

Anti-Christianity and Funerary Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan

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I. Introduction

Life free of Buddhism was almost impossible in Tokugawa Japan (1600-1868), where Buddhist temples covered every corner of the country. It is estimated that, by the late seventeenth century, there were at least more than 100,000 Buddhist temples, and this number remained undiminished until the early Meiji years when an anti-Buddhist movement, known as “abolish the Buddha and discard Śākyamuni” (haibutsu kishaku), swept the country.¹⁾ More

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1) It is not possible to give even a ballpark figure, never mind an exact one, with regard to how many temples existed during the Tokugawa period. On six different occasions (1632 [Kan'ei era]; 1692; 1744; 1781-1800 [Tenmei-Kansei eras]; 1834; and 1839), the shōgunate ordered the nation's head temples to submit a list of their branch temples. But there are only two extant registers of head-branch temples, or *jiin honmatsuchō*, available for calculating nationwide statistical data—those pertaining to the Kan'ei and Tenmei-Kansei eras, respectively. According to Tamamuro Fumio's analysis of these surviving registers, the Kan'ei register lists around 12,000 temples, while the Tenmei-Kansei register lists around 40,000

than 100,000 temples (probably about 200,000-250,000 when subtemples such as jiin, tacchū, anshitsu, and the like were all individually counted and included) in a country whose population was grown from around twelve million at the turn of the sixteenth century to around thirty million by 1700 and stabilized thereafter, or where there were about 73,000 administrative units (about 63,000 village [mura] units and 10,000 ward [machi] units) meant that, on average, 300 people (or sixty households on the assumption that each family unit has five members), or each village or ward supported at least one or two temples.²⁾ This is what the Tokugawa Japanese had to shoulder in

temples. Both these registers, however, are incomplete and fall far short of reflecting the whole picture of the times. For a detailed analysis, see Tamamuro (1981), pp.15-26.

On the other hand, there are mysterious reference figures —between 460,000 and 500,000 — that were often cited, if indiscreetly, as a total number of Buddhist temples in Tokugawa Japan (for example, see Yoshida Nobuyuki, p.30). These figures indeed appear in the *Shinron* (New Thesis) of Aizawa Seishisai (1825), the *Kasshi yawa* of Matsura Kiyoshi (1821-41), and the *Suijinroku* (edited by Katsu Kaishū in 1890). It is said that these figures were based on a fund-raising story in which Shitenōji in Osaka was alleged to have “successfully” solicited donations from 459,040 temples of the country when, at the turn of the eighteenth century, it had appealed for assistance to deal with its destroyed buildings. There is no basis to this story. Interestingly, however, the *Shaji torishirabe ruisan*, an early Meiji-period collection of documents (statistical data, policies, regulations, surveys, and the like), repeats, as if adding credibility, that there were 465,049 (?) temples in Tokugawa Japan. For more details, see *Monbushō shūkyōkyoku*, vol. 4, pp.30-36; and Tamamuro (1981), p.19.

In 1925 the Ministry of Education, which gathered statistical data on nation's Buddhist temples (jiin) and halls (butsudō), found that there were 70,012 temples and 33,824 halls. Adding to these figures the estimated number of temples destroyed by the anti-Buddhist movement in the early Meiji years (at least, 20 percent to 30 percent of the total), the report suggested that, during the Tokugawa period, there were more than 90,000 temples (excluding Buddhist halls, which did not have serving monks in residence according to the report). But it is unlikely that all these “Buddhist halls” indeed had no serving monks in residence during the Tokugawa period. For more details, see *Monbushō shūkyōkyoku*, vol. 2 (Dai-rokushū), pp.1-3; and *Monbushō shūkyōkyoku*, vol. 4 (Dai-jūshū), pp.38-44.

Taking into account another factor that many monks voluntarily opted for abandoning their Buddhist status and transformed their temples into secular residences or others or left them dilapidated during the early Meiji period, I suggest that the total number of Buddhist temples in Tokugawa Japan exceeded at least 100,000. The figure of 200,000-250,000 that included all subtemples is Tamamuro Fumio's suggestion.

addition to regular tax obligations and corvée duties to the government and to the ruling class.

Truly, in Tokugawa Japan, almost no village was without a Buddhist temple and no person untouched by the intervention of Buddhist monks. Nonetheless, Buddhism was not a state religion. Unlike the Meiji imperial government, for example, which tried to elevate Shintō to the status of a state religion, the Tokugawa regime did not make any attempt to incorporate Buddhist ideas and rituals into governing principles of the state. It neither forced people to allocate their precious resources to Buddhist temples nor encouraged Buddhist institutions to tap the economic surplus of Tokugawa society. On the contrary, throughout the Tokugawa period both central (bakufu) and local (han) governments, which often found themselves vying with Buddhist institutions over the same resources, tried to control, even suppress in some cases, Buddhism. Given all this, one might wonder how Buddhist institutions were able to penetrate into every corner of the country and how so many Buddhist temples were able to maintain themselves.

As the Kan'ei (1624-43) register of head-branch temples testifies, however, most temples simply could not entrust their sustenance to the mainstay of Tokugawa economic life—agricultural landholdings.³⁾ Among 2,838 temples listed in the Kan'ei register, 15 percent reported that their income from landholdings was less than one koku (= 5.119 bushels) of rice; 52 percent

2) For a discussion of the demography of Tokugawa Japan, see White, pp.9-18; and Hayami (1997), pp.78-81, (2001), pp.56-58; and for a reference for the number of village units, see Kodama, pp.496-508. The shōgunal government's 1834 nationwide cadastral survey on the capacity of rice production (kokudaka) informs that there were 63,480 village units in the country. There are no reliable statistical data on the total number of the nation's urban wards, but it is estimated that there were about 10,000 ward units. See Yoshida Nobuyuki, pp.32-33. According to the government statistics, in 1884 the total number of village and ward units was 71,137. See Murata, p.33.

3) This register refers to a compilation of branch temple registers submitted by head temples to the office of temples and shrines at the bakufu by the tenth year (1633) of the Kan'ei era (1624-43). Among them, only forty-five registers survive. For a more detailed account of how the Kan'ei register was compiled, see Tamamuro (1981), pp.8-12.

reported income between one and five koku; and 13 percent reported income between six and ten koku. According to one estimate, in order to be stable, in the 1630s a temple needed an annual income of at least ten koku of rice.⁴⁾ As far as the Kan'ei register is concerned, a vast majority of Buddhist temples—80 percent—had to find extra or supplementary income sources for survival.

Where and how were Buddhist temples, ubiquitous throughout the country yet stable and even prosperous throughout the period, able to find financial resources to supplement their mediocre income from agriculture? In an attempt to answer this question, I draw attention to the example of Edo, the shōgunal castle town that came to embrace a large number of Buddhist temples within a short period of time yet able to accommodate them without much stress. The mode in which Buddhist temples operated themselves in Edo can be treated as a local issue. But given that, as far as religious policy was concerned, the shōgunal government (the shōgunate or bakufu) set the overarching rules and regulations for all Buddhist temples throughout the country, the Edo example can offer us a direction with regard to how we should approach the larger question of the prosperity of Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan.

II. The Genesis of Buddhist Temples in Edo

Edo, which served as the de facto capital of Tokugawa Japan, had only been a small rural town with no significant religious establishments until the settlement of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) there in 1590. Edo's population grew to around one million by the late seventeenth century and remained quite stable thereafter. Its dramatic metamorphosis from a rural town into a mega-city in the seventeenth century was accompanied by a rapid growth of Buddhist temples. According to a Bunsei era (1818-29) bakufu survey, which details the genesis of religious institutions, Edo came to embrace more than 1,000 temples—on average, one temple per 1,000 residents. In comparison, the total number

4) *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

of Shintō shrines was only 112.⁵⁾ This level of temple density was far less than the national average, but given that about a half of the population belonged to the samurai class, most members of which were affiliated with temples in their local domains, Edo was clearly a “Buddhist” city as far as the commoner residents were concerned.

In understanding the context of Edo's swift accommodation of a large number of Buddhist temples, findings from the Bunsei-era survey are helpful.⁶⁾ Data from the survey show that Buddhist temples in Edo had the following sectarian distribution in the 1820s.

From Table 1, we notice that Pure Land, Nichiren, and Zen Buddhist sects were dominant in Edo. The strong presence of the so-called Kamakura Buddhist sects in Edo — a newly developed city that had to start from scratch — contrasted with situations in the more traditional rural villages of the surrounding Musashi area where such old Buddhist establishments as Tendai and Shingon sects were relatively prominent. Before Tokugawa Ieyasu entered the city, Edo's Buddhist temples had been sparse in number and meager in magnitude (notwithstanding a few exceptions such as Sensōji and Zōjōji). As Edo rapidly developed, Buddhist sects and monks, who saw ample opportunities

5) For the list of temples and shrines, see Asakura, pp.3-88. It should be noted that there were hundreds of petty (Shintō) shrines in Edo erected in the corners of residential districts or on the sides of streets or attached to other buildings. These small-scale shrines, collectively referred to as *shōsha*, or *shōshi*, were not usually tended by priests in residence. For an account of these petty shrines in Edo, see Inoue, pp.22-25.

6) Originally, the bakufu conducted a survey of wards and religious institutions for the project of compiling the *Go-funai fūdoki* (Records of customs and land of the inner districts [of Edo]) — a would-be reference book containing basic data regarding the shōgunal castle town (that would supplement the previously edited *Shinpen Musashi fūdoki* [A new edition of the records of customs and land of Musashi]). Among the survey results, those pertaining to religious institutions (which were primarily obtained from temple/shrine reports) were compiled as a separate compendium under the title *Go-funai jisha bikō* (Reference notes on temples and shrines of the inner districts [of Edo]). Although the volumes of the *Go-funai fūdoki*, completed in 1829, are currently unavailable due to heavy losses in an 1872 fire, the separate edition, *Go-funai jisha bikō*, has survived in its entirety and enables us to examine the social existence of Buddhist temples in Edo.

for growth, vied with each other to expand their footholds. Jōdoshū, Nichirenshū, Sōtōshū, and Jōdoshinshū (also commonly known as Ikkōshū) turned out to be the most successful of these.⁷⁾

<Table 1> Buddhist Temples in Edo

Names of Sects	Number of Temples	Percentage
Jōdoshū	231	23.6
Nichirenshū	200	20.4
Sōtōshū	156	16.0
Jōdoshinshū	124	12.6
Tendaishū	92	9.4
Rinzaishū	72	7.4
Shingi Shingonshū	65	6.6
Ōbakushū	14	1.4
Kogi Shingonshū	13	1.3
Shugen	7	0.7
Jishū	2	0.2
Shingon Risshū	2	0.2
Total	978	100

SOURCE: Asakura Haruhiko ed. *Go-funai jisha bikō bessatsu*, pp.7-35.

NOTES: Temples related to the shōgunal house as prayer halls or funerary temples (such as Kan'eiji, Zōjōji, Gokokuji, Tenzūin, Gojiin, and Nishihonganji in Tsukiji); temples located near the city boundary of Edo demarcated by the "vermillion line"; temples serving Shintō shrines as jingūji; and many other subtemples (which, in organizational structure, belonged to the head temples of high status but were independently run) were not included in this survey. In other words, Edo temples actually numbered more than what is indicated by Table 1. As I have said, there were more than 1,000 Buddhist temples in Edo.⁸⁾

7) True Pure Land Sect is referred to as Jōdoshinshū, and, on rare occasions, as Ikkōshū or the Honganji sect. During the Tokugawa period this sect was usually called Jōdoshinshū, and, less often, Ikkōshū, Gomontoshū, Shinshū, or simply Jōdoshū. The name Shinshū was, however, not officially recognized by the government until 1872. See Nagura (1995), p.172.

8) Nittō (1998), p.4.

Table 2 shows how many temples of each sect were newly established within certain given periods. The year 1600 marks the beginning of the Tokugawa regime, and 1631 and 1663 are the years in which the shōgunate reiterated its ban on the construction of new temples.

<Table 2> The Genesis of Buddhist Temples in Edo

Sects	Pre-1590	1590/99	1600/31	1632/63	Post-1663	N/A	Total
Jōdoshū	21	21	123	12	6	48	231
Nichirenshū	18	27	96	14	3	42	200
Sōtōshū	25	19	60	9	7	36	156
Jōdoshinshū	20	11	66	9	4	14	124
Tendaishū	21	4	19	2	4	42	92
Shingonshū	3	0	29	5	5	38	80
Rinzaishū	1	2	39	14	9	7	72
Ōbakushū	1	0	1	2	1	9	14
Shugen	2	0	0	0	2	3	7
Jishū	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total	112	84	433	67	41	241	978
%	11.5	8.6	44.3	6.8	4.2	24.6	100

SOURCE: *Go-funai jisha bikō*, 7 volumes.⁹⁾

In 1631 (the eighth year of the Kan'ei era) the shōgunal government outlawed the building of new temples, ordering the major temples of each sect to survey their branch temples and to enter them in what would later be known as the Kan'ei register of head-branch temples (*honmatsuchō*). The bakufu then classified the temples listed in the Kan'ei head-branch register as "old-track temples" (*koseki jiin*) and privileged them over the ones erected after

9) This table is a revised version of Nittō Kazuhiko's meticulous analysis of the *Go-funai jisha bikō*, reprint, 7 volumes (Tokyo: Meicho shuppan, 1986), to which I added statistics pertaining to the temples managed by shugen (See *Go-funai jisha bikō*, vol. 7, pp.281-302). See Nittō (1995), pp.179-81. In terms of religious function, temples managed by shugen, or shugenja, were no different from those controlled by ordained Buddhist monks.

1631, which were collectively referred to as “new-land temples” (*shinchi jiin*). Bakufu officials continued to attempt to halt the mushrooming of Buddhist temples throughout Edo.¹⁰⁾ Despite the government’s hostility, the number of temples continued to increase. About three decades later, the shōgunate once again issued an edict forbidding the opening of “new-land temples” — an edict that was once again promulgated in 1692. The increase of new temples measurably slowed thereafter, and their number was stabilized around 1,000.

Given that, throughout the Tokugawa period, “old-track temples” carried much status and prestige, it is not surprising that, when temples were surveyed in the early nineteenth century, many of them tried to inflate their genealogy. The older-is-better mindset seemed especially conspicuous among those temples that claimed they had originated before 1600. It is highly unlikely that there were already 196 temples (see Table 2) in the small town of Edo before the shōgunal government was set up. Many of these, if they existed at all, must have been obscure religious facilities, hardly qualified to be called “temples.”¹¹⁾ In other words, the statistical accuracy of Table 2 should be read with care. Nevertheless, as far as the genesis of Edo’s Buddhist temples is concerned, the Bunsei survey reveals the overall historical trends: (1) a vast majority of temples were newly erected within a relatively short period of time; and (2) the vast majority of these were erected during the early decades of the seventeenth century.

Specifically, more than 60 percent of the 231 Jōdoshū temples were founded in the seventeenth century (before 1591, Edo had only twenty-one Jōdoshū

10) *Monbushō shūkyōkyoku*, vol. 4, pp.1-3.

11) In understanding the incipient forms of what were later officially recognized as Buddhist institutions (*jiin*), Tamamuro Fumio’s analysis of a 1633 temple survey pertaining to Kōshi County of the Kumamoto domain is helpful. According to him, even in the early decades of the seventeenth century many Buddhist “temples” were still nothing more than semi-private prayer halls attached, or adjacent, to the main residential building of a family. They were neither managed by ordained monks, nor had official temple names. These religious facilities, which were run by semi-religious or peripatetic figures or maintained by wealthy farmers or village officials, were later developed into independent, self-sustaining, publicly recognized Buddhist temples. Tamamuro (1999), pp.27-40.

temples). In particular, under the leadership of two major head temples, Chionin in Kyoto and Zōjōji in Edo (which would, respectively, control ninety-two and seventy branch temples in Edo), the Jōdoshū saw a dramatic proliferation of its branch temples by the 1630s. In the case of Nichirenshū, the ratio of temples established after 1600 reached 56 percent; and, in the case of Sōtōshū, it exceeded 48 percent. Jōdoshinshū was also quite successful in expanding its branches within the new political center of the nation. More than 60 percent of its temples were established between 1600 and 1662. On the whole, more than half of all Buddhist temples in Edo were erected between 1600 and 1663 (whether they were newly constructed, transformed from obscure prayer halls, or transplanted from other areas). If we take into account those temples whose histories are unknown but whose construction was unlikely to have taken place before 1600, it becomes clear that most of Edo's Buddhist temples came into being in the seventeenth century, particularly in its early to middle decades.

Where in the city were these temples constructed? It is not easy to determine where all these temples were initially founded because religious institutions in Edo were often subjected to the precarious city planning of the shōgunate. The transfer of most of the inner-city temples to the outskirts of the city following the Meireki Fire in 1657 was particularly dramatic. Initially, in the early years of the seventeenth century, the shōgunate allocated spaces in Hirakawa, Sakurada, and Kanda — all in the vicinity of the shōgunal castle — for Buddhist temples. However, due to the rapid growth of city districts and the need to expand and upgrade the shōgunal castle, the shōgunate began to relocate Buddhist temples to the suburban areas. By 1639 the expansion of the outer moats encircling the castle and the additional appropriation of new tracts of land for the second residences (nakayashiki) and third residences (shimoyashiki) of the daimyō families had already forced out many of the inner-city temples. When the Meireki Fire devoured large parts of Edo, the shōgunate moved the remaining temples further outwards. Temples located in Kanda and Hirakawa were relocated to Asakusa, Yanaka, or Komagome; those

in Kyōbashi to Shiba; those in Inner Ushigome to Outer Ushigome or Kobinata; and those in Inner Azabu to Outer Azabu.¹²⁾ It was not until the Genroku era (1688-1703) that Edo temples were relatively stabilized at the surrounding belts of the city along Fukagawa, Honjo, Asakusa, Shitaya, Yanaka, Komagome, Koishikawa, Kobinata, Ushigome, Yotsuya, Azabu, Mita, Takanawa, and Shiba. Except for the Nishihonganji temple in Tsukiji, all Buddhist temples in the old districts were transferred to the relatively sparsely populated suburban areas that encircled the shōgunal castle and the downtown area, as if forming a defensive wall. By the turn of the seventeenth century, some areas were literally transformed into Buddhist districts, showcasing a large number of temples clustered together: Asakusa led the pack with 172 temples, followed by Azabu with 76, Ushigome with 74, Yanaka with 67, Shitaya with 57, and Yotsuya with 53.¹³⁾ Many temples were removed from the heavily inhabited inner-city districts that were supposed to constitute their supporting base.

Despite a shaky start and mounting density, most of the Buddhist temples in Edo adjusted well to their new environments as was seen in their ability to embrace tens of thousands of priests, to hold a great number of prosperous religious events, and to erect and maintain innumerable ritual halls, stupas, and other facilities in good shape.¹⁴⁾ Given that many of the samurai residents, particularly those belonging to the upper echelon, were affiliated with temples in their local domain or fief, and that Edo was a massive urban hodgepodge containing tens of thousands of transients, the circumstances of Edo's Buddhist temples for survival must have been rather demanding. But, stories of temple

12) For an overall discussion of the relocation history of temples in Edo, see Nittō (1995), pp.181-83. There are many case studies pertaining to the formation of temple districts in early modern Edo. For Asakusa, Shitaya, Yanaka, and Ushigome temple districts, see Komori, pp.90-96; and Itō, pp.13-18.

13) Tōkyōto Bunkyo kyōiku iinkai, p.586.

14) All this gave rise to a perennial scene, as Saitō Gesshin (1804-78) described in his *Edo meisho zue* (Illustrations of famous places in Edo) and *Tōto saijiki* (A record of annual observance in the eastern capital), in which Edo residents strolled in the temple precincts marked by the spectacle of exotic buildings and pagodas, while being thrilled by all kinds of rituals and events held throughout the year.

poverty were rarely heard despite the fact that there is no evidence that temples were all richly endowed with land properties.

The forms of "temple lands" (*keidaichi*) in Edo, if there were, were various: those granted by the shōgun himself (vermilion-seal lands [*go-shuinchi*]); those granted by the government (*hairyōchi*); private land properties subject to government tax (*nenguchi*); new land properties donated by private patrons (*kishinchi*); old lands that had always been exempt from taxation (*jochi*); and front districts (*monzen* or *monzenmachi*) that townspeople could lease for their residence or business. Among these land categories, the vermilion-seal land, exempted from taxation and regarded as an indication to high honor, was granted only to forty-nine temples of the highest rank. The rice yield, measured in terms of *kokudaka* (amount of *koku*), from this category ranged from 700 *koku* to five *koku*, and its total yield amounted to 5,480 *koku*.¹⁵⁾ On the average, the taxable *kokudaka* per temple on vermilion-seal land was a bit more than 112 — an amount that could generate, for instance, an actual income of thirty-four *koku* of rice on the tax rate of 30 percent. This certainly appeared not so bad, but it pertained to only 5 percent of all Edo temples.

As far as income from land properties was concerned, many other temples had to rely upon rent from their tax-free precincts and/or front districts. A bit more than half of all temples held these tax-free precincts and/or front districts, but only a tiny portion of them were able to net a sizable income from renting them out. In terms of the size of land area over which each temple had a proprietary right, more than 60 percent of the temples commanded less than 1,000 *tsubo* (approximately 303 square meters); and, among them, 319 (about one-third) had fewer than 500 *tsubo* — a land area that would not leave much room for rent income after basic temple facilities were accommodated. In particular, many of the Jōdoshinshū and Nichirenshū temples (68 percent and 40 percent, respectively) were built on land that comprised of fewer than 400 *tsubo*.¹⁶⁾ In short, for a majority of the Edo temples, then, land property was

15) Konchiin in Shiba was granted a land of 700 *koku*.

16) For a more detailed statistical analysis of the temple lands, see Nittō (1995),

simply not a dependable source of income.

So where could the majority of Edo's Buddhist institutions —most of which were newly erected, not decorated with old religious traditions, and heavily concentrated in suburban valleys and hills — turn to secure a stable income? Some temples resorted to the business of prayer or votive rites that generated income in the form of prayer fee, donation, alms-giving, and sale of such votive items as amulets and talismans. This was clearly the case of Sensōji, which, by capitalizing on its renowned Asakusa Kannon as an object of popular worship, garnered more than 70 percent of its 2,000 to 3,000 gold pieces per year.¹⁷⁾ Buddhist halls, blessed with “miraculous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,” were able to attract crowds of visitors and pilgrims and to rake in a sizable income from them. But the number of those temples blessed with marketable deities was very few.¹⁸⁾ Furthermore, the fortune of a prayer temple, which owed much to the religious fad of the time, was often too precarious and highly unpredictable. Then, what, in the final analysis, provided a majority of Buddhist temples —regardless of their sectarian affiliation, prestige, and religious reputation — with financial stability?

Ⅲ. Buddhist Temples and the Economy of Death

The answer was death. During the Tokugawa period, all families were forced to be affiliated with a Buddhist temple, and everyone had to die Buddhist through a Buddhist funeral.¹⁹⁾ Not only the funeral, but all other postmortem

pp.183-88.

17) For more details, see Hur, pp.14-21.

18) For example, well-known prayer temples (parenthetical entries indicate name of Buddhist image) in Edo included Nishihonganji (Amida), Shōdenji (Bishamonten), Genkakujī (Konnyaku Enma), Fukagawa Fudōdō (Fudōmyōdō), Yūtenji (Amida), and Ryūsenji (Meguro Fudō). For a detailed account of Edo's popular Buddhist deities (and Shintō deities) that attracted large crowds, see Niikura, pp.12-243.

19) The terms “household” and “family,” both of which are translations of the

rituals were also to one degree or another within the religious perimeter of Buddhist monks who offered their priestly role and collected fees. Naturally, in order to ensure stable incomes that death-related rituals generated, almost all Buddhist temples tried to secure funerary patron households, and the funerary patron household, once it was affiliated with a Buddhist temple, stayed with it generation after generation. The enduring relationship between a Buddhist temple and its funerary patron household, cemented through recurring rites and services related to death and ancestral veneration, gave rise to what is commonly known as the *danka* system (*danka seido*).²⁰ It was the *danka* system, more than anything else, that sustained Buddhist temples in Tokugawa Japan.

Here, “*danka*” (also called “*danna*,” “*dan'otsu*,” “*danchū*,” “*dankata*,” or “*danto*” which all have their etymology in the Sanskrit word *dana* [giving]), refers to the funerary patron household or individual patron, who is affiliated with and supports a temple, known as “*dankadera*” (also called “*dannadera*,” or “*bodaiji*,” and, in the case of *Jōdoshinshū*, “*tetsugitera*”).²¹ The *danka* system,

Japanese term “*ie*,” are used interchangeably when a clear distinction cannot be made.

20) Some scholars adopt, instead of the term *danka seido*, the term *jidan seido*, suggesting that the former does not properly represent the reality of relationships between funerary *danna* temples and *danna* patrons in two respects. One is that the term *danka seido* is premised on the assumption that *danna* affiliations were all formed between Buddhist temples and the units of households, not individual patrons, and that the assumption of one *danna* temple per household therefore fails to explain the affiliations between Buddhist temples and individual *danna* patrons as is seen in what is commonly known as *handanka* or *fukudanka*. The other is that the term *danka*, which was rarely used or found in the official documents in Tokugawa society, gained wide currency only from the Meiji period. For these reasons, they prefer the term *jidan seido*. See Fukuta, p.120; and Hōzawa (2004), pp.158-60.

But it is not entirely true that the term *danka* was rarely used in the Tokugawa period, maybe in the bakufu or han documents. Nevertheless we find its ample usage in temple documents as well as in the local archival materials, and it was more so in the late Tokugawa period. Furthermore, the term *danka* has already been so widely familiarized that it would not make any sense to deny the term *danka seido* just for the sake of a minor stream of *handanka* or *fukudanka*. I adopt the term *danka seido* following the more established convention.

21) The term *tetsugitera* (a temple of intermediation) in *Jōdoshinshū* denoted that its

by binding all Japanese people to the Buddhist care of death and thereby generating the economy of death, provided Buddhist temples with a stable source of income and, hence, guaranteed prosperity. The *danka* system (*danka seido* or *dankasei*) is commonly, albeit misleadingly, rendered as the “temple parish system” in English literature, but this system had little to do with the idea “parish” that connotes geographical partitioning in the affiliations between patron families and funerary temples. Rather, it simply indicates the relationships of affiliation between patron households (or individuals) and funerary Buddhist temples, which were formed when the former acted to choose, with free will and regardless of location, the latter. Too often, patterns of affiliation between the two sides were so arbitrary, disorderly, zigzagged, or crisscrossed that it was almost impossible to group them into temple-centered parishes demarcated by geographical boundaries.

The *danka* system was a financial foundation not only for Buddhist temples in Edo but also for a vast majority of Buddhist temples throughout the country, regardless of their sectarian affiliation, distribution, and location. In 1879 the Meiji government ordered the local governments to conduct a comprehensive survey on Shintō shrines and Buddhist temples and submit the results. It was a project aimed at gathering new data on the changes over the past turbulent years so that they could replace the previous surveys conducted in 1870, which were considered incomplete. With regard to Buddhist temples, the government instructed that the survey include information on head-branch relationship and sectarian affiliation, history (the year of establishment, founder, and chronicle), administration (current head monk and subtemples), religious facilities and deities enshrined, landholding, the number of *danna* (funerary/prayer) households (or patrons), and the like. The survey results in the Kōzuke province, for example,

role was to play an intermediary role in the direct head-branch (or master-disciple) relationship between the sectarian head (*hōshu*) and *danna* patrons (*monto*). What the head monk of a *tetsugitera* did for his patrons was considered a service delegated from, and therefore conducted on behalf of, the head of the sect. In the same context, the *monto* believed that they were the *monto* of the sectarian head, not those of their *tetsugi danna* temple.

provide us with, among many others, detailed data on how many temples in the province maintained funerary *danna* patrons.²²⁾

More than a decade was passed from the Meiji Restoration, and during this period many temples throughout the country, including ones in the Kōzuke province, had to endure the anti-Buddhist storm of the new era. Nevertheless, the survey reports, the *Kōzuke no kuni jiin meisaiichō* (1880-81, The detailed registers of Buddhist temples in Kōzuke Province), show that almost all Buddhist temples in the province continued to maintain funerary *danna* patrons.²³⁾ According to the reports, there were 1,361 temples in total in the Kōzuke province. Among them, ones that had funerary *danna* patrons numbered 1,283 temples, or a bit more than 94 percent of all. This high ratio of funerary *danna*-holding temples was more or less similar across different sects. In the case of Tendai-shū, it was 91 percent with 322 temples out of 355 in total; in the case of Shingon-shū, it was 95 percent with 414 temples out of 434; and in the case of Zen-shū (Sōtō, Rinzai, and Ōbaku), it was 94 percent with 392 temples out of 416. The Jōdo-shū which showed a relatively low presence with 93 temples in total had only one *danna*-less temple, and the Nichiren-shū and Jōdo-shinshū, which had 23 and 40 temples in total, respectively, were all endowed with funerary *danna* patrons.²⁴⁾

The number of funerary *danna* patrons which each temple held ranged from just one person, if extremely rare, to thousands of persons, indicating that the economic dependence of Buddhist temples upon funerary *danna* holdings was never even. For temples that held a small number of *danna* patrons, income generated through the *danka* system must have been supplemented by other sources, and for those blessed with a large number of *danna* patrons could have enjoyed a high level of financial stability with income from the service

22) For more details on the survey, see Ushiki, vol. 1, pp.3-11, 37-42.

23) The data on funerary *danna* were indicated in terms of the numbers of individual *danna* patrons, not those of *danna* households, affiliated with temples. Though a somewhat unusual custom, the data are precise for figuring out the actual holding of funerary patrons for each temple.

24) All these data are based on Ushiki, vols. 1-8.

of death-related rituals for their patrons. Despite variations in degree, funerary *danna* patrons seemed indispensable for the survival and prosperity for a vast majority of temples in the Kōzuke province.

Indeed, funerary *danna* patrons were an integral part of temple economy. In some areas the ratio of *danna*-holding temples reached 100 percent as was seen, for example, in the Shiiya domain (currently parts of Niigata Prefecture) where all of its 23 temples held funerary *danna* households.²⁵⁾ The following table clearly shows how ubiquitously Buddhist temples were endowed with funerary *danna* patrons. The data provided here, which are based on survey reports in 1870-71, are samples chosen from the areas that cover northern Honshū to Kyūshū. Soon after the Restoration the Meiji government surveyed the status of Shintō shrines and Buddhist temples for its pro-Shintō policy. Even though many temples suffered from the anti-Buddhist atmosphere and lost some of their funerary *danna* patrons, a vast majority of them still kept maintaining funerary *danna* households — a legacy that bespeaks the firm entrenchment of the *danka* system inherited from the previous period.

As is seen in this table, the distribution of temples in terms of sectarian affiliation showed a wide range of variations, with a relatively strong presence of Zen temples in comparison with the scantiness of temples belonging to Tendai-shū, due probably to the uneven local characteristics of areas chosen here. Nevertheless, the overall ratios of funerary *danna*-holding temples were all very high without exception, ranging from 77.6 percent to 94.5 percent, suggesting that a vast majority of temples throughout the country were involved, to one degree or another, in the business of death-related rituals — a source of steady income under the *danka* system.

25) See *Shiiyahan honmatsu jigō so no ta meisaichō* (1870). The *meisaichō* documents, including this one, which I use here, are all from Professor Tamamuro Fumio's collections. I am grateful for his kindness for allowing me to use these materials.

<Table 3> The Ratios of Funerary Danna-Holding Temples²⁶⁾

	Kakuda	Izu	Shingū	Kurashi ki	Ōzu	Hita
Tendaishō	1/1	0/0	0/1	14/17	8/9	4/10
Shingonshū	38/54	11/17	1/3	113/149	28/35	18/30
Zenshū	69/71	234/280	136/140	86/119	84/108	120/176
Jōdoshū	13/13	42/50	7/9	8/8	1/1	48/68
Nichirenshū	3/4	66/73	2/2	44/53	2/2	14/19
Jōdoshinshū	15/15	15/16	8/8	36/42	11/11	190/202
Total	139/158	368/436	154/163	301/388	134/166	394/505
Percentage	88.0	84.4	94.5	77.6	80.7	78.0

* The numbers before the slash indicate those of danna-holding temples, and those after it, the total numbers of temples in each sect.

* The category of Zenshū includes Sōtōshū, Rinzaishū, and Ōbakushū; and that of Jōdoshū also includes Jishū.

* In the case of the Shingū domain, Kurashiki province, and Hita province, subtemples such as anshitsu and tacchū are all individually counted, for they are separately recorded in the reports. Except these, all other data do not include separately counted subtemples.

* In the case of the Ōzu domain, temples belonging to Zenshū included three Ōbakushū temples none of which had funerary danna households, and all others were affiliated with Rinzaishū. Among the Zenshū category in the Hita province, there were 26 Ōbakushū temples included, and among them, only four temples had funerary danna households.

As a whole, Arimoto Masao, who traces the regional distribution of Buddhist sects, sums up what religious functions Buddhist temples primarily carried out in Tokugawa society.²⁷⁾ According to him, the primary business of Buddhist

26) The data in each area are based on, respectively, *Kakudaken shoshū honmatsu jigō so no ta meisaichō* (1871), *Izu no kuni honmatsu jigō so no ta meisaichō* (1871), *Shingūhan shoshū honmatsu jigō so no ta meisaichō* (1870), *Kurashikiken honmatsu jigō so no ta meisaichō* (1871), *Ōzuhan shoshū honmatsu jigō so no ta meisaichō* (1871), and *Hitaken shoshū honmatsu jigō so no ta meisaichō* (1871).

27) Arimoto Masao groups Buddhist sects in Tokugawa Japan into three clusters in terms of their religious orientation in the pursuit of religious benefits: Shingon, Tendai, and Nichiren sects that stressed both individuality and communality; Zen and Jōdo sects that emphasized communality over individuality; and Jōdoshin sect that denied the efficacy of votive prayer. He then illustrates, based on the statistical data collected by the Meiji government in 1877, how the three clusters

temples in the Kantō and its vicinities was funerary rituals and memorial services for their patron households, and Buddhist monks were not so active in preaching Buddhist doctrine or ethic.²⁸⁾ The Kinki and its vicinities that contained many old and great temples and showed the strong presence of miyaza organizations (which dominated religious ceremonies for the ujigami) in the local villages, revealed a characteristic religious tendency of their own. In particular, the local miyaza organization, which controlled communal village rituals, discouraged the Jōdoshinshū followers from promoting their unique teachings on ethical edification and equality in faith. Nevertheless, Buddhist temples in this region were also, like those in Eastern Japan, primarily engaged in the conduct of death rituals and postmortem memorial services.²⁹⁾ The situation in the areas of Jōdoshinshū stronghold was, notes Arimoto Masao, not so different either from that in other regions despite the fact that its sectarian teachings did not officially recognize the ritual efficacy of nenbutsu-chanting for the postmortem well-being of the deceased in funeral and memorial services.

As far as Jōdoshinshū was concerned, Nagura Tetsuzō also corroborates, based on an analysis of the religious practices of Jōdoshinshū followers in the Okayama area, that by the 1640s all of them were subjugated to the

of Buddhist sects were distributed in three geographical regions (Kantō, Kinki, and areas of Jōdoshinshū stronghold). According to his analysis, the composition of Buddhist sectarian clusters is as follows. In the Kantō and its vicinities (Suruga, Tōtōmi, Izu, Kōshū, Shinano) about 49 percent of all temples belonged to Shingon, Tendai and Nichiren sects; about 46 percent to Zen and Jōdo sects; and the remaining 5 percent to Jōdoshinshū. In the Kinki and its vicinities (Wakasa, Inaba, Hōki, Bizen, Bitchū, and Mimasaka), about 30 percent of all temples were occupied by Shingon, Tendai and Nichiren sects; about 40 percent by Zen and Jōdo sects; and about 30 percent by Jōdoshinshū. In the areas of Jōdoshinshū strongholds that encompassed Echigo, Etchū, Echizen, Noto, Kaga, Hida, Western Minō, Western Owari, Aki, Iwami, Sūo, Nagato, Chikuzen, Chikugo, Bigo, Western Buzen, about 57 percent of all temples belonged to Jōdoshinshū; about 13 percent to Shingon, Tendai and Nichiren sects; and about 30 percent to Zen and Jōdo sects. Arimoto (2002), pp.375-76. In particular, for a detailed geographical distribution of Jōdoshinshū strongholds, see Arimoto (1995), pp.55-58, 61-63, 66-67.

28) *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

29) *Ibid.*, pp.168-72.

prescription of Buddhist death even though some of them resisted vigorously.³⁰⁾ To be sure, Jōdoshinshū faithfuls in some areas tried to differentiate their ritual practices pertaining to death and ancestral veneration from those conducted by other sectarian followers by emphasizing that their nenbutsu-chanting was an expression of gratitude toward the Buddha Amida, not a means of devotional oblation toward their ancestral spirits.³¹⁾ But the overall tendency overrode the uniqueness of Jōdoshinshū practices that had yielded to the Law of the King with the complete dissolution of Ikkō ikki. By the mid-seventeenth century many Jōdoshinshū temples emerged in various parts of the country, but, not surprisingly, these temples, which were not blessed with landholdings, found themselves totally dependent upon donations and fees paid by lay followers for ritual services related to death and postmortem care. The twelve-article regulations of Higashichōshōji, a Jōdoshinshū temple in the Fukui ward of Echizen, included, among others, one straightforward about what its patrons (monto) were expected to do within the framework of danka system: strictly conduct all yearly ancestral rites and Buddhist rituals according to one's station in society.³²⁾ Indeed, most of the Jōdoshinshū temples imposed a similar set of regulations upon their patrons. The list of regulations was long, including compliance with the shōgunal law, contribution to the maintenance of temple buildings, respect for the head monk, hard work, frugality, and so forth. And one of the key points was always unambiguous: the faithful conduct of death rituals and memorial services within the framework of the danka relationship.³³⁾

Buddhist temples in Tokugawa Japan were religious institutions that executed

30) For details, see Nagura (1995), pp.170-73.

31) Nagura (1994), pp.250-53.

32) See *Fukui shishi shiryōhen 9: Kinsei shichi*, p.426. Other rules included: keep the regulations of the Law of the King as well as those of the Law of the Buddha; devote all energies to the family occupation and agriculture; do not forget the favor one received from the state; respect the head monk of danna temple, keep the ethics of five relationships, practice frugality and sincerity, and so forth. Interestingly, there was no single article mentioning the core religious teachings of Shinran; what was stressed was the fulfillment of danka obligations, ancestral rites, and other feudal ethics.

33) Arimoto (2002), pp.304-5.

rituals for the deceased and ancestral spirits. This ubiquitous character that was applied to Buddhist temples across all sects and all locations seems to defy the political geography of Tokugawa Japan's bakuhan system that was fragmented into the patchwork of control and governance. As Mizubayashi Takeshi suggests, to be sure, Tokugawa Japan was a “compound state” in which the shōgunate exercised ultimate authority over the daimyō domains, yet each domain maintained a certain level of autonomy and independent legal sphere. In contrast, as far as the religious geography of death was concerned, Buddhist institutions as an agent of death rituals remained almost monochromatic although the details of their ritual practices could not completely be free from local as well as sectarian variations. More than anything else, it was the economy of death that brought the Tokugawa Japanese in support of Buddhist temples—a mechanism that was cemented under the danka system.

IV. The Danka System and the Anti-Christian Policy

It should be noted, however, that the danka system was, unlike the word “seido” might imply, not really a public “system” or “institution” per se that carried a legal status. Rather, it was nothing more than a by-product of the Tokugawa bakufu's anti-Christian policy —a by-product that was originally initiated by Buddhist temples, not by the government. Although it eventually was sanctioned by the public authority as the shōgunate institutionalized the anti-Christian policy into a nationwide system of population surveillance, the danka system was really never written into law. Nevertheless, the danka system was, despite the lack of legal status, applied to the entire populace as it was gradually integrated into the Tokugawa polity of anti-Christianity. In understanding the genesis of the danka system, therefore, it is essential to comprehend its anti-Christian context —a context that decisively transformed its sphere of practice from private to public.

During the early seventeenth century, in the name of protecting the land of the "divine country," or the "country of the gods" (*shinkoku* — a nativist dictum that would repeatedly be invoked in subsequent anti-Christian pronouncements), the Tokugawa regime decided to eradicate Christianity (which invariably refers to Roman Catholicism until 1859 when the first Protestant missionary, John Liggins of the American Episcopal mission, arrived in Nagasaki) from Japan and began purging Christian missionaries and their followers, who were collectively called *Kirishitan*. Here, Christian missionaries refer to Catholic fathers, commonly called "bateren" in Japan, and brothers, called "iruman," both of whom entered Japan from 1549 until the 1630s for the purpose of proselytizing Japanese into Christianity. The term "bateren" was derived from the Portuguese word "padre," and the term "iruman" from the Portuguese word "irmão." These terms reflect the fact that the majority of the missionaries, who numbered about 300 in total (230 padres and 70 irmão), belonged to the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), which was based in Portugal.³⁴⁾ On the other hand, the term "*Kirishitan*," which comes from the Portuguese word *Christão*, is a historical term that was used by the Tokugawa Japanese to refer to the Catholic Church, Christian religion, or its followers ever since Francisco Xavier's arrival in Japan in 1549. The Christian missionaries on their part called the Japanese who accepted their religion "qirixitan."³⁵⁾ Konoï Takeshi estimates that the total number of *Kirishitan* between 1549 and the 1630s reached as many as 760,000.³⁶⁾

34) Konoï, pp.2-4.

35) Miyazaki Kentaro suggests that those, who had been associated with Christianity until 1873 when the anti-Christian ban was lifted and Catholics began to reappear, should be "*Kirishitan*." Based on this, he contends that those *Kirishitan*, who went underground from 1644 to 1873, should be called "underground *Kirishitan*" in distinction from those, who continued to keep their *Kirishitan* religion even after 1873 and should therefore be called "*Kakure Kirishitan*." See Miyazaki, p.5. During the Tokugawa period the term *Kirishitan* was written in various ways. In the beginning it was written 幾利紫旦, 貴理志端, 記利志旦, or 吉利支丹; but after it had been banned, it was changed into 鬼利至端 or 貴理死貪. When Tsunayoshi 綱吉 assumed the *shōgun* post, the character 吉 in his name which was often included in the term *Kirishitan* was removed and, thereafter, it was usually written 切支丹, きりしたん, or キリシタン. See Konoï, p.2.

In carrying out its anti-Christian policy, the Tokugawa regime relied upon the device of “temple certification,” or *terauke*. Under this system, each year all residents were ordered to prove their non-Christian identity by allowing themselves to be inspected by a “Buddhist temple” with which they are affiliated. The Buddhist temple would then issue them a “certificate” stating that they were affiliated with it and, therefore, had nothing to do with the Kirishitan religion. Those who failed to undergo the inspection of temple certification were classified as Kirishitan and put to death.

Notwithstanding the rationale that posited the anti-Christian policy against the country of the gods (*kami*), why did the Tokugawa regime choose to adopt a Buddhist rather than a Shintō system of inspection? During the medieval period, Buddhist temples had been a source of political havoc. Furthermore, due to their close affiliation with the imperial court, which the incipient shōgunal house had yet to overcome, the strategy of deploying Buddhist temples could be a risky business.³⁷⁾ However, for political and practical reasons, by the late seventeenth century the entire population was somehow subjected to the Buddhist inspection of Christianity, and the anti-Christian inspection by Buddhist temples was fully integrated into the governing apparatus of the Tokugawa regime. This left an indelible mark on the lives of Japanese people, both high and low.

Nevertheless, in making Buddhist temples responsible for anti-Christian religious inspection, the shōgunate never officially linked it up with the *danka* system, nor authorized Buddhist temples to enforce through it funerary patronage upon the populace. Legally, temple certification was a separate issue

36) For more details, see *ibid.*, pp.5-12. According to Konoi, before Toyotomi Hideyoshi had banned Christianity, there were about 200,000 Kirishitan, 200 churches, and 22 missionary facilities in Japan. The number of Kirishitan increased to about 300,000 by 1601 and again to about 370,000 by 1614 when the shōgunate issued the anti-Christian edict. After the edict, most of the Kirishitan abnegated their religion, but missionary activities did not cease. From 1614 to 1629 the Jesuits was able to gain more than 20,000 followers, and the Franciscans acquired more than 26,000 in the Tōhoku region.

37) For an account of the relationship between the imperial court and the bakufu during the early decades of the seventeenth century, see Tsuji, pp.57-94.

from what was practiced under the *danka* system. The shōgunate never officially bound the system of temple certification to, nor did it officially institutionalize, the *danka* system. However, Buddhist monks, empowered with the privilege of religious inspection, were quick to transform their religious inspectees into regular funerary patrons and to organize them into the system of permanent *danka* relationship. The anti-Christian policy of the Tokugawa regime served as a conduit to Buddhist death.

It was from 1612 that the Tokugawa bakufu got serious about eradicating Christianity. In 1613 Konchiin Sūden (1569-1633), an influential Buddhist adviser who served the first three Tokugawa shōguns, composed the anti-Christian edict known as "A Statement on Expelling Padres" (*Bateren tsuihō no bun*). Shōgun Hidetada promulgated it to the nation, thereby setting the tone of anti-Christian policy that would be implemented in the decades that followed. Initially, only those who were identified as *Kirishitan* were required to obtain written proof from Buddhist temples or village officials with regard to their abandonment of Christianity and affiliation with Buddhism, but from the 1630s, the shōgunate gradually unified the method of religious inspection into the system of temple certification and began to impose it upon the populace. After the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-38), which was condemned as a Christian-inspired revolt, bakufu leaders intensified their efforts to root out all Christian elements, more vigorously assigning the task of religious inspection upon Buddhist temples. By the 1660s, based on the non-Christian certificates of their residents authorized by Buddhist temples, village, or ward officials were ordered to draw up an anti-Christian register, known as a "register of sectarian inspection" (*shūmon aratamechō*), for all residents under their jurisdiction and to submit it to the government.

Within this administrative framework, the "register of sectarian inspection" could not be drawn up without the process of "temple certification" (*terauke*). But it should be noted that each of them followed a separate procedure and that their respective legality stood independent from each other. The "temple certification" was conducted by Buddhist monks, and the "register of sectarian

inspection” was compiled by secular officials. However, due probably to the linkage between these two processes, scholars often fail to differentiate them, as is seen in the frequency with which the term “terauke” is rendered into “temple registration.” The “terauke” was limited only to the procedure in which “tera” or the head monk of a Buddhist temple, in place of the government, conducted the task of “uke” or undertaking the certification that persons affiliated with it were not Kirishitan. The responsibility for registering the residents who were inspected by Buddhist temples belonged exclusively to village or ward officials, not to Buddhist monks. To be sure, there was no law prohibiting temples from maintaining a private register of their own pertaining to their patron households, and most temples maintained one in the form of “register of the past (the dead),” known as kakochō or ekōchō — a list of the deceased members and their posthumous names. Nevertheless, the terauke system never amounted to the “temple registration” system.

V. The Danka System and Death Rituals

As the annual religious inspection was put into strict practice, Buddhist monks, who acted like public officials, strengthened the danka system and through it, locked the entire populace into the mandate of Buddhist death. But it should also be noted that the danka system resonated with the socio-religious needs of people beyond its political dimension. The early modern Japanese, who wanted to deal with the deaths of their family members with dignity, were receptive to the ritual prescriptions of the danka system. Rather than continuing on with the medieval approach to death, which had by and large reflected the Buddhist notions of karmic reward and retribution, the early modern Japanese wanted to deal with death by utilizing the hands-on performance of rituals and services. Buddhist death rituals, not doctrinal polemics, were appropriated to the socio-religious needs of a new type of family structure that was taking shape in the seventeenth century. Thus, in

order to gain a balanced understanding of the *modus operandi* of the *danka* system, we need to take into account changing religious concerns in relation to the changing family structure.

In his discussion of medieval Japanese Buddhism, William R. LaFleur suggests that the idea of “six courses” (*rokudō*) served as “a coherent explanation of the world and of human experience; it was the single most satisfying and comprehensive explanation available to the Japanese people at the time.”³⁸) The *rokudō* refers to the six possible modes of being (in hierarchical order: gods [*kami*], humans [*ningen*], asuras [*ashura*], animals [*chikushō*], hungry ghosts [*gaki*], and creatures of hell [*jigoku*]) into which one is destined to be reborn after death in a cycle of ongoing transmigration, in accordance with the principles of karmic reward and punishment — a law that was believed inescapable and universal. Within the system of karmic causality, as LaFleur puts it: “Death will result in rebirth, and rebirth always poses the possibility of either progress or slippage to another location in the taxonomy. In strict interpretations, everything depends on the life lived now and the karma engendered in the present. The system thus makes each person individually responsible for his or her own future. Injustice is an impossibility.”³⁹) Progression upward along the cycle of the *rokudō* taxonomy was, of course, what people hoped for and sought after. Buddhist doctrine taught that it was even not entirely impossible to find a way out of the cycle of birth and death and to enter the realm of Paradise, where transmigration ceased. For the medieval Japanese, however, dream-like eternal happiness in Paradise was far outweighed by the open-ended possibility of slipping into hell. Their undying anxieties led them to undertake all manner of quests for salvation.⁴⁰) No matter

38) LaFleur (1983), p.26.

39) *Ibid.*, p.29.

40) According to LaFleur, paths to salvation that were commonly undertaken in medieval Japan were personal and faith-based, whether they featured devotion to Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, reliance upon the mystic power of *nenbutsu* (chanting the name of Amida, the merit of which was believed to lead one to the Western Paradise of Amida), or an attempt to reconstruct the *rokudō* system through the metaphor of “play” (*asobi*). In particular, LaFleur suggests that, when the entire

what they tried to do, they could not escape the tortuous knowledge that the avoidance of hell was their own personal responsibility.

In keeping with the belief that they were personally responsible for their own fate, the medieval Japanese found themselves overwhelmed by the horrible scenes of hell. The “scroll of hell” (*jigoku zōshi*), for example, which depicted a variety of images of unspeakable suffering in the pits of hell, was a pet companion to medieval Buddhist didacticism. During the late medieval period, the *etoki bikuni* or “painting-recitation nuns,” including what was later commonly known as the Kumano nuns (*Kumano bikuni*), owed much of their religious popularity to their ability to preach about the “scroll of hell,” which highlighted posthumous sufferings in hell within the *rokudō* cosmology.⁴¹⁾ The terrifying scenes portrayed in the scroll, particularly the “Heart Visualization and the Mandala of the Ten Realms” (*Kanjin jikkai mandara*), which had various editions, allowed no one to forget that one had to safeguard one's future life. In particular, images of ill-fated women agonizing in a bloody pond, or punished with being childless, added force to women's fear of Buddhist condemnation. The medieval Japanese took very seriously the merciless working of karmic causality dictated by the moral responsibility of

rokudō system was conceived as an arena of play, people could display “a remarkable capacity for enjoyment —one that over the centuries produced much humor, festival, spoof, the pleasures of a ‘floating world,’ the lyrics of an *Ikkyū* or a *Ryōkan*, and the comedy of *kyōgen*.” In addition to the ludic mode of overcoming the pain of transmigration, LaFleur cites the practice of dancing *nenbutsu* (*odori nenbutsu*) as an illustrious example of “a mode of salvation through play.” See LaFleur (1983), pp.54-58.

- 41) Barbara Ruch is critical of the term *Kumano bikuni*, which she suggests “cannot be found in documentation prior to the seventeenth century,” saying that this composite term, rather vague and even pejorative, can in no way represent a wide array of itinerant or mendicant nuns belonging to different orders and professions. See Ruch, pp.540-41, 557-60. Nevertheless, a majority of Japanese scholars still employ this term as a representative group of painting-recitation nuns. According to them, at the end of each year Kumano nuns used to retreat into Kumano, where they performed ascetic practices; and beginning in the fourth month they traveled to Eastern Japan along with Kumano *oshi* and *sendatsu* in order to distribute Kumano talismans while preaching about the scroll of hell. For example, see Hayashi, pp.313-17; and Yamamoto, pp.49-53.

the individual.

From the early seventeenth century on, however, the painting-recitation nuns began to lose much of their previous appeal as preachers of the rokudō cosmology that had once gripped the medieval Japanese. As time progressed, many of them were gradually turned into street singers, entertainers, prostitutes, or the wives of petty Buddhist preachers (*yamabushi*), or dissipated into wandering mendicants. It was particularly so from the Tenna-Genroku years (1681-1703) that ushered in the development of a commercial economy in which sex also much became an object of trade.⁴²⁾ The message of karmic retribution, once a powerful weapon for these street preachers, was being heard less and less. Already in 1661, in his *Tōkaidō meishoki* (Record of famous places along the Tōkaidō Highway), Asai Ryōi (1612-91) commented on what he perceived as Kumano bikuni: “While one was not aware of it, [Kumano nuns] stopped chanting. Although still visiting Kumano and Ise, [they] neither practice austerities nor keep precepts. [They] even do not know how to explicate the scrolls, but, instead, only treasure singing ... ‘One of the five heaviest punishments shall be meted out to those who violate precept-keeping nuns,’ says a Buddhist sūtra, but, sadly, it is nuns themselves who eagerly initiate peddling out [their bodies].”⁴³⁾

42) In Edo there appeared a sort of commercial houses where Kumano nuns were engaged in entertainment activities. These houses, known as *nakajuku*, were located in Izumichō, Shiba, Kyōbashi, and Kayabachō. When the public authorities cracked down on these entertainment houses, the nuns engaged in prostitution turned into street solicitation for survival, and when the control loosened, they soon turned backed to entertainment businesses. See Sone, pp.37-38; and Nei, pp.167-68.

43) Asai, p.57. Cf. Ruch, p.547. As Engelbert Kaempfer, a German physician working for the Dutch trade factory at Nagasaki who visited Edo two times, observed in 1691, “Kumano nuns” were no longer viewed as serious religious practitioners or proselytizers. See Kaempfer, pp.275-76:

Among them are some who have been trained in houses of prostitution and have bought their freedom after having served their term to spend the remaining part of their youth in this fashion. These bikuni move in groups of two or three, walk daily one or several miles from their home, and approach genteel travelers who pass in kago or on horseback. Each of them attaches herself to one particular traveler, starts up a rustic tune, and as long as it is to her advantage, she accompanies and amuses him for several

It is true that the seventeenth-century metamorphosis of painting-recitation nuns was expedited by the Tokugawa government, which tried to do away with itinerant religious entrepreneurs involved in street solicitation. In 1614 Tokugawa Ieyasu determined that public religious solicitations should be subjected to government's approval. Thereafter, bakufu officials began to tightly regulate solicitation activities in terms of duration, area, and their format while controlling the free movement of wandering religious practitioners. All this gave a serious blow to Kumano nuns whose livelihood was dependent upon the mercy of public donations.⁴⁴⁾ In 1659, for example, the bulletin board at the entrance of Kiji Bridge in Edo warned that the Kumano nuns settled in the residential ward in Inner Kanda should follow government regulations regarding their movements and contact with outsiders.⁴⁵⁾ Many of the itinerant nuns, who used to roam the city freely, were gradually segregated into separate settlements as the mode of their social functions were deflected away from religious preaching and underwent diverse transformation. According to the edict on Kumano nuns, which was issued in the 1660s, those who were engaged in religious activities without "climbing the [Kumano] mountain" for a certain period of time for disciplinary training, were defined as illegal mendicants subject to control. Many of these mendicant nuns, who could not afford retreat to Kumano and so failed to obtain a license, were accordingly detached from the Kumano organization, commonly known as Hongan jiin (Temples of original vow), and easily fell into poverty.⁴⁶⁾ In 1706, when the shōgunate

hours ... So I can hardly exclude them from the category of loose women and prostitutes, however much they adopt religious tonsure.

For a brief discussion of the transformation of Kumano nuns in early modern times, also see Bernard, pp.250-54; and Sone, pp.32-33.

44) *Ibid.*, pp.34-35.

45) See *Buke gensei roku*, pp.116-17; and Kikuchi, pp.48-49.

46) Sone, pp.35-36. According to a 1727 document, there were seven "temples of original vow" with which Kumano nuns were supposed to be affiliated. These "temples of original vow" used to be centers authorized to collect donations from the public for construction, maintenance and repairs of Kumano sanzan ("Three Mountains of Kumano" referring to Hongū, Shingū, and Nachi) buildings and facilities. In return, those affiliated with these "temples of original vow," including shugen, yamabushi, monks, and nuns, were entitled to distribute and

further issued edicts banning the solicitation of alms gathering nuns and warning people to stay away from them in the name of keeping "good moral order," the religious functionality of the "Kumano nuns," who had previously captured the religious imagination of the populace with their skillful citation of afterlife and hell, much diminished.⁴⁷⁾

But it would be naïve to attribute the gradual dissipation of the didactical utility of hell scrolls too much to the Tokugawa policy that tried to discourage painting-recitation nuns from traveling around. One must also look at the diminishing appeal of their religious message on the fate of individual souls kept accountable individually for their moral behavior or religious devotion.⁴⁸⁾ By the mid-seventeenth century, the ghastly images of hell were being replaced by a religious path that promised liberation from the cycle of endless transmigration; and this path featured familial Buddhism rather than individual Buddhism. The task of saving one's soul through one's own religious actions, which had been a mainstay of medieval Buddhism, gave way to a family-centered ritualism designed to elevate the deceased to the status of ancestral deity or *sorei*.⁴⁹⁾ One's spirit, which could be deified with the help of

commercialize Kumano talismans and other religious products throughout the country. When Kumano nuns fell off from these original vow organizations, they gradually dissipated into towns and streets and had to survive on their own. See Nei, pp.168-71.

47) For a detailed discussion of how "Kumano nuns" were gradually transformed into street entertainers, see Kikuchi, pp.51-53. On top of this, the "three mountains of Kumano" (Kumano Sanzan), which had been under Buddhist control and had served as the religious bases of the Kumano nuns, lost their right to distribute talismans when the Shintō families of the region took them over. See Yamamoto, pp.50-51.

48) Suggesting that there were still many active painting-recitation nuns, as seen in the pictorial evidence, Barbara Ruch implies that hell scrolls still commanded measurable popularity even in the late Tokugawa period. But among the evidences she cites ones pertaining specifically to the "scroll of hell" are a few, and even these few evidences belong mostly to what she calls "gendered hell paintings" that pay far more attention to such religious themes as female defilement and childlessness than to the cosmology of hell and afterlife in general. For more details, see Ruch, pp.566-75. But the overall trend, as we will see in Part II, was moving toward the entrenchment of death rites that bypassed the issue of hell.

49) The term *sorei* was not commonly used in the Tokugawa period even though

familial death rituals and through ancestral rites of oblation, was called “hotoke” and treated as such. A hotoke (which, literally, means a “Buddha”) as a synonym for the deified deceased was believed to be a divine being who wholly transcended the domain of karmic transmigration.⁵⁰⁾ Relieved of their anxiety over karmic causality, the Tokugawa Japanese increasingly believed that the spirits of theirs and others could be saved as long as the descendants took care for them by practicing familial Buddhism. Familial death rituals and ancestral rites of oblation were heralded as the solution to what might be dubbed the problem of death and hell. Yasumaru Yoshio sums up the change: “Dead spirits, which had been an object of worry in the medieval period, were, through the mediation of Buddhism, incorporated into the order of this world; and from the early modern period the practice of venerating ancestral spirits served as the foundation of order in Japanese society.”⁵¹⁾ It is ironic that, under the danka system, Buddhism ended up inoculating the notion of Buddhist karma that it had so treasured during the medieval period. Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan that was involved in familial death rituals and ancestral rites

some National Learning scholars and Shintōists often adopted it to refer to the spirits of ancestors particularly when they launched a Shintō-funeral movement. The common use of this term in folklore is attributable to Yanagita Kunio who highlighted it in his *Senzo no hanashi* (1946).

50) According to Yanagita Kunio, the word “hotoke” was derived from “hokai” or “hotoki” —the “vessel” used in making offerings to the Buddhas as well as to the spirits of the dead. From the medieval period the folks began to indicate both the Buddhas and the spirits of the dead by the word for the vessel “hotoki,” which was somehow transformed into “hotoke” and eventually misconstrued as the word for Buddha. In any case, for Yanagita, the essence of ancestral rites lay in offering food to the deified ancestors. See Yanagita, p.84; Bernier, p.61; and Smith, p.53. On the other hand, Aruga Kizaemon, who is critical of Yanagita Kunio’s speculation and instead pays attention to the fact that in the *Nihon shoki* the term “butsu” was already called Tonarinokuni no kami, hypothesizes that ancient Japanese erected uji Buddhist temples and worshipped, in addition to ujigami, Buddhist images, which they called “hotoke,” as the tutelary deity of their uji group, and that, by the ninth century, ancestors venerated at these uji temples as their tutelary deities were also known as “hotoke.” For this reason, suggests Aruga, Buddhist images and memorial tablets, which were all placed at the household Buddhist altar, all came to be called “hotoke” without distinction. For more details, see Aruga, pp.63-88.

51) Yasumaru, p.28.

can be précised into “funerary Buddhism” (*sōshiki Bukkyō*).

To be sure, the term “funerary Buddhism,” which correlates with the title of Tamamuro Taijō's book *Sōshiki Bukkyō* (Tokyo: Daihōrinkaku, 1963), is not free from the burden of ideological implication. Some scholars and Buddhist critics in Japan mobilize this term to underline what they negatively see in the *danka* system —its deleterious effects that left Buddhism bereft of its original spiritual value. On the other hand, scholars of Jōdoshinshū practices point out that “funerary Buddhism” did not evenly spread into all Buddhist sects even though Jōdoshinshū monks and followers were all eventually forced to incorporate ancestral rites into their religious practice under the threat of anti-Christian suppression.⁵²⁾ The term “funerary Buddhism” is not completely free of controversy, but it still succinctly captures the socio-religious function of Tokugawa Buddhism that was operated within the framework of the *danka* system.⁵³⁾

How and when did funerary Buddhism begin to take root in the family life of ordinary Japanese? In understanding the permeation of funerary Buddhism into the populace, we need to clarify in what religious context it was practiced. Scholars, who regard “ancestor worship” as a quintessential tradition of Japanese culture, often ascribe it to funerary Buddhism and the *danka* system. With regard to such a suggestion, however, Ōkuwa Hitoshi notes that the Tokugawa Japanese rarely used term *sosen sūhai*, which refers to ancestor worship. What they used, continues Ōkuwa, were such terms as *senzo matsuri* or *sosen saishi*, which can be rendered into “rites for ancestors” or “ancestral rites” —concepts that stressed the ritual aspect, not the ideational aspect, of ancestral veneration. In religious context, ancestral rites (*sosen saishi*) and ancestor worship (*sosen sūhai*) are contrasting: in the former one becomes an ancestor because his or her spirit receives ritual veneration; and in the latter ritual veneration is offered because one is an ancestor or ancestral deity.⁵⁴⁾ In

52) For more details, see Vesey, pp.14-15; and Nagura (1995), p.173.

53) LaFleur notes that the negative images of monks portrayed within the purview of “funerary Buddhism” included the directors of funerals, the chanters of requiems, and the collectors of donations. See LaFleur (1992), p.81.

other words, in the context of ancestral rites there can be no ancestors without the offering of rituals, but in the context of ancestor worship there can still be ancestors even without that of rituals. Based on this distinction, Ōkuwa suggests that the concept of “ancestor worship” fails to capture the custom of the Tokugawa Japanese ancestral veneration premised on the religious efficacy of rituals toward ancestors rather than on the divinity of ancestors as an object of worship.⁵⁵⁾ The universal practice of funerary Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan that featured death rituals and ancestral rites bespoke the arrival of a new age.

In ancient Japan the word “hōmuru,” which means “funeral,” was often read as “haburu,” which means “to throw away” or “to discard.” As this indicates, in ancient times funerals often consisted simply of dumping the dead body.⁵⁶⁾ According to the *Shoku Nihon kōki* (Later chronicles of Japan continued), in 842 Kyoto officials collected and incinerated as many as 5,500 corpses, all of which had been abandoned in the inner city and on the riverbeds. The *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* (Veritable records of three reigns of Japan) states that in 883 the court ordered local officials to bury the abandoned corpses that could be seen from the pathways of the envoy from Palhae (Pohai) Kingdom.⁵⁷⁾ Similarly, it is said that Kūya (903-72), a well known mendicant monk, often gathered dead bodies that had been deserted in the wilderness; subsequently he cremated them after blessing them with the recitation of Buddha's name. As

54) Ōkuwa, pp.69-70. Japanese terms that can be rendered into “ancestor” are two: *senzo* and *sosen*. Among these two terms, according to Fukuta Ajiō, the term *senzo* was widely used in Japan from ancient times and it was particularly so in the Tokugawa period. In contrast, although Confucian or National Learning scholars sometimes used it during the Tokugawa period, the term *sosen* was quite alien to the Tokugawa Japanese and it was popularized only from the Meiji period as it was adopted in the official documents as the Japanese term referring to the English word “ancestor.” See Fukuta, pp.6-9. But in this book the term *sosen* is adopted when it refers to ancestor or to compound words containing the word ancestor such as “*sosen saishi*” or “*sosen sūhai*,” for it is more widely used in the Japanese context as an academic term than the term *senzo* is.

55) *Ibid.*, p.67.

56) Fujii, p.126. For a detailed discussion of the custom of dumping the dead body in the Kyoto region in ancient times, see Katsuda (2003), pp.36-47.

57) For an introduction to these two ancient chronicles, see Sakamoto, pp.141-54, 169-86.

the *Konjaku monogatari* (Tales of times now and past), the *Shasekishū* (Sand and pebbles) of Mujū Ichien (1226-1312), and other narrative literature inform us, the custom of discarding corpses — particularly corpses of the lower classes or of those having no family — persisted into the medieval period.⁵⁸⁾ It is true that courtiers conducted formal funerary services and erected mausoleums for their deceased family members; however, in most cases, as Tanaka Hisao notes, even these aristocrats did not feel obliged to offer regular memorial services for their ancestors, often going so far as to neglect their burial sites.⁵⁹⁾

It was not until the late medieval period that people, both high and low, began to pay serious attention to the well-being of the spirits of their deceased family members. From the early seventeenth century Buddhist death rituals and memorial services, which were designed to facilitate the process of transforming the deceased's spirit into a benign ancestral deity outside the rule of karma, gained wide currency across all classes.⁶⁰⁾ Yanagita Kunio (1875-1962), a founding father of Japanese folklore, characterized the nature of these Buddhist death related rituals as a process of purifying one's soul so that it could ascend to the status of kami. He even determined that this process had nothing to do with the notion of improving one's karma.⁶¹⁾ Indeed, the Tokugawa Japanese believed

58) For examples, see Katsuda (1987), pp.40-46; Ury, p.183; and Morrell, p.105. Based on a detailed examination of records, Katsuda Itaru makes a comprehensive list on the cases of abandoned corpses found in Kyoto in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Katsuda (2003), pp.252-64. Bitō Masahide suggests that the legacy of disposing of the dead by abandoning corpses was apparent in the custom of *umebaka*. Indeed, in some regions, the *umebaka* was referred to as the 'dumping grave' (*sutabaka*). Corpses were generally placed in shallow pits, and after only a short interval the same ground was often dug up and used to bury another corpse. See Bitō (1991), p.378.

59) For example, in the eleventh century the cemetery of the glorious Fujiwara family in Kohata was left on a desolate mountain hill, and its descendants seemed to have no idea where their ancestors had been buried. When cremation for the dead was conducted, family members were not usually in attendance; instead, family servants or monks collected the ashes and deposited them in a sepulcher. See Tanaka, pp.183-204.

60) Bitō, p.130.

61) Yanagita, p.144.

that, once posthumously deified, and as long as its descendants venerated it, the spirit of a dead person was assured of its divine status in a realm not bound to the law of karmic reward and retribution. What was required for this divine status of ancestral kami was, ironically, the dedication of Buddhist rituals of ancestral veneration. The ancestral “kami,” which was created and honored with the devotion of “Buddhist” rituals pursued within the *danka* system, offered a spiritual avenue for the well-being of early modern families.

The new mode of Buddhist death rituals and ancestral veneration reciprocated the family structure that was moving away from the medieval extended or multiple family household system. The new family structure, which featured a monogamous nuclear or simple family household (*tankon shōkazoku*, in most cases, a stem family in which there was no more than one couple in each generation) made up of father, mother, children, and sometimes grandparents, demanded spiritual support that would foster its independence and solidarity.⁶²⁾ This support took shape in the form of household-based Buddhist death rituals and ancestral veneration focused upon the stem-lineage of a conjugal family unit. In contrast, in the preceding extended family system, the focus of ritual devotion was upon the main family lineage to the detriment of branch family members, who were discouraged from asserting their own independent lineages. For branch family members, the custom of ancestral veneration was a constant reminder of their inferior status and their need to submit to the main family lineage. But the monogamic nuclear family system in the Tokugawa period had its own means of sanctification that featured familial Buddhist death rituals, ancestral rites, and notions of filial piety.⁶³⁾

VI. The Cultural Politics of Buddhist Death

How were the components of the *danka* system — *danna* households,

62) Takeda, pp.211-13.

63) Kuroda, pp.328-31.

Buddhist monks and institutions, and the state — then mutually involved in the issues of death and ancestral veneration against a backdrop of anti-Christianity. Unlike in premodern China and Korea, where Buddhism was commonly understood to be antithetical to family values, early modern Japan championed Buddhism as a way of sustaining family and society in harmony. Empowered with funerary Buddhism, Buddhist monks in Tokugawa Japan took advantage of the inaction and disinterest of other religious traditions. It was always obvious that, given its fundamental make-up, Shintō could not function as a dispenser of death related rituals. Shintō was extremely sensitive to any source of pollution, and of all sources of pollution, death was considered to be the most defiling. Further, Japanese Confucianism, which had been ascendant among Zen monks and courtiers from the late medieval period, was far removed from the ritual arena of ancestral veneration, showing stark contrast to Chinese and Korean Confucianism. In Tokugawa Japan, Confucianism was by and large considered to be an intellectual discipline concerned with political economy and social engineering rather than a wellspring of familial ritual life. So, the religious vacuum created by Shintō and Confucianism offered a golden opportunity for Buddhists to fill in. Buddhist monks, although styling themselves as “renunciants” (*shukkesha*) who left their family and the secular world, emerged as arbiters of the family affairs of death and ancestral veneration within the *danka* system.

Above all, the role of Buddhist monks as arbiters of family rituals did not pose any problem to the government which tried to tame Buddhism. Already in the early decades of the seventeenth century, such highly regarded *shōgunal* advisors as Sūden (1569-1633) and Tenkai (1536-1643), who had experienced the political turmoil caused by the collision between the Law of the Buddha and the Law of the King, insisted that Buddhist institutions serve the regime.⁶⁴ Family rituals were an arena of social control in which Buddhist institutions could offer their service to the Law of the King. When this vision was coupled with the anti-Christian policy, the *shōgunate* could effectively

64) For a comprehensive treatment of Sūden and Tenkai, see Tsuji (1953), pp.26-173.

subordinate the Law of the Buddha on the tacit approval of the danka system.

Once incorporated into the apparatus of the shōgunal governance, however, Buddhist temples did not remain passive agents of shōgunal policy; rather, they strove to carve out spaces within which they could advance their own ends, often targeting the same pool of resources — whether political, economic, or social — as did the government. The tactics of Buddhist temples usually came down to implementing, through the leverage of annual religious inspection, a variety of schemes designed to secure the patronage of funerary danna households. Buddhist death rituals and ancestral rites were promoted as a sort of social “norm” to which the danna households were expected to subscribe: die Buddhist and venerate ancestral deities within the framework of the danka system. Every new death reinforced the prescription of Buddhist death, and ancestral rites, which were conducted throughout the year, both regularly (on such occasions as the New Year, Higan, and Bon) and irregularly, were a constant reminder of the mandate of the danka system. Squeezed between the Law of the Buddha and the Law of the King, the Tokugawa Japanese often found themselves struggling to provide for both.

It should therefore come as no surprise that Buddhist death rituals and ancestral rites, despite their posture as familial affairs, often became a site of competition, resistance, and negotiation between the government, the Buddhist temples, and the danna households. The government tried to keep the growing power of Buddhist temples in check and tweak various regulatory measures to control the Buddhist clergy, while the temples continued to extract income and compliance from the populace. Disenchanted, anti-Buddhist critics charged Buddhist temples and their members of being corrupt and demanded material frugality and clerical probity to them. In an extreme case during the 1660s, local lords, such as Ikeda Mitsumasa (1609-82) of the Okayama domain, Tokugawa Mitsukuni (1628-1700) of the Mito domain, and Hoshina Masayuki (1611-72) of the Aizu domain moved to execute a draconian anti-Buddhist measure known as the “retrenchment of Buddhist temples” (jiin seiri). Many Buddhist temples in these domains were demolished, and hundreds of Buddhist

monks were defrocked and returned to agriculture.⁶⁵⁾

In spite of pressure and harassment, Buddhist institutions did not back down. Resorting to their right of religious inspection, Buddhist monks stressed the inseparability between anti-Christianity, Buddhist rituals for the dead, and ancestral veneration. All this contributed to integrating family rituals into the governing apparatus of the *danka* system. Over time, rites for a deceased family member were gradually standardized into three stages of ritual practice: a funeral; a series of thirteen post-funeral memorial services, known as the “thirteen Buddhist rites” (*jūsan butsuji*, which were conducted over a period of about three decades); and the annual veneration of the ancestral deity.⁶⁶⁾ The Tokugawa Japanese, who followed the multistage ritual practice of Buddhist death, believed that paying homage to ancestral deities was good in itself, indispensable for the well-being of their household, and, by extension, good for society in general. Brought to funerary Buddhism, *danka* households maintained, or at least tried to maintain, good relations with their funerary temples by fulfilling their obligations to them. In return, funerary temples tended to the religious needs of their patrons. As for the government, the social harmony that the *danka* system seemed to foster was something to be protected despite its desire to check and control the Buddhist clergy.

That said, however, it did not mean that the *danka* system was immune from conflict and disruption. Disputes between funerary temples and their patron households were not unusual. In many cases, those disputes took the form of “leaving the *danka* relationship” (*ridan*) or of “unauthorized egress and ingress” (*fuhō deiri*) to another funerary temple. When a dispute arose, the temple usually tried to avoid losing its funerary patron while the latter tried to justify switching to another temple. In Tokugawa society, where precedent was taken very seriously, disputes over the issue of “leaving the *danka* relationship” posed a quandary to the public authorities, who tended to give priority to

65) For a convenient account of policies pertaining to the “liquidation of Buddhist temples” in these three domains, see Tsuji, pp.331-36.

66) Fujii, pp.99-101.

vested social stability. When the dispute was aggravated to the point of collective action, it could slip out of control and even develop into a political problem. As far as the government was concerned, a lopsided relationship between a *danna* household and its temple was not so desirable. While trying to find the appropriate balance of power between the temple and the household, the public authorities often found themselves facing a delicate issue of social order. Tipping the balance, even slightly, could result in unpredictable chain reactions.

Thus, the manner in which *danna* households, funerary temples, and the state came to terms with the *danka* system reflected the inner dynamics of Tokugawa society — dynamics that were tangled up with socio-ethical arguments for ancestral veneration, with the state apparatus for population surveillance, and with discourses regarding the proper social location of Buddhism. The *danka* system, practiced in terms of claims and counterclaims, rights and obligations, and political control and religious autonomy, was neither static nor monochromatic. Its social topography was complicated by mutual reliance, competition, and contestation over money, power, and social influence.

Within a broader context, how did the state utilize the social customs of, and ethical values embedded within, funerary Buddhism for the purposes of social engineering? In a society where ritual served as a marker of social status, private funeral rituals could not escape from the radar of state censure and control when they were out of bound with pomp and luxury. By setting a range of ritual latitude, public authorities tried to incorporate people with varying local customs and attitudes into an overarching orthopraxy of Buddhist death. On the other hand, the people for their part, instead of balking, tried to utilize their familial rituals in order to assert a sense of social standing, dignity, autonomy, or social resistance.

The *danka* system was never an isolated sphere; it was always part of the evolving Tokugawa social system. Thus, the question of why so many temples emerged between the late sixteenth century and the mid-seventeenth century, and of how they were able to maintain themselves, involves the task of

analyzing the construction and evolvement of Tokugawa society in relation to funerary Buddhism. Through force (anti-Christian religious inspection), ideological persuasion (the imperative of Buddhist death and ancestral veneration), and sentiment (filial piety and social harmony), the agents of the *danka* system (i.e., Buddhism, family, and public authority) demonstrated that the Tokugawa social order remained a site subject to cooperation, competition, and conflict among themselves.⁶⁷⁾ In illuminating the social matrix of funerary Buddhism, it is therefore essential to look at the “perceived norm” of Buddhist death as a socio-religious institution in which the Tokugawa social order was communicated, experienced, and contested. Funerary Buddhism was a corollary of the process of social power that embodied and articulated the basic notions and values of the Tokugawa Japanese.⁶⁸⁾

As hindsight, in order to evaluate the relations of power that defined the social mode of the *danka* system, episodes that show how Shintō priests strove to circumvent the Buddhist grip on funerary rites can be examined. In dealing with this issue, one thing should be made clear: no matter how hard Shintō priests petitioned for “Shintō funeral” (*shinsōsai*), public authorities never embraced their entreaties as they were. When their petition (which was often mired in a prolonged dispute) was brought to the limit, the government then allowed, albeit reluctantly, the head priest in question and his heir apparent only to be buried with a Shintō funeral, not other family members. But this kind of exception was rarely granted, and, when it was, it was rarely allowed to extend past one generation. The government's primary concern was to ensure that it did not disrupt the *danka* system now inseparable from the scheme of

67) For a theoretical discussion of how society is constructed through the working of force and discourse, see Lincoln (1988), particularly the introduction, pp.3-11.

68) As Jordan and Weedon (p.14) note, “social power manifests itself in competing discourses. Discourses are more than ways of giving meaning to the world, they imply forms of social organization and social practices which structure institutions and constitute individuals as thinking, feeling and acting subjects.” Following the definition of power suggested here, I attempt to illuminate the cultural politics of funerary Buddhism and show how they determined the socio-religious meaning of death in Tokugawa society. For a theoretical discussion of cultural politics, see Jordan and Weedon, pp.3-17.

anti-Christian religious inspection. No matter how much fed up they were, until long past the twilight of Tokugawa Japan, Shintō priests could be never free from the religious bondage of funerary Buddhism.⁶⁹⁾

VII. Conclusion

The persistence of the *danka* system speaks to the nature of the social order that, for more than two centuries, underpinned Tokugawa Japan. It was a social order that was institutionalized through anti-Christian religious inspection and cemented through funerary Buddhism. In this way, Buddhism and the Tokugawa state formed a united front for fighting the “wicked enemy” of Christianity — an alien religion that was accused of threatening the peace and order of Japan from without. It was believed that Christian missionaries and their Japanese collaborators were corrupting the foundation of the divine country not only through deceptive religious teachings, but also through bribes. It was even argued that each month the country of Tartar (home to a Mongolian people) sent monies to Japanese *Kirishitan*!⁷⁰⁾ The Tokugawa bakufu's perception of a Christian threat was starkly contrasted with Christian missionaries' efforts to abide by the law of Japan. Evidence of a Christian threat was yet to be found, but it did not matter.⁷¹⁾ Bakufu leaders proceeded to link the task of rooting out the “national enemy” to that of consolidating an overarching governing order that bound the populace to the *bakuh*an system.

Nevertheless, the anti-Christian situation could not last forever: with the arrival of a new age that saw the overhaul of the government structure, it was

69) For an account of the history of disputes over the Shintō funeral, see Tsuji (1954), pp.115-39.

70) Yasumaru, pp.438-39.

71) Ōhashi, pp.46-47: “The established view holds that the Christian threat was twofold: firstly there was the fear of the ‘colonization’ of Japan through the military might of Portugal and Spain on whom the Christian missionaries were seen to rely, and secondly there was fear of the outbreak of popular uprisings inspired by Christians.”

reverted to radical change. Amid the increasing pressure of Western powers that demanded tolerance of the much hated and suppressed religion, Meiji leaders realized that their anti-Christian stance was not sustainable. Nevertheless, charged with a new vision of a Shintō state, they tried to expand Shintō funerals in place of funerary Buddhism. But this attempt did not work out as was hoped, in spite of various measures and schemes implemented. After a spate of trial and error, the Meiji government, which was eventually forced to lift the ban on Christianity, decided to stop manipulating the custom of death rituals that were deeply rooted in the danka system. Funerary Buddhism, which weathered through the Meiji period despite the deprivation of its previous claim to orthopraxy, was left free in the Meiji system.

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