



Frédéric Girard, Annick Horiuchi, Mieko Macé, ed. *Repenser l'ordre, repenser l'héritage: Paysage intellectuel du Japon (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)*

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AT THE MOMENT when the headquarters of the encyclopedia *Hōbōgirin* passes from Kyoto to Paris, and from the hands of Hubert Durt to those of Jean-Noël Robert,

the present volume offers reassuring evidence that French scholarship on the Far East is in excellent shape. The rich and instructive book opens the windows wide on a fascinating landscape. The Tokugawa period has long been admired for the writers of the Genroku era—Chikamatsu, Saikaku, Bashō—and for *ukiyo-e* art, but its vibrant intellectual debates are a more recent source of fascination to Western students. The present collection confirms one's impression that the seventeenth century is perhaps the most exciting period in the history of Japanese thought. The myth of a "closed country" is becoming rather frayed as we learn how eagerly the Japanese absorbed the Chinese and European learning that filtered through from the foreign communities in Nagasaki, and how awareness of European modernity could be conveyed by toys, pictures, and other commodities as well as by the research of a tiny handful of *rangaku* scholars (see Timon Screech's *The Lens Within the Heart: The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan*, University of Hawai'i Press 2002). The Tokugawa State had a quite secular cast and many of the Neo-Confucian systems that flourished in this time had a demystifying effect reminiscent of the European Enlightenment.

The figures who loom largest in this volume, Kumazawa Banzan (1619–1691), Itō Jinsai (1627–1715), and above all Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728), all had wide-ranging and free-thinking minds of a kind that seems distinctively modern. A charming feature of the history of ideas in this period is how these figures reappear in the most varied contexts, either as inspirers or authorities to be overcome. Beneath this lofty level were less intellectual writers, closer to ordinary problems, who popularized in a less critical fashion topics such as the "way of Heaven" ideology that had come in from China, as W. J. Boot recounts (114). Had Japan been saturated with contemporary European thought these exchanges between Chinese and Japanese, between the leading intellectuals, and between popularizers and public, as in a great family or salon, might not have flourished. The history of Japanese thought since the Meiji Restoration, in contrast, becomes somewhat drab and heavy because so much of it is an assimilation and recycling of European ideas.

Early Tokugawa thought can be seen as centering on the task of providing the justification of social institutions (as Olivier Ansart points out in his contribution). Recall that European rationalism of the same period culminated in the Principle of Sufficient Reason that justified all events. But the project of justification met contradictions, especially in dealing with such surds for social thought as the outcaste *eta*. Contrary to Sorai's absolutization of the Confucian saints (legendary Chinese kings), Andō Shōeki (c. 1703–1762) conducts an iconoclastic polemic against these hallowed figures and also against book-learning, in the name of Nature. This may remind the Western reader of Rousseau, but as Jacques Joly goes on to show, Andō is by no means the liberal or radical political thinker that the scholars who discovered him in postwar Japan claimed. While Sorai "has the norms depend on individual personalities, rejects any cosmological description of the Way, and assigns to humanity the task of realizing *sakui* (artifice) by means of political action, Shōeki, to the contrary, denies to individuality any claim to be the bearer of a norm of any

kind, promotes an integral naturalism worked out as a cosmological theory which affirms the transparency of all things in the immediacy of the spontaneous—*shizen*—and forbids humans to enact anything resembling an interference with the world by enclosing them in the pure satisfaction of their most immediate naturalness, identified with the spontaneous course of the whole” (301).

The contributions of J.-F. Soum, H. Ooms, N. Koyasu, T. Yoshida, and M. Macé fill out the picture of Tokugawa scientific culture and its incidences on society. A poignant flight of imagination is displayed by the mathematical minded economist Honda Toshiaki (1743–1820), discussed by A. Horiuchi. His utopian view of Europe reflects a severe crisis of Tokugawa society and betrays a longing for interaction with other countries and a sense of Japan’s need of external resources. In his fantasy of Europe as an unchanging model of perfect (Confucian) government, the Pope figures as the wise, elected emperor of the nations, and Christianity, “the most ancient and thus the most perfect” of religions is an “effective tool for promoting the development of the people” (436). Modern traits are seen in the literary theory of the period: Motoori Norinaga’s studies of *The Tale of Genji* deploy a sophisticated system of reading, as he rejects interpretations that sought ethical or political edification from the text or that stressed the biography of its author. For Jacqueline Pigeot, this puts him in the company of such connoisseurs of the literary as Flaubert, Proust, Barthes, and Todorov.

The essays of Michel Mohr and F. Girard are of particular interest for religious studies. The world of Zen had more engaging differences and interactions than is usually imagined, as Mohr’s vivid contribution shows. It is interesting that a leading Sōtō thinker such as Dokuan Genkō (1630–1698) could ignore Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō* in favor of Chinese Rinzaï masters settling in Nagasaki as the Ming Dynasty collapsed. This corrects the image projected by the quite recent uniformization of doctrine and exclusive cult of Dōgen. The most famous Chinese émigré was Ingen Ryūki (1592–1673), from whom stems the Ōbaku lineage, but Dokuan was drawn by his rival Dōja Chōgen (1602–1663), as were Bankei Yōtaku (1622–1693) and Egoku Dōmyō (1632–1721), one of Hakuin’s teachers. Dokuan was a man of letters rather than a popular preacher, but he played a major part in consolidating the Buddhist “reconquest” of the Nagasaki area as abbot of Kōtaiji from 1668 to 1674. He deplored the low level of Japanese Zen and aroused adverse comment by his claim that the “unbroken transmission of the Dharma” from the Buddha down was illusory. Dokuan had an appreciation for other traditions, in the spirit of Ogyū Sorai, whom he admired, but he also carried on a polemic against Shingon Buddhism and against syncretism between Zen and Pure Land.

Girard argues that the challenge of Christianity had a lasting effect on Buddhism, not only in its methods of preaching and community building, but even on its content. Japanese thought reinforced its structure “on the occasion of an oppositional contact with the other, and also by sedimentation and confluence, as it harvested what remained of the confrontation” (168). Thus the frequency of the word *jiyū* in

the preaching of Suzuki Shōsan (1579–1655) may be a response to the language of the Nagasaki Christians he combated in 1642–1644. The 1592 catechism *Dochirina Kirishitan* (Christian Doctrine) taught that Christ’s liberation (*gedatsu*) brings one from slavery into the state of freedom (*jiyū no mi*); the Buddhist term *gedatsu* is dropped in the 1600 edition, giving more prominence to *jiyū* as a Christian word (185–86). Suzuki’s successor in anti-Christian polemic, Sessō Sōsai (1579–1655) stresses the abiding original nature, *honshō*, perhaps as a Buddhist equivalent of the Christian doctrine of immortality. His choice of Confucian and Taoist elements suggesting a single cosmic principle, an immanent divinity, strikes an unusual note in Buddhism. Girard mentions the “way of Heaven” ideology in this context (193), whereas Boot sees no reason to posit a Christian influence for this (115–16). The Buddhist schools tightened their ranks in response to the Christian challenge, with agnostic Zen reaching out to soteriological Pure Land, and while stressing the self-sufficiency of humanity and the cosmos, they sought to present other perspectives than those of pure “nothingness” after death. When Bankei taught the Unborn (*pushō*), he may have been responding to the use of *pushō* in Christian catechesis: instead of a created and immortal soul, a self-contradictory idea to Buddhist ears, Bankei reaches down to the level of the unconditioned mind that surpasses the duality of this world and the world of liberation (199). Of course the Unborn fits smoothly into the mainstream of Buddhist thought, as one of those notions that are “not necessarily new, but take a new relief in acting as an antibody faced with a virus” (p. 169), so it is hard to prove Christian influence. Such influence would not contradict the distinctively Japanese character of the innovations in seventeenth century Buddhism, but would explain what catalyzed its emergence.

This collection of studies on a vital and changing culture succeeds in its aim of “showing this effervescence in all its fineness and complexity” and of stimulating “a reflection on modernity from renewed bases” (viii). It reveals that Tokugawa Japan is not an antiquarian sidetrack, but an important contributory stream in the making of the world we live in today.

Joseph S. O’Leary  
Sophia University