

Editor's Introduction

Kuroda Toshio and His Scholarship

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KURODA TOSHIO (1926–1993) was a historian of Japan's medieval period who has greatly influenced, if not reshaped, the field of Japanese history with several innovative theories. His ideas went against the grain of existing twentieth-century scholarship, and hence were revolutionary and controversial. In particular, Kuroda's views on medieval religion shifted the focus from the so-called new schools of Kamakura Buddhism which had dominated scholarship up to that point. These schools stand as Japan's most prominent forms of Buddhism today, but in the medieval period their influence was not yet pervasive. Kuroda sought to identify the predominant form of religion then by exploring the place of religion in medieval Japan's social, political, and intellectual world. The conclusions he arrived at challenged the conventional wisdom among scholars. He asserted that it was not Buddhism's new schools but the old ones, what he called *kenmitsu* 顯密 (exoteric-esoteric) Buddhism, that pervaded the medieval scene and set the standard for religion. Moreover, Shinto did not exist as a separate medieval religion, but was submerged in this *kenmitsu* religious culture. Furthermore, the entire *kenmitsu* worldview functioned as an ideological foundation for the social and political order, providing it with a rationale and giving it cohesion. Thus religion did not stand apart from the world as a realm of pure ideas, but was fully integrated into all levels and dimensions of medieval Japan. With these claims—which were in fact incorporated into an even broader interpretation of medieval life and social organization—Kuroda revealed himself to be a historian and theoretician of the first order, displaying formidable powers of conceptualization and wide-scale interpretative vision.

Kuroda's Life and Ideas

Kuroda was born in 1926 in rural Japan near the city of Kanazawa. He

grew up, according to his own account, amid the rice fields of the countryside. His family was devoutly Buddhist, belonging to the Jōdo Shinshū, or Shin school of Pure Land Buddhism, one of the new schools of Kamakura Buddhism. His early upbringing no doubt helped stimulate his life-long interest in Japan's religious history. The other formative element in Kuroda's background was the ultranationalism of the 1930s and 1940s. Like many scholars of his generation, Kuroda reacted strongly in the postwar period against the emperor system and Shinto nationalism as it was propounded during the war. Kuroda entered Kyoto University in the spring of 1945. Because the war ended soon after that, he managed to escape conscription and military service. Graduating with a major in Japanese history in 1948, he wrote a senior thesis entitled "Shinshū kyōdanshi jokō—Toku ni shakai seikatsu to shinkō to no kankei ni tsuite" [Preliminary considerations of the institutional history of the Shin Buddhist school, particularly concerning the relation between social life and religious devotion] (KURODA 1948). By his own admission, Kuroda was heavily influenced at this point by the prevailing scholarly view that the new schools of Kamakura Buddhism, with their emphasis on exclusive religious practices such as the *nenbutsu*, were the dominant and representative form of medieval religion.

After graduation Kuroda entered Kyoto University's graduate program in Japanese history, while at the same time taking a position as a high school teacher in nearby Takatsuki. He studied and taught for the next three years and then, resigning his high school position, turned his undivided attention to graduate studies from 1951 to 1955. It was during this period that he wrote "Kamakura Bukkyō ni okeru ikkō senju to honji suijaku" [Single-minded and exclusive practice vs. *honji suijaku* thought in Kamakura Buddhism] (KURODA 1953), an early indicator of his realization that the character of medieval religion was more complicated than that reflected in the sectarian histories of the new Buddhist schools. Buddhism was not the only focus of Kuroda's work at this point. Like most historians, he also conducted extensive research on medieval *shōen* 莊園, or estates, and analyzed them using the Marxist categories that dominated postwar Japanese historiography. Kuroda left graduate school in 1955 to take a position at Kobe University, and subsequently moved to Osaka University in 1961. As was common in his day, Kuroda did not receive a Ph.D. for his graduate study, but years later, in 1983, was granted the more prestigious Doctor of Letters (*Bungaku hakase*) by Osaka University.

Throughout the 1950s Kuroda published widely, though not integrally, on a variety of topics in the social, political, economic, intellectual,

and religious history of medieval Japan. In 1963, however, he published a broad-ranging, synthetic essay that established his reputation as one of the foremost medieval historians of his generation: “Chūsei no kokka to tennō” [The medieval state and the emperor]. In it he proposed an original and comprehensive theory on the structure of the medieval state known as the *kenmon taisei* 権門体制, “system of ruling elites.” According to this theory, the medieval social and political order was dominated by three elite groups: the imperial court and aristocracy (*kuge* 公家), the bakufu and samurai authorities (*buke* 武家), and the leading religious establishments (*jike* 寺家). They were each organized around families or family-like structures and lineages (including the large temple-shrine complexes), and they derived their wealth and influence from control of estates, which were the organizational unit of economic production.

Generally, these elite groups were clustered in the environs of Kyoto and, though one *kenmon* might assert itself for a time over the others, they tended to rule Japan interdependently, sometimes in a competing manner but other times collaboratively. Together the system of rule that they created constituted the medieval Japanese state. The effect of the *kenmon taisei* theory was to challenge the prevailing scholarly view that Japan’s medieval period was the proverbial “age of the samurai.” Though not universally accepted, Kuroda’s theory forced historians to rethink their assessment of medieval rule and to acknowledge the tenacious power and influence of the imperial court and the major religious institutions against bakufu domination in the Kamakura period and beyond. The story of medieval Japan suddenly appeared far more complex than the simple account of samurai ascendancy suggested it to be.

Kuroda’s *kenmon taisei* theory functioned as a miniature “big bang” spinning out “solar systems” of historical discourse on diverse aspects of this medieval order. One of them focused on the role and function of religion in the power matrix of the medieval state. In 1975 Kuroda published a volume entitled *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō* [The state and religion in medieval Japan], which began with a reprint of his seminal essay on the *kenmon taisei* and ended with a new monograph-length article outlining his views on medieval religion, entitled “Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai” [The development of the *kenmitsu* system as Japan’s medieval orthodoxy]. This work clearly revealed the extent to which Kuroda saw religion as an essential component in medieval Japan’s system of rule. It was not simply an extraneous social and intellectual pursuit hovering at the margins of power and authority. That very same year Kuroda published another long

article, “Chūsei jisha seiryoku ron” [A thesis on the power of medieval temple-shrine complexes] (KURODA 1975c), which he subsequently developed into a short, popular book entitled *Jisha seiryoku—Mō hitotsu no chūsei shakai* [The power of medieval temple-shrine complexes: Yet another medieval society] (KURODA 1980). In it he examined how medieval religious institutions operated, how they exerted their influence on the world around them, what their internal dynamics were, and what their overall effect on society was. With these works Kuroda staked out religion as a prime concern in his scholarship. Though he continued to publish on other aspects of medieval society, religion tended to dominate his scholarly agenda from this time until his death in 1993.

Kuroda’s views on religion stand in sharp contrast to the way Buddhism and Shinto have been depicted through most of the twentieth century. His analysis of religion has challenged the assumptions of existing Buddhist and Shinto scholarship, just as his “ruling elites” theory has upset the samurai-centered portrayal of medieval rule. Throughout his writings, Kuroda frequently reminded readers that two historical developments have distorted the modern perception of medieval religion. The first was the establishment in Buddhism of well-defined sectarian organizations in the Tokugawa period (1600–1867), which created discrete Buddhist schools with sectarian dogma and ecclesiastical lines of authority. The second was the government’s forcible separation of Shinto from Buddhism in the Meiji period (1868–1912), which generated a rallying point for modern Japanese nationalism and an ideological basis for aggrandizing the emperor. There is a tendency to assume that these structures—clear-cut sectarian divisions in Buddhism and two separately constituted religions, Shinto and Buddhism—have existed throughout history, and a proclivity to project them back on medieval times. These constructions must be set aside, Kuroda asserted, to perceive medieval religion objectively and without distortion. The shortcomings of twentieth-century scholarship have derived from its failure to do so.

Another pronounced difference between Kuroda’s approach and that of modern Buddhist and Shinto scholarship is Kuroda’s use of Marxist thought in analyzing religion’s significance and function. This difference is not unique to Kuroda, but in fact divides the entire discipline of postwar Japanese historiography, which has been fueled by a Marxist problematique, from the field of Buddhist studies (*Bukkyō-gaku* 仏教学), which has roots in the abstract and apolitical analysis of Buddhist doctrine that flourished in Tokugawa times. Kuroda’s understanding of medieval society is predicated on the assumption that

there was a continuous struggle between the rulers and the ruled. His analysis of the estate system, the economic foundation on which the entire medieval order rested, focuses on the importance of small-scale, enterprising, peasant farmers. The inherent aspiration of peasants was to attain a better life for themselves, whereas the natural impulse of the ruling class was to appropriate the fruits of the peasants' labor. Kuroda's explanation of religious ideas and practices is frequently driven by an assessment of whether they served the interests of the ruling elites or the peasants. It is this Marxist agenda that is somewhat disconcerting to doctrinal purists in Buddhist studies. What is striking about Kuroda's analyses is that they lend themselves not only to Marxist theories, popular in the past, but also to their apparent successor in the West, postmodern analyses of power. It must be pointed out, however, that Kuroda was never slavish in his application of Marxist categories to medieval phenomena, as some of his contemporaries were. He was clearly inspired by a Marxist vision, but commonly allowed the medieval material to yield its own categories of analysis.

One by-product of Kuroda's Marxist values is that he did not hesitate to put historical scholarship to work in assessing contemporary social and political questions. Kuroda, having himself been educated in the ultranationalist environment of wartime Japan, was anxious as a socially conscious historian not to allow the excesses and historical distortions perpetrated then to be repeated. Kuroda's attempt at correcting distortions is seen particularly in his treatment of Shinto. He believed that the creation of a nationalistic Shinto ideology in the prewar period was possible because historians had not sufficiently clarified its premodern character as an integral part of and an extension out of the *kenmitsu* Buddhist worldview of medieval times. Moreover, he felt that the prewar establishment of shrines to the war dead, such as Yasukuni, and their more recent postwar valorization constituted a manipulation of the earlier practice of pacifying the spirits of those who died unfortunate deaths. His elucidation of the medieval antecedents of these phenomena was intended as much to counter contemporary reactionary politics as to clarify the nature of medieval religion.

Kenmitsu Buddhism

One of Kuroda's greatest contributions was his reconstructed picture of medieval Buddhism. When Kuroda appeared on the scene, the prevailing view of Buddhism's history was the standard division of it into

three phases and forms of development: Nara, Heian, and Kamakura. Nara Buddhism was identified as the Buddhist traditions transplanted from China to the major temples of Nara, the so-called six Nara schools. Heian Buddhism referred to the Tendai and Shingon schools founded in the Heian period, which were closely linked to aristocratic society and provided the dominant systems of thought and practice for over four hundred years. Kamakura Buddhism signified the various new schools of Pure Land, Zen, and Nichiren Buddhism that arose in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which developed simple, accessible, and exclusive religious practices attractive to diverse social classes. The new schools of Kamakura Buddhism have been portrayed as the culmination of Buddhism's development in Japan, and the old schools of Nara and Heian Buddhism as preliminary and transitional stages that led inexorably to this Kamakura standard. Hence Kamakura Buddhism has been regarded as the most representative form of Buddhism in medieval times. It is this picture of Buddhism that Kuroda confronted and challenged.

As noted above, the alternative view that Kuroda proposed is called *kenmitsu* Buddhism. His basic contention is that during medieval times the new forms of Kamakura Buddhism were fairly peripheral, whereas the old forms tended to dominate religious affairs. Certainly, they were the ones that controlled the most temples, clerics, and material resources, and whose religious outlook was recognized as mainstream. The word *kenmitsu*, meaning "exoteric-esoteric," refers to the body of beliefs and practices that bound medieval religion together as a coherent and comprehensive worldview. The scope of this worldview went beyond the parameters commonly ascribed to Buddhism, for it included beliefs and practices associated with kami, which today are categorized as Shinto. Under this *kenmitsu* umbrella, separate lineages or schools were recognized—the number of Buddhist schools was traditionally set at eight (*hasshū* 八宗: Tendai, Shingon, and the six Nara schools)—and they each developed their own exoteric teachings (*kengyō* 顕教), doctrinal systems that rationalized and undergirded religious practices. But they were all united in their common recognition of the efficacy of esoteric beliefs and practices (*mikkyō* 密教).

Esoteric teachings were first popularized in Japan by Kūkai 空海 (774–835) who founded the Shingon school, but the Tendai school, founded by Saichō 最澄 (767–822), later developed and elaborated them, and brought them to maturity in the ninth century. These esoteric teachings pervaded virtually all religious institutions of the age, and were supported by and harmonized with their individual exoteric doctrines. Though there were countless variations of esoteric and exo-

teric teachings—Tendai being the foremost—collectively they constituted the single worldview that Kuroda called *kenmitsu* Buddhism. It was this system of Buddhism, Kuroda claimed, that was the orthodoxy of medieval times, persisting in varying degrees into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The orthodox structure of medieval religion encompassed both esoteric practice and exoteric doctrine, but the esoteric dimension was commonly recognized as superior. One thing that made it dominant was the thaumaturgic power that esoteric teachings were thought to embody. Buddhism offered, of course, a path to enlightenment, but it did so amid a vast spirit world that was part and parcel of medieval life. In navigating one's way through this world—avoiding harm and seeking advantage in both spiritual and worldly affairs—people availed themselves of the magical and mysterious powers of esoteric ritual. Esotericism's capacity to avert danger and secure benefit was considered especially great because it was seen as the product of the universal teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism, thus putting it far beyond the spells of a local miracle worker or shaman. These esoteric practices were employed particularly to pacify ominous or vengeful spirits who had been wronged in life and died in misfortune. Cults of ominous spirits (*goryō shinkō* 御霊信仰) proliferated in Japan during the ninth and tenth centuries, coalescing especially around court officials who died in disgrace amid political intrigue. Esoteric ritual, which had attained widespread acceptance by then, became a standard means of pacifying spirits of the dead and transforming them into beneficent and heroic spirits. In short, it provided a mechanism for domesticating the spirit world. One of the early uses of the *nenbutsu*—chanting the name of the Buddha Amida—was simply to calm and succor the spirits of the dead. Hence esoteric practices worked hand in hand with spirit cults to confirm the validity of *kenmitsu* Buddhism.

Kuroda emphasized that *kenmitsu* Buddhism should be seen not only as a comprehensive religious worldview but also as a unifying ideology for the medieval state. The mechanism through which this religion-state linkage occurred was the doctrine that the imperial law (*ōbō* 王法) and the Buddhist teachings (*buppō* 仏法) were mutually dependent and supporting. From early in Japan's history, Buddhism was widely perceived as a "protector of the state" (*chingo kokka* 鎮護国家), but the *ōbō-buppō* doctrine, which took shape around the eleventh century, implied a more complex and integrated relationship, such as that between the two wings of a bird or the two wheels of a cart. The Buddhist teachings were said to spread by means of the imperial law, and the imperial law to prosper through the support of

Buddhism. The two were considered to be intertwined, and to flourish in conjunction with each other. Without one, the other was incomplete. *Kenmitsu* Buddhism actively embraced the role of ideological partner of the state, and generated much of the doctrinal rationale for it, as well as for the legitimation of imperial rule.

Kenmitsu Buddhism functioned in the medieval setting not simply as a source of ideological justification, but also as one of the institutional pillars of society. The major temple-shrine complexes (*jisha* 寺社) of the country together comprised, according to Kuroda, one of the three ruling elites (*kenmon*). Hence, when the language of mutual dependence between *ōbō* and *buppō* was invoked, it reverberated not only at an abstract, doctrinal level but also at a concrete, institutional level. The major religious institutions—e.g., Enryaku-ji on Mt. Hiei, Tōdai-ji and Kōfuku-ji of Nara—exerted their influence through the control of land, manpower, and economic resources in the estate system, just as the other ruling elites did. That is why such a large body of *komonjo* 古文書, official documents for administering land and assets, was produced by them, and why they developed their own type of military forces to guard their interests—for instance, the “warrior monks” (*sōhei* 僧兵) of Mt. Hiei. In these respects the temple-shrine complexes did not differ in character from the other two ruling elites, the bakufu and the imperial court. What did make them distinctive, however, was that their authority derived in part from their religious identity. They provided the ritual means for controlling the world of ominous spirits. They articulated an ideology of legitimation for the ruling elites as a whole. And they defined a religious ideal, the *kenmitsu* ideal, that integrated into a comprehensive and inclusive system the vast range of spiritual phenomena in medieval times. In the power dynamics of medieval Japan such religious authority had a palpable effect on society, just as economic and political forces did.

The picture of the *kenmitsu* system that Kuroda presented casts the new forms of Kamakura Buddhism in a very different light. Instead of representing the final flowering of Buddhism in Japan, they appear in the medieval context as deviations from the *kenmitsu* norm. They neither overshadowed nor supplanted the *kenmitsu* worldview, but operated within it, reacting against some aspects of it and elaborating on others. Kuroda thus considered *kenmitsu* Buddhism to be the orthodoxy of medieval Japan, and these new religious developments to be heterodox and reformist movements (*itan kaikaku undō* 異端改革運動). These divergent movements spanned a wide variety of religious phenomena within the medieval setting, including not only the commonly recognized schools of Kamakura Buddhism, which coalesced around Pure Land, Zen, and Nichiren teachings, but also initiatives within

major *kenmitsu* temples (e.g., the revival of the precepts [*kairitsu* 戒律] in the Nara schools), as well as underground movements (e.g., the Tachikawa cult of erotic teachings in the Shingon school). The *kenmitsu* order was wide-ranging and complex enough to show varying degrees of tolerance or intolerance for these movements. It absorbed some into its own system, but sought to suppress others. Among the various movements, several lent themselves to the concerns and aspirations of the peasant class, and provided an organizing ideology for peasant uprisings (*ikki* 一揆) in late medieval times—specifically, for the *Ikkō ikki* 一向一揆 of the Shin school and the *Hokke ikki* 法華一揆 of the Nichiren school.

Within the *kenmitsu* system there also existed a vast array of beliefs and practices revolving around the kami, which today would be classified as Shinto. In the modern period there has been a concerted effort to portray Shinto as a separate indigenous religion, supposedly embodying Japan's original essence despite cultural interpolations and overlays. One of Kuroda's basic contentions is that prior to modern times Shinto was united with Buddhism in a single worldview, and that its character was in fact shaped by the motifs of that world. The linkage between the two found rational expression in a variety of theories that began to appear around the eighth or ninth century. Early on, the kami were identified as protectors of the buddhas and bodhisattvas or as dependent on their teachings. Later, in the tenth through twelfth centuries, there evolved a more elaborate theory, the so-called *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 doctrine, to explain the relationship: the kami were considered none other than manifestations of the buddhas and bodhisattvas appearing in Japan to lead sentient beings to enlightenment. Through such a conceptual framework, the beliefs, customs, and traditions surrounding the kami were defined largely by *kenmitsu* Buddhism, and gained sophistication and social significance from it. Even the medieval perception of Japan as a "land of the kami" (*shinkoku* 神国), which has been viewed in modern times as evidence of Shinto's independent identity, was a product of the logic and discourses of *kenmitsu* thought. Its appearance in the Kamakura period paralleled the emergence of the heterodox and reformist movements, and functioned in part as a reactionary response to the challenges they posed to the medieval order.

Thus, whatever identity and sophistication Shinto has in its modern form was derived chiefly from its character within the *kenmitsu* system. To that extent, Kuroda considered *kenmitsu* Buddhism, rather than some primordial essence preserved in an independent religion known as Shinto, to be Japan's dominant cultural persona.

Kuroda's Scholarship

The purpose of this commemorative issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* is to make available in English a selection of Kuroda's articles and to show in brief how his scholarship has been received and interpreted. Kuroda has had a significant impact on the scholarly world of Japan, and his major writings were recently assembled into an eight-volume set entitled "The Collected Works of Kuroda Toshio" (*Kuroda Toshio chosakushū*, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1994-95). Despite his prominence in Japan, there have been only three articles of his to appear in English until now:

1. "*Gukanshō* and *Jinnō shōtōki*: Observations on Medieval Historiography" ("*Gukanshō* to *Jinnō shōtōki*—Chūsei no rekishikan" [KURODA 1957]). Translated in 1959 by John A. Harrison. This article was written before Kuroda himself had reached maturity in his scholarly views, though glimmerings of his later ideas on the medieval discourse of Japan as a "land of the kami" can be found in it.
2. "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion" ("Nihon shūkyōshijō no Shintō" [KURODA 1983a]). Translated in 1981 (from a manuscript version prior to the publication of the Japanese original) by James C. Dobbins and Suzanne Gay. This article introduced English readers to Kuroda's revolutionary analysis of medieval religion, and presented a general overview of his ideas on Shinto.
3. "Historical Consciousness and *Hon-jaku* Philosophy in the Medieval Period on Mount Hiei" (a 1984 conference paper that was later revised and published as "Kenmitsu Bukkyō ni okeru rekishi ishiki—Chūsei Hieizan no kike ni tsuite" [KURODA 1985]). Translated in 1989 by Allan Grapard. This article, indicating the *honji suijaku* doctrine as an extension of the classical hermeneutical categories of *hon* (essential) and *jaku* (hypostatic) for interpreting the *Lotus Sutra*, elucidated the intellectual pursuits of a class of Tendai "chroniclers" (*kike* 記家) in later medieval times. The texts produced by them tended toward mystical Buddhist formulas on the one hand, signifying *hon*, and miraculous tales of the kami on the other, signifying *jaku*.

The contents of this issue on "The Legacy of Kuroda Toshio" include translations of five more of Kuroda's writings. The purpose of this endeavor is to present a representative selection of Kuroda's scholarship and a cross-section of his ideas so that the full impact of his vision of medieval Japanese religion can be comprehended. The specific items translated herein are as follows.

1. “The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System As Japan’s Medieval Orthodoxy” (“Chūsei ni okeru kenmitsu taisei no tenkai” [KURODA 1975b, pp. 413–547]). Translated by James C. Dobbins. This is Kuroda’s seminal article in which he first propounded his *kenmitsu* theory. This translation actually contains only the introduction and part 1 of the article, which in its entirety is about 135 pages long in Japanese. The section translated here explains the emergence of *kenmitsu* Buddhism as a religious and ideological system and the various influences on its formation.

2. “The Imperial Law and the Buddhist Law” (“Ōbō to buppō” [KURODA 1983b]). Translated by Jacqueline Stone. This article elucidates the interdependent and mutually supporting relationship that existed between the state and religion in medieval times. It concludes with a brief assessment of changes in that relationship during late medieval, early modern, and modern times.

3. “Buddhism and Society in the Medieval Estate System” (“Shōensei shakai to Bukkyō” [KURODA 1967]). Translated by Suzanne Gay. This article presents a sweeping overview of the diverse and multifaceted involvements of Buddhism in medieval society. It was published in 1967 as one section in a general history of Japanese Buddhism. Though written prior to Kuroda’s publication of his *kenmitsu* theory, it contains a wealth of information about the medieval religious conditions that ultimately led Kuroda to his theory.

4. “The World of Spirit Pacification: Issues of State and Religion” (“Chinkon no keifu—Kokka to shūkyō o meguru tenbyō” [KURODA 1982]). Translated by Allan Grapard. This article explores medieval cults dedicated to spirits of the dead and the development of ritual means of pacifying these spirits. It also traces the changes that such practices underwent in early modern and modern times, especially with the establishment of shrines to the war dead such as Yasukuni. In format and approach, this article resembles several others that Kuroda wrote in the late 1970s and 1980s, in which he isolated a particular topic, analyzed its significance in the medieval setting, and surveyed its changes in later times. (“Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion” and “The Imperial Law and the Buddhist Law,” both mentioned above, generally follow this pattern as well.)

5. “The Discourse on the ‘Land of Kami’ (*Shinkoku*) in Medieval Japan: National Consciousness and International Awareness” (“Chūsei no shinkoku shisō—Kokka ishiki to kokusai kankaku” [KURODA 1975a, pp. 504–38]). Translated by Fabio Rambelli. This piece is actually a translation of part 4 of Kuroda’s seminal 1975 article on the *kenmitsu*

system, referred to in item 1 above. It examines in detail the circumstances in which a new focus on the kami and a new awareness of Japan as a “land of the kami” emerged in the medieval period. It demonstrates that this consciousness was inspired by and pervaded with Buddhist conceptualizations and rationales.

Generally, this collection of translations presents a good overview of themes and perspectives in Kuroda’s scholarship. The first two articles offer a clear outline of Kuroda’s concept of *kenmitsu* Buddhism and its relationship to the state, and the last two, coupled with the translation of “Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion,” provide an in-depth examination of aspects of Shinto. If there are themes from Kuroda’s works insufficiently covered in these translations, they are his elucidation of the power and influence of medieval religious institutions (*jisha seiryoku* 寺社勢力) and his views on the revival and reformist movements of medieval Buddhism (*Bukkyō kakushin undo* 仏教革新運動). Both of these are touched on in the third translation in this special issue, and also in the articles found in the second part of the issue.

Besides the five translations, this special issue also contains three articles assessing Kuroda’s scholarship and discussing his ideas critically. These three reflect the complex ways Kuroda’s core ideas can be developed and also the profound impact they have had on the study of Japan’s religious history.

1. “Religion, Ideology of Domination, and Nationalism: Kuroda Toshio on the Discourse of *Shinkoku*,” by Fabio Rambelli. This article is actually an interpretive essay that is best read in tandem with Kuroda’s “The Discourse on the ‘Land of Kami’ in Medieval Japan,” translated by Rambelli. It elucidates a wide range of significances that the *shinkoku* ideology had, both religious and political, and differentiates it clearly from the nationalistic Shinto ideology developed in modern Japan. It reveals how the medieval *shinkoku* ideology emerged from conceptualizations and paradigms found in *kenmitsu* Buddhism, and functioned within the context of the estate system and in reaction to the heterodox and reformist movements of Buddhism. What is significant about Rambelli’s article is that he goes beyond Kuroda’s analysis of the *shinkoku* discourse and attempts to explicate its inner logic. To that extent, Rambelli takes issue with Kuroda’s general treatment of *shinkoku* thought as fundamentally nonrational.

2. “Kuroda Toshio and the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory” (“Kuroda Toshio shi to kenmitsu taisei ron,” 1994), by Taira Masayuki (translated by Thomas Kirchner). This is a translation of an article written by

Kuroda's successor at Osaka University, who is perhaps the foremost interpreter and proponent of Kuroda's scholarly views in present-day Japan. It presents a lucid chronology of the evolution of Kuroda's thought, and defends his ideas against criticisms by scholars who continue to support the view that the new Kamakura Buddhist schools were indeed the most significant religious phenomenon of medieval times. Taira pinpoints ways that Kuroda's theories have revolutionized the perception of medieval Buddhism—e.g., interpreting the *hijiri* movement as an integral part of *kenmitsu* Buddhism rather than as a reaction against it—but he also identifies imprecisions in Kuroda's use of terminology and in his chronology of *kenmitsu* Buddhism's development that must be rectified to arrive at an accurate picture of medieval religion.

3. "A Reexamination of the *Kenmitsu Taisei* Theory," by Sueki Fumihiko. This article was written especially for this special issue (and also published in Japanese; see SUEKI 1996) by a widely recognized scholar in the field of Buddhist studies who is a professor at Tokyo University. Sueki lauds the more comprehensive and complex analysis of medieval Buddhism that Kuroda's theories have provoked, and he considers his own mentor and predecessor, Tamura Yoshirō, to have advanced the same cause through his examination of *hongaku shisō* 本覚思想, "original enlightenment thought," as a pervasive motif in medieval Buddhist doctrine. But Sueki believes there are dangers of overgeneralization when *kenmitsu* concepts are invoked loosely or uncritically, and he also feels that Taira Masayuki has carried Kuroda's ideas to conclusions that Kuroda himself might not endorse. Nonetheless, Sueki recognizes Kuroda as opening new and important avenues for understanding medieval Buddhism.

The overall impact of this entire cluster of articles is to highlight the innovative character of Kuroda's thought and the sweeping scope of his interpretive vision. Anyone accustomed to the narrowly defined scope of much of Japanese scholarship—whether it is historical analysis of *shōen* records for a particular locale, or close exegesis of a doctrinal treatise from a particular Buddhist tradition—will find the breadth of Kuroda's scholarship startling. It is not that Kuroda was unconcerned with *shōen* documents or doctrinal works. On the contrary, he relied on them extensively—in addition to a vast array of other historical materials including popular tales, diaries, temple-shrine narratives (*engi* 縁起), chronicles, artistic works, and so forth—to document the structure and development of medieval religion, as well as of medieval society as a whole. Admittedly, it is possible to disagree with particular points in Kuroda's approach—e.g., how he extrapolated from single pieces of evidence to broad generalizations, or how he

analyzed the relationship between different entities in society or their phases of development. Certainly, the authors of the three interpretive articles included here, whether subscribing to Kuroda's school of thought or not, take issue with his views in one place or another. What cannot be disputed, however, is the compelling nature of Kuroda's large-scale vision. Under his influence the field of medieval Japanese history has opened up in ways that early modern and modern Japanese history have not. That is, it now strives to elucidate not simply social, political, religious, economic, and intellectual affairs individually, but also their interdependent and integrated nature across conceptually constructed boundaries. Moreover, Kuroda's ideas have extended beyond the field of history to influence Buddhist studies as well. Specifically, they have called into question its sectarian-based analysis of Buddhism's concepts and development, and its presupposition that Buddhist doctrine can and should be examined apart from social or political concerns. In short, the net impact of Kuroda's scholarship has been immense, and its reverberations will be felt for years to come. Even if one disagrees with Kuroda, it is impossible to ignore him.



In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the contributors of this volume. We all share, I feel, an appreciation of Kuroda's scholarly vision and a desire to introduce it to others. I would like especially to thank the translators, who dealt superbly not only with the complexity of Kuroda's thought and vocabulary, but also with Kuroda's often labyrinthine and nuanced prose. In producing the various translations and articles in the volume, we have taken a rather *laissez faire* approach, allowing individuals more or less to frame specialized Japanese terms in their own language. If there is some consistency or shared terminology across articles, it is the result of the heroic efforts of the *JJRS* editors to bring order to our respective contributions. We also have them to thank for the greater felicity in English prose they have imparted to our writings.

Finally, this volume is dedicated to Kuroda Toshio himself, whose work has challenged and inspired us.

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