

But it is ungracious to quibble over such things because *Readings of the Lotus Sūtra* is an excellent companion to anyone interested in this sutra. The essays are all of high standard, yet written in a clear style that are a pleasure to read. Students will find this volume a concise summary of the salient points of this sutra's teachings and its development, while advanced scholars will discover much that will provoke them to think about this sutra in a new light. It is required reading for everyone interested in Buddhism.

Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics. By Christopher Ives. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. x+275 pages. Hardcover \$52.00.

NANCY STALKER

In the last decade or so, scholars have been effectively debunking the idealized, ahistorical portrayal of Zen as a non-violent religion epitomizing traditional Japanese culture. Some have pointed out how the works of advocates like D. T. Suzuki and Nishida Kitarō were as nationalistic as they were spiritual. Others have challenged the stereotyped image of Zen monks in seated meditation in exquisitely aesthetic surroundings by chronicling the mundane religious lives of followers. Yet others have explored how certain Japanese cultural practices and icons, like archery and the Ryōanji rock garden, have become spuriously associated with Zen. And finally, some have chronicled Zen's active and enthusiastic support of modern Japanese militarism and imperialism.

Christopher Ives has provided us with a refinement of this final category in an excellent and original study of Ichikawa Hakugen (1902–1986), a “priest, professor and activist” who was “almost single-handedly” responsible for launching postwar critiques of Buddhist war responsibility. In contrast with the condemnatory attitude of scholars like Brian Victoria and Ichikawa himself, the author's nuanced and scholarly approach foregoes negative judgment of Zen complicity with the state, even-handedly examining the philosophical and political underpinnings of Imperial-Way Zen. He seeks to move beyond the questions of *how* and *in what ways* Zen was co-opted by the imperial state, beginning to answer *why* Zen did not resist this trend asking “why Zen, a religious tradition purportedly effective at

liberating people from the ego and its entanglement in political co-optation and violence, actively supported Japanese imperialism.”

Ichikawa is a complex figure who attempted to grapple honestly with his “wartime shortcomings” in which he “steered a course between collaboration and active resistance.” He was a self-described “coward” who found militarism repugnant from an early age and adopted a radical leftist attitude toward Buddhism, seeking to combine it with Marxism and move towards “B-A-C, Buddhism, Anarchism-Communism.” But with the escalating atmosphere of nationalistic patriotism in the 1930s, alongside state suppression of leftists, he found himself capitulating to nationalist norms, rather than risking arrest and finally committing ideological apostasy (*tenkō*), parroting the idea that Japan was fighting a “holy war.” During the postwar period, beginning in 1950, while a professor at Hanazono University he began to critically examine how Zen philosophy, norms and history facilitated cooperation with the imperial state. Like Maruyama Masao and other prominent postwar intellectuals, guilt and shame over his lack of resistance in wartime drove Ichikawa to deeply examine Buddhist war responsibility.

The author argues overall that institutional history, rather than Ichikawa’s emphasis on Zen’s ethical pitfalls or Brian Victoria’s emphasis on its bushido ethos, better explains the causes of Imperial-Way Buddhism, citing Buddhism’s symbiotic relationship with state authorities from the eighth century onward, epitomized in ideas about *ōbō buppō*, or the unity of the laws of the sovereign and the Buddha. The author also seeks to temper Ichikawa’s and Victoria’s views that Zen “waged war,” contending instead that “it got caught up in war” because of institutional self-interest, its traditional closeness to military leaders and patriotism instilled through the imperial educational system, among other factors.

The text moves agilely between historical circumstances, Ichikawa’s postwar views, contemporary Buddhist discourse and the author’s own analysis. Chapters one and four are primarily historical. The former provides an overview of the developing relationship between religion and state authority from Meiji to early Showa (1868–1945), describing the evolution of a Buddhism that was “useful to the state” in a modern sense, zealously helping with nationalist campaigns, supporting military troops and proselytizing among colonial subjects. In chapter four, the author lays out Buddhist efforts to help cultivate nationalism and mobilize the populace for war through their ideological, ritual and institutional support of state

programs. In response to Victoria, he argues that bushido was not causal but rhetorical, “a construct readily available when Zen leaders sought an ex post facto justification” for their collaboration. He astutely points out the problem of reception, i.e., that it is difficult, if not impossible to “measure” the effect of ideology and propaganda; while we can examine how Zen elites propagated nationalist attitudes, we cannot determine the extent of internalization among the conscripted masses. This chapter also provides a lengthy discussion, informed by a wide range of scholarship, on theories of nationalism and their application to Japanese imperial ideology on a deep level.

Chapters two and three address Ichikawa’s analysis of how concepts critical to Zen philosophy and metaphysics, including “peace of mind” (*anjin*) and “becoming one with things” (*narikiru*) helped accommodate collaboration with Japanese imperialism by “undermining criticism of and resistance to sociopolitical actuality.” He pointedly asked, “Was social conscience thrown away with the shaving of their heads?” Constructs such as karma, indebtedness and harmony justified social and economic disparities, stressed obedience to authority and shaped Zen’s conservative social stance overall. Ichikawa examined Zen’s early history and found that Zen was “a religion for Chinese elites seeking existential security in the midst of social turmoil.” Those elites thus sought peace of mind in times of conflict and becoming one with the situation allowed them to experience actuality without discrimination or judgment. The related religious ideals of detachment, neutrality and indifference, of conformity and adaptation to circumstances ignored ethics, legitimated the status quo and rejected discrimination between good and evil.

The latter portion of the book, chapters five through seven shifts from explanation to exhortation, proposing the construction of a critical perspective that would help buttress Zen against future co-optation by the state. To this end, the author conducts a close analysis of how and why key aspects of Zen teaching and practice, including precepts, compassion, negation and monasticism failed to provide tools for keeping Zen focused on peace and human rights and avoid future co-optation. He finds that there was no single, stable set of Buddhist precepts, that the doctrine of ahimsa, avoiding killing, could also be used to justify violence, that Zen compassion was detached and offered little direction when dealing with political affairs and that Zen monastic training instilled a social ethic of obedience toward superiors rather than critical consciousness.

The book closes with a call for Zen ethicists to “apply internal pressure,” and “extend their critical gaze,” in order to grapple with understanding how their religion “provided ‘useful service’ to Japanese rulers . . . and in so doing seemingly violated basic Buddhist values.” Overall, the text is a thought-provoking and valuable contribution to the new scholarship on Zen. It should be read widely by religious studies scholars and philosophers and by historians of religion and of Imperial Japan.