

## In Memoriam



ISHIKAWA RIKIZAN  
(1943–1997)

IT IS WITH GREAT SADNESS that we report that on 4 August 1997, Professor Ishikawa Rikizan, a tireless researcher, teacher, and social activist, died suddenly of acute heart failure at the Tokyo Number Two National Hospital. Born 4 November 1943, in Nakaniida Village in the Kami District of Miyagi Prefecture, Professor Ishikawa was ordained as a Sōtō cleric by Sugawara Kan'ichi at the temple Gosei-ji in 1962. That same year, immediately after graduating from high school, Professor Ishikawa entered Eihei-ji for two years of monastic training. After leaving Eihei-ji he spent an additional year training under the renowned Sōtō master

Hashimoto Ekō at Hōkyō-ji. Following this period of monastic practice, Professor Ishikawa entered Komazawa University, where he completed his B.A., M.A., and all the course work for a Ph.D. in Buddhist studies. (The Japanese academic custom usually allows only well-established scholars to receive the Ph.D. degree—Professor Ishikawa was putting the final touches on his dissertation at the time of his death.) He became a research assistant at Komazawa University in 1976, the year he received Dharma Transmission from Sugawara Kan'ichi. In 1981 he began his teaching career at Komazawa University, where he became Professor in 1991.

Professor Ishikawa was a prolific scholar with a wide range of interests and skills. Over the course of his academic career he wrote, coauthored, and edited several books and over two hundred articles in fields as varied as classical Chinese, Dōgen studies, medieval Chinese Zen, medieval Sōtō Zen, Buddhism and human rights, and the history of nuns and convents in Japan. Professor Ishikawa was also the coeditor for important scholarly publications, including the *Eihei-ji shi*, the *Sōtōshū sensho*, and the *Nihon Bukkyō jinmei jiten*. In addition to his writing and editing work, Professor Ishikawa was deeply involved in the recovery and preservation of primary source materials related to Buddhism. He participated in, and led, many research trips throughout Japan to survey the huge quantities of unclassified documents housed in temples and archives, so that scholars in the future could have greater access to documents that have gone largely unexamined.

At the heart of Professor Ishikawa's scholarly work published throughout a decade in numerous short articles was a comprehensive, pioneering study of medieval Sōtō secret initiation documents (*kirigami*). Collecting, classifying, and interpreting these and other Zen colloquial sources, Professor Ishikawa produced a multifaceted account of the practical realities of medieval Sōtō Zen practice and the

spread of Sōtō institutions into rural Japanese society. In his work Professor Ishikawa detailed the dissemination of funeral rites, memorial services, and clerical ordinations in rural life, as well as the synergistic enrichment of these Zen rituals and practices with elements derived from such folk and shamanistic traditions as Shugendō and Onmyōdō. Of particular concern for Professor Ishikawa was the infiltration of Buddhism into the practical realities of medieval life, especially the important role Buddhist doctrines and practices played in the consolidation of medieval notions of social status. This essential research will become more readily available later this year when a synthesis of these articles on medieval Zen will be published by Hōzōkan as *Zenshū shōden shiryō no kenkyū* [Studies of Zen Transmission Documents].

Just as Professor Ishikawa's pioneering work on *kirigami* served as a springboard for research into such diverse topics as clerical marriage, Shugendō, abortion, and discrimination against various minority groups, his studies became the platform for his own concrete social activism. During his tenure at Komazawa University, he regularly gave a course on Buddhism and discrimination against women, people with disabilities, and *burakumin*. Professor Ishikawa also lectured to groups throughout Japan on Buddhism and social issues, especially concerning Buddhism and the social status of women and *burakumin*. In addition, he worked actively to ameliorate the centuries-old legacy of discrimination within Buddhist institutions, devoting his profuse energy and talent to helping to establish the Sōtō Zen denomination's Central Bureau for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights [Jinken Yōgo Suishin Honbu].

Through his academic studies of Japanese Buddhism in the post-Restoration era—an example of which is contained in this journal—Professor Ishikawa came to see the role that Japanese Buddhists, including those of his own Sōtō denomination, had played in supporting Japan's colonial expansion in Asia from the late-nineteenth century until the end

of the Asia-Pacific War in 1945. As a result, he encouraged his fellow clerics to acknowledge their denomination's active participation in the Japanese imperialist policy. Professor Ishikawa was particularly active, along with other members of the Central Bureau for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, in the effort to restore the honor of Uchiyama Gudō, a Sōtō cleric who was executed because of his antigovernment activities. Professor Ishikawa's effort came to fruition in July 1993, when Uchiyama was posthumously reinstated as a cleric by the Sōtō denomination.

Professor Ishikawa was impressive not only for the breadth of his scholarly activities, but also for his generosity and kindness. Although extraordinarily busy, Professor Ishikawa happily served as a mentor to a variety of graduate students and researchers. A patient but demanding teacher, Professor Ishikawa shared his vast knowledge with all who were sincerely interested in the study of Buddhism, male or female, Japanese or non-Japanese, whatever the level of their competence. While at Eihei-ji, Professor Ishikawa had worked in the monastery kitchen, where he acquired a facility with a chef's knife that proved useful at the many gatherings he hosted for his students and colleagues. He had the ability to nourish people on many levels through his teaching, scholarship, and friendship. Professor Ishikawa was a shining example of the Joyful Mind, Magnanimous Mind, and Great Mind about which he wrote in his commentaries on Dōgen's Instructions for the Chief Cook (*Tenzo kyōkun*). He will be sorely missed.

**Richard Jaffe**

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