

Introduction to the Articles by Nishimura Ryō

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This is a special issue of the *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* (JCBS) commemorating the life and work of Nishimura Ryō 西村玲 who died prematurely in February 2016. This issue is devoted to the Buddhism of the sixteenth-through eighteenth-century China, a topic very important to Nishimura. She was a pioneer in the field of Edo-period (1603–1867) Buddhist thought and her work extended to the late Ming period. Both Jimmy Yu, one of the editors of this journal, and myself became good friends with her during her year as a Visiting Researcher at the Princeton University in 2005. This issue is our way to honor Nishimura and how she has touched the lives of many scholars who came to know her.

Nishimura Ryō was the author of *The Originality of Buddhist Thought in Early Modern Japan: Thought and Practice of the Monk Fujaku* (Kinsei Bukkyō shisō no dokusō: Sōryo Fujaku no shisō to jissen [近世仏教思想の独創—僧侶普寂の思想と実践], 2008), which earned her the 2009 Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Award and Honorable Mention for the 2010 Japanese Academy Medal. This work ambitiously presents a new intellectual history of early modern Japan by recentering Buddhism and demonstrating its influence on modern Buddhist thought. It is indispensable for anyone researching early modern and modern Buddhism.

In this work, Nishimura argued that two wheels drove early modern Japanese Buddhism—the influence of Buddhism in the Ming period (1368–1644), and reform movements within Japanese Buddhism. Of the two, the focus of her book on the monk Fujaku [普寂] (1707–1781), represented the latter. As a Vinaya monk, he advocated the movement for reviving the study and observance of Buddhist precepts (J. kairitsu fukkō) [戒律復興]. As a Buddhist intellectual, he also partook in two major controversies of his time: the critique that the Buddhist worldview was by then obsolete (J. shumisen setsu ronsō) [須

弥山說論争], and the assertion that Mahāyāna was not taught by the historical Buddha (J. daijō hibussetsu ron) [大乘非仏說論]. Nishimura demonstrates how Fujaku's contributions to these debates influenced modern Japanese Buddhist thinkers.

More broadly, Nishimura challenged the academic discourse on Edo-period Buddhist decadence (J. kinsei bukkyō daraku ron) [近世仏教墮落論], specifically the assumption that although the shogunate's support led Buddhist temples to prosper institutionally, it also caused Buddhism to stagnate and corrupted its priests. She questioned this received perspective by reappraising and revealing the actual intellectual vibrancy and originality of early modern Buddhist thought.

As she completed her first book, Nishimura began to broaden her scope of Edo Buddhism by exploring late Ming Buddhist influences on Japanese Buddhist thought. She also examined the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist critiques of Christianity during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries. Her efforts in these two areas of research are represented in this special issue of the *JCBS*: “The Circuit of the Life Power Wisdom: Yunqi Zhuhong's Thoughts on Abstention from Killing During the Late-Ming Dynasty,” and “The Void and God: Chinese Criticisms of Christianity in Late-Ming Buddhism.” Both were originally published in the monograph *Kinsei Bukkyōron* (近世仏教論), which is a collection of her published articles edited and posthumously published in 2018 by Sueki Fumihiko 末本文美士, Sonehara Satoshi 曾根原理, and Maegawa Ken'ichi 前川健一.

“The Circuit” focuses on the thinking of Buddhist monk Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏 (1535–1615) regarding abstention from killing, the criticism by Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) of this Buddhist principle in his *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 [The True Meaning of (the Doctrine of) the Master of Heaven], and Zhuhong's rebuttal. “The Void and God,” meanwhile, examines Buddhist responses to the Catholic conception of a creator God (C. Tianzhu 天主), as described by Ricci. Nishimura traces the processes by which Chan Buddhists—such as Zhuhong, Miyun Yuanwu 密雲圓悟 (1567–1642), and his disciple Feiyin Tongrong 費隱通容 (1593–1661)—came to define the ultimate as the “void” through their efforts to refute Ricci's notion of God. Taken together, these two articles exemplify Nishimura's keen interest in Buddhist theological and soteriological concerns. Nishimura showed that Buddhism's commitment to its ultimate goal of liberation did not necessarily dilute its capacity as an intellectual tradition. She vividly described Chinese and Japanese Buddhist monks of this period engaging in debate both within and beyond Buddhism, generating new arguments and interpretations. The two select articles in this

issue is a sampling of her scholarship that demonstrate the vitality and rigor—or “originality,” as in her book title—of early modern Buddhist thought on its own terms.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to this special issue of the *JCBS*. I also thank the many people who helped share Nishimura Ryō’s scholarship with the English-speaking world, including the editor at *Hōzōkan*, the publisher of her *Kinsei Bukkyōron*, and her parents, Nishimura Shigeki 西村茂樹 and Kuniko 西村久仁子, who kindly granted permission to translate and reprint the two articles here. As the *JCBS*’s editors, Jimmy Yu and Albert Welter helped me select the two most appropriate articles for the current issue and guided the process of translation. We are grateful to Matthew Hayes for translating them into English. Although the two articles signal Nishimura’s fresh insights, she ultimately did not have time to develop them fully. Because of the limitations of translating a posthumous work, the translator thus left anything unclear as is, providing occasional correctional notes where appropriate.

Nishimura Ryō was a brilliant scholar with a purpose and razor-sharp intellect, and a person intent on better understanding the world, both past and present. Tragically, her life was cut short at the young age of forty-three, and her death shook her colleagues and friends in Japan and North America. As I write this introduction, I am reminded of her absence, her unfinished books and articles, our unfulfilled promises to travel together. It is my hope that her thoughts and words, including but not limited to these two articles, will continue to inspire scholars of current and future generations.