

REVIEW

Sōshiki Bukkyō 葬式仏教 (Funeral Buddhism)

By *Taijō Tamamuro* 圭室諦成

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Yen 450.

The author, a distinguished scholar in the field of Japanese Buddhism, discusses the development of Japanese Buddhism from the standpoint of funeral rites. He believes that at present this is the only function that Japanese Buddhism fulfills. According to this presupposition, the people look to Buddhism only for funeral rites, healing, and good fortune. In the history of Japanese Buddhism the first of these was healing, the second good fortune, and the third and last about the fifteenth century funeral rites. However, the first two dropped off the front line, relatively speaking, and it was the latecomer that has monopolized Buddhism as the popular faith. This is the reason why he focuses his interest on this theme.

In his presentation he divides the subject into four parts, that is, poli-

tics and religion, the development of funeral rites, memorial services and cemeteries, and the task of Buddhism in connection with funeral rites. In Part I the author, in discussing the distortion of religion by the intervention of political powers, describes the way in which ancient rulers abused religion. They cleverly got hold of various faiths brought from abroad and made the best possible use of them in order to control the masses. They utilized Taoistic magical rites in the native faith of the Japanese in order to appease nature deities; Confucian teachings to deify themselves; and Buddhism was merged with nature worship in order to serve their purposes. He says that Buddhism flourished because of its cooperation with the ruling classes, but that not all Buddhist monks were opportunists. Some of them

freed themselves from political bondage and lived a life of faith as true missionaries. The main stream originated with the priests Kyōshin (-866) and Kūya (903-72), forerunners of the Pure Land school, who were looked down upon as beggars but who contributed much to the maintenance and spread of the real spirit of Buddhism.

In Part II he discusses the development of funeral rites and the process by which the Pure Land faith permeated the masses. As the Pure Land doctrine emphasized rebirth into the Pure Land, the manner of dying and the after-death rites received much more attention than had previously been the case in connection with primitive Japanese death rites. Needless to say, Buddhist funerals took place as early as 700 A.D., but in the Pure Land school popular funeral rites became fully developed. It was the Zen school, however, that systematized them into a ceremony which had already become stereotyped in China in the twelfth century.

In Part III, which deals with memorial services, tombs, and cemeteries, the author discusses the

subject with numerous scriptural references, and shows how Japanese native beliefs and practices were "Buddha-ized." Moreover, he explains the metamorphosis of the idea of a dangerous spirit of the dead into a friendly ancestral spirit and some of the current annual rites which did not originate in Buddhism. He tells us that memorial services were so developed and popularized that in some cases they were held even for the living.

In Part IV he discusses the task of Buddhism in connection with funeral rites, and stresses that the present system of a family affiliation with the temples was established between 1467 and 1665: the former date marking the beginning of the Great Civil War (*Ōnin no ran*) and the latter the ban by the Tokugawa shogunate on the establishment of new temples. Buddhist missionaries intruded into the social structure of villages and sought active contact with existing religious institutions of the villagers. Their main object was to impress the village people with their funeral services. He gives as an illustration of this the way in which both

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the Pure Land and Zen schools, that were well known for their beautiful funeral services, could expand more than the other schools which followed the earlier customs. He also points out that the Tokugawa shogunate made the best use of the established system, refuting the common theory that the Tokugawa shogunate was responsible for the establishment of the system and thus caused the degradation of Buddhism.

In his analysis of the history of modern Buddhism the author points out that (1) because of Buddhist cooperation with the government there arose new popular sects outside of the Buddhist tradition, (2) new antifeudal powers created an anti-Buddhist ideology, (3) Shinto deprived Buddhism of the function of fulfilling the worldly desires of the masses, and the bond between Buddhism and funeral rites remained solid in spite of all the changes. Accordingly, he states that today funeral rites constitute the only channel of communication between Buddhism and the masses.

This book may be said to be the product of a successful combination

of a thematic and a historical approach, or a history of Japanese Buddhism from a single viewpoint. The author takes into account recent developments in not only the field of Buddhist studies but also in folklore, archeology, and studies on death cults. We thank him for his concise and lucid presentation of his views and his detailed documentation of historical data. The book is not only descriptive, it is also critical, and we are sure that the readers will find it both interesting and instructive. Nevertheless, we feel dissatisfied with the principle he adopts of organizing historical data around the problem of the relationship between state and religion. We suspect the influence of a socio-economic view of history, for example, in his dichotomy of rulers and masses, monks and the populace, and so on. To our mind one prominent characteristic of Japanese Buddhism is that the two classes were not so clearly separated as, say, in India. We also feel that he should be more critical of folklore data when he tries to reconstruct the pre-Buddhist death cult in Japan. He refers, for ex-

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ample, to the dual-tomb system as a very old institution, but folklorists are not sure of the data, and they do not agree on the origin and meaning of that system.

Finally, in Part IV, we cannot help feeling some disappointment in finding that he does not discuss the theme, "The Task of Buddhism in Connection with Funeral Services," very fully. Though he suggests the idea of creating modern memorial services out of the feudalistic, magical rites of ancestor worship, he does not show what he means by a modern memorial service. We do not feel, on our part, like being apologetic for Buddhism because of its preoccupation with funeral rites, but we would like to

consider the significance of ancestor worship, the so-called nature worship, and cosmological rites. We also question the author's statement that nothing is left for Buddhism but the performance of funeral rites. We would like to suggest as a title for Part IV, "The Problems of Buddhism in Connection with Funeral Rites," instead of "The Task of Buddhism in connection with Funeral Rites." The book presents a good analysis of Buddhism as it has been in the past, and offers a good opportunity for Buddhists, the clergy in particular, to reconsider not only their function in the present, but their role, and the role of Buddhism in the future.

Kyōko Nakamura.

Note: The original title of the book on Shinto by Sokyō Ono 小野祖教, reviewed in Vol. V No. 4 of this Journal, is *Shintō no kiso-chishiki to kiso-mondai* 神道の基礎知識と基礎問題.