society and had grown astray from the actual world. Saintliness was the original way of Buddhist priests, but according to Tanaka it was precisely that way which had made people's hearts stray from Buddhism and caused it to lose its ability to drive the greatest force in the society; instead, this stance had caused society to fall into a dangerous situation. Here, Tanaka advanced his own Buddhism—not a Buddhism that withdrew into the temple and concentrated solely on doctrine, but rather one that dove further into the secular world, actively grew near to the people and truly engaged with their every problem. This was the ideal Buddhism for Tanaka.

He also expressed a critical view of conventional Buddhism's understanding of the problem with women, whereby it distanced itself from secular people, particularly women, who were seen as being more polluted. Priests needed to protect women and actively expound their original nature and aptitudes. They should not regard women insincerely, but should treat them with the utmost integrity. Tanaka called upon priests to respect women and uphold the moral qualities of both the sexes, noting that they must not associate with women in a foolish or trivial manner.⁶⁷ This emphasis on the

⁶⁵ Tanaka 1894.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

woman's role in sustaining the path of husband and wife and the contention that women must be respected is notable not just in the discourse on priestly marriage at the time, but in the discourse on marriage at large.

In this way, Tanaka submitted the unprecedented affirmative argument that priests must practice *nikujiki saitai* not just for the revival of Buddhism, but for the sake of society's ethics and the advancement of the nation, based on the working of natural law. Here we must consider what kind of Buddhism Tanaka was aspiring for.

As for that teaching that has always been with our Japanese empire, it must be called a Japanese Buddhism. This progressive Japanese Buddhism will never part from Japan, and yet it also should become the Buddhism of all of Jambudvīpa. In other words, it is a Japanese Buddhism that will bring together the whole universe. The people of our country must not for a single day forget the essence of this teaching. On that day when the nation is run and the people's lives are conducted according to the crux of this teaching, expedient means will be enacted, absolute truth will be revived, people will be purified, the world will be peaceful and wise men produced, people of abilities will emerge, the wise and the good will be raised, and loyalty and chastity will appear. It will be a day when all morality, all happiness, all beauty, and all goodness will be emitted simultaneously.⁶⁸

Tanaka's ideal Buddhism was one strongly rooted in Japan's society. It was Jambudvīpa Buddhism, or this-worldly Buddhism, a Buddhism for the sake of secular society. What would support that Buddhism was none other than the morals of men and women, the path of husband and wife. If this path were rectified, then all of society would become wonderfully prosperous—we can imagine that this was Tanaka's dream. What we should focus on here is the phrase "a Japanese Buddhism." That Buddhism, unrelated to the old ways of conventional Buddhism, is a Buddhism for the sake of Japanese society and the Japanese people. Previously, this author has examined the *nikujiki saitai* problem in Japanese Buddhism from the ancient period to modernity. Priests did not just begin to publicly practice *nikujiki saitai* in the Meiji period—rather, this is a phenomenon that occurred throughout Japanese Buddhist history. Unique from the Buddhism of other regions, a Buddhism which includes priestly marriage is truly that which Tanaka

⁶⁸ Tanaka 1894.

asserts is “a Japanese Buddhism.” With his two works, *Bukkyō fūfu ron* and “*Bukkyō sōryo nikusai ron*,” it is no exaggeration to say that Tanaka completed Japanese Buddhism’s *nikujiki saitai* debate.

CONCLUSION

When the Grand Council of State’s Proclamation 133 was issued in 1872, the Buddhist world was greatly impacted and responded with much confusion and anguish. Amidst this, the Buddhist world gradually split into conservative and reform factions. The conservatives took the position that even though it was permitted by the government, they would not eat meat or marry, and would continue to observe the precepts. On the other hand, the reformers, considering the circumstances of the Buddhist world at the time, the changing times, the problem of the transmission of Buddhism, and the contradiction between the Buddhist precepts and secular ethics, continued to beg the government and the religious organizations to permit clerical marriage. In the first stage, the conservative camp represented an overwhelming majority, but by the mid-Meiji, priests ran into the problems of military service and electoral rights, and were forced to think of a new priestly image that could accommodate the new era and the relationship between Buddhism and secular society. Pressed by the demands of an era in which they had to go out into secular society and expand their activities, priests could no longer seclude themselves in the temple, and the Buddhist world gradually began to move.

In the face of these changes, the voices that criticized *nikujiki saitai* and sought to preserve the traditional Buddhist precepts met with greater opposition from proponents of the opinion that *nikujiki saitai* should be recognized from the end of the second decade of the Meiji period. Vigorous arguments were made based on concerns about the realities of the Buddhist world, the movement of the times, the genetic quality of priests, and the importance of human morals. In particular, the revisions to the rules of each of the various sects in this period led to a debate that was qualitatively and quantitatively far greater than it had been up to that point. Amidst this, the most noteworthy elements were Tanaka Chigaku’s theory of marriage for priests and his actual evangelical activities as a lay Buddhist. Tanaka offered up the path of husband and wife as the foundation and central axis of the world of nature and all of society. The most noteworthy aspect of Tanaka’s position was that it did not stop with the argument that clerical marriage should be recognized, but went so far as to actively propose a theory of a

Buddhist husband and wife. Eventually, as the result of these debates, in the beginning of the fourth decade of the Meiji period the regulations prohibiting *nikujiki saitai* were gradually eliminated from each sect's rules.

Tanaka was once a Nichiren priest, but he highly valued the thought of Hōnen and Shinran as he appealed for priests to give up their secluded lifestyle in favor of flourishing in society. Since religion and the human heart possessed a relationship that was impossible to sever, if priests did not hold to the path of husband and wife, which was one of utmost ethical importance for human beings, they could not educate the people. By building such a path, priests could mobilize the spirit of the people and give rise to a great power. Tanaka emphasized that this power was the source of the development of the nation, and presented an active argument for clerical marriage hitherto unprecedented in the *nikujiki saitai* debate. The Buddhism to which Tanaka aspired was one that was active in secular society, and he emphasized that it was precisely this Buddhism that was “a Japanese Buddhism.” By proposing the concept of “a Japanese Buddhism,” which was established and sustained by the path of the Buddhist husband and wife, Tanaka completed an argument that would settle the problem of *nikujiki saitai* that had been pending for more than one thousand years of Japanese Buddhist history.

(Translated by Jessica Starling)

REFERENCES

- Fukuda Gyōkai 福田行誠. 1931. “Kyōbushō e kengen” 教部省へ建言. In *Shūkyō bungakushū* 宗教文学集, vol. 52 of *Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū* 現代日本文学全集. Tokyo: Kaizōsha.
- Hattori Masao 服部莊夫. 1938. *Ōtori Sessō ō* 鴻雪爪翁. Tokyo: Kōkyōkai.
- Hirano Yoshitarō 平野義太郎. 1948. *Nihon shihon shugi shakai no kikō: Shiteki katei yori no kyūmei* 日本資本主義社会の機構：史的過程よりの究明. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Ikeda Eishun 池田英俊. 1976. *Meiji no bukkō: Sono kōdō to shisō* 明治の仏教：その行動と思想, vol. 31 of *Nihonjin no kōdō to shisō* 日本人の行動と思想. Tokyo: Hyōronsha.
- Inoue Enryō 井上円了. 1890. “Saitai kinsei shū shoshi ni nozomu” 妻帯禁制宗諸師に望む. *Nihonjin* 日本人 41, pp. 5–6.
- Kawaguchi Kōfū 川口高風. 2002. *Meiji zenki sōtōshū no kenkyū* 明治前期曹洞宗の研究. Kyoto: Hōzōkan.
- Kitane Yutaka 北根豊 and Suzuki Yūga 鈴木雄雅, ed. 1997. *Nihon shoki shinbun zenshū* 日本初期新聞全集, supplemental volume 1. Tokyo: Perikansha.
- Kobayashi Masamori 小林正盛, ed. 1936. *Ōtori Sessō ō san'urō shibunshō* 鴻雪爪翁山雨樓詩文鈔. Tokyo: Shin no Nihonsha.

- Matono Hansuke 的野半介, ed. 1968. *Etō Nanpaku* 江藤南白, vol. 1. Tokyo: Hara Shobō.
- Monbushō Bunkakyoku Shūmuka 文部省文化局宗務課, ed. 1968. *Meiji igo shūkyō kankei hōrei ruisan* 明治以後宗教関係法令類纂. Tokyo: Daiichi Hōki.
- Naikaku Kanpōkyoku 内閣官報局, ed. 1974–94. *Meiji nenkan hōrei zensho* 明治年間法令全書. 45 vols. Orig. pub. 1868–1912. Tokyo: Hara Shobō.
- Ono Kunimatsu 小野国松, ed. 1892. *Jōdoshū seiki ruisan* 浄土宗制規類纂. Tokyo: Kitazawa Kyūjirō.
- Ōtani Eiichi 大谷栄一. 1999. “Tanaka Chigaku no shisō to undō 1: Zaike bukkyō undō to shite no nichiren shugi undō” 田中智学の思想と運動①：在家仏教運動としての日蓮主義運動. *Fukujin* 福神 2, pp. 37–45.
- Pham Thi Thu Giang. 2004. “Kinsei jōdo shinshū ni okeru nikujiki saitai ron: Sono ningen kan to bukkyō kan” 近世浄土真宗における肉食妻帯論：その人間観と仏教観. *Nara joshi daigaku daigakuin ningen bunka kenkyūka nenpō* 奈良女子大学大学院人間文化研究科年報 20, pp. 402–12.
- Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷. 1890. “Inoue Enryō shi ga saitai kinsei shū shoshi ni nozomu no bun o yonde sara ni kinsai shū shoshi ni nozomu” 井上圓了氏か妻帯禁制宗諸師に望むの文を讀で更に禁妻宗諸師に望む. *Nihonjin* 42, pp. 10–11.
- Tanaka Chigaku 田中智学. 1894. *Bukkyō fūfu ron* 仏教夫婦論. Tokyo: Risshō Ankokukai Honbu.
- . 1931. *Shishiō ronsōhen* 師子王論叢篇, vol. 2. Part of *Shishiō zenshū* 師子王全集. Tokyo: Shishiō Zenshū Kankōkai.
- . 1968. “Bukkyō sōryo nikusai ron” 仏教僧侶肉食妻帯論. *Nichiren shugi kenkyū* 日蓮主義研究 1, pp. 10–59.
- . 1994. “Bukkyō fūfu ron” 仏教夫婦論. *Nichiren shugi kenkyū* 日蓮主義研究 17, pp. 16–63.
- Tanaka Hōkoku 田中芳谷. 1974. *Tanaka Chigaku sensei ryakuden* 田中智学先生略伝. Tokyo: Shishiō Bunko.
- Uchida Shūdō 内田修道 and Makihara Norio 牧原憲夫, ed. 1990. *Meiji kenpakusho shūsei* 明治建白書集成, vol. 2. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō.
- Yoshida Kyūichi 吉田久一. 1970. *Nihon no kindai shakai to bukkyō* 日本の近代社会と仏教, vol. 6 of *Nihonjin no kōdō to shisō*. Tokyo: Hyōronsha.