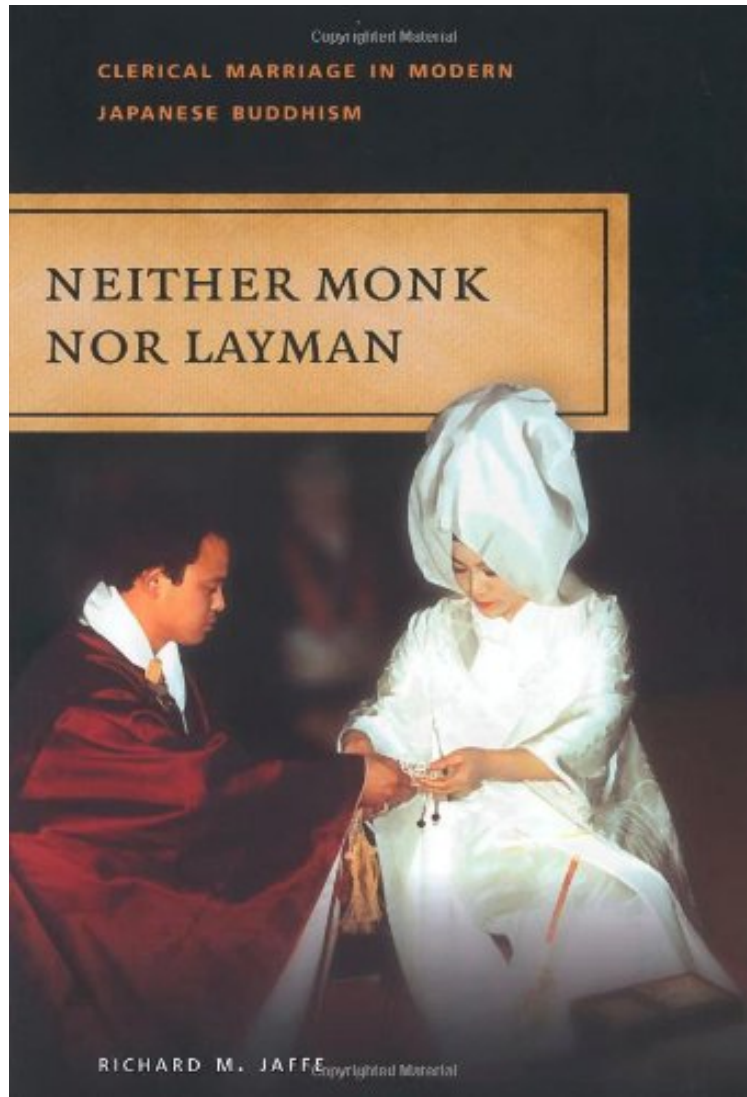


Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism

Richard M. Jaffe

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Richard M. Jaffe : Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A Major Look at the Very Model of a Modern Meiji Married Monk By Crazy Fox Once upon a time a guy fresh out of college and seriously interested in Buddhism went to Japan; he visited local temples on a regular basis, and was increasingly confounded by the fact that it was usually a woman

roughly the same age as the head monk who acted something like the temple's unofficial receptionist and public relations representative. Only slowly did it dawn on him that these women were the head monks' wives. Yeah, something odd had happened between the early Tokugawa period (where most of his Buddhism books cut off) and the present. Too bad he didn't have this excellent book by Richard Jaffe--the silly naif wouldn't have been quite so befuddled. Indeed, "Neither Monk nor Layman" is a very important, ground-breaking study on a highly significant facet of modern Buddhism in Japan, a facet by the way that has influenced the development of American Buddhism in subtle ways. And Jaffe has done a first-rate job on this book; he combines the critical meticulous care of a historian and the knowledgeable, non-reductive sensitivity of a Buddhist Studies scholar. His writing is sharp and clear, his reasoning convincing, and his arguments compelling. He includes a wealth of fascinating detail but marshals all of this in advancing his narrative. The overall result is a remarkable scholarly achievement. One of the things I liked best about the book though was Jaffe's eye for the complexity of the issues involved. The government's multiple reasons and motivations for decriminalizing clerical marriage are treated with great nuance and attention to larger patterns of Meiji Japanese nation-state formation, while the Buddhists are not relegated to being passive recipients of the government's policies as is often the case. Far from it, Buddhist interaction with the government is handled with finesse, and the range of Buddhist reactions to the decriminalization (staunch opposition, eager acceptance, and everything in between) is explored fully. In the process, we get a close look at the arguments and concerns of famous Buddhist monks of this time like Fukuda Gyokai and Shaku Unsho as well as lesser known but (Jaffe points out) highly influential figures like Otori Sessō and Kurama Takudo. The controversial Nichiren lay religious leader Tanaka Chigaku is also discussed extensively. Basically, then, this book is essential reading for anyone interested in Buddhism, Religious Studies, and/or Modern Japanese History. Anyone more generally interested in the vicissitudes of religious institutions in modernity should also find the book useful. And if you like this book as much as I do, you may also want to check out Stephen Covell's "Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in a Religion of Renunciation" (which discusses contemporary issues with temple wives and clerical marriage) or Bernard Faure's "The Red Thread" (which discusses the convoluted views of Buddhism on gender and sexuality more generally).² of 2 people found the following review helpful. An Important Book By James I. Ford This is a critical study for anyone wishing to understand the unique place of Buddhist ordination within the Japanese inheritance. Well done and well written. As someone who has attempted to address this subject in my own writings, I stand in awe of the depth and scope Professor Jaffe brings to the task... I highly recommend it.

Buddhism comes in many forms, but in Japan it stands apart from all the rest in one most striking way the monks get married. In *Neither Monk nor Layman*, the most comprehensive study of this topic in any language, Richard Jaffe addresses the emergence of an openly married clergy as a momentous change in the history of modern Japanese Buddhism. He demonstrates, in clear and engaging prose, that this shift was not an easy one for Japanese Buddhists. Yet the transformation that began in the early Meiji period (1868-1912) when monks were ordered by government authorities to marry, to have children, and to eat meat today extends to all the country's Buddhist denominations. Jaffe traces the gradual acceptance of clerical marriage by Japanese Buddhists from the premodern emergence of the "clerical marriage problem" in the Edo period to its widespread practice by the start of World War II. In doing so he considers related issues such as the dissolution of clerical status and the growing domestication of Japanese temple life. This book reveals the deep contradictions between sectarian teachings that continue to idealize renunciation and a clergy whose lives closely resemble those of their parishioners in modern Japanese society. It will attract not only scholars of religion and of Japanese history, but all those interested in the encounter-conflict between regimes of modernization and religious institutions and the fate of celibate religious practices in the twentieth century.

A richly detailed and clearly written work. . . Jaffe provides abundant material for anyone interested in state-religion issues. . . . A must read for anyone interested in Japanese religious history, Buddhism, or Japanese history. -- Stephen G. Covell "Japanese Journal of Religious Studies" Jaffe does a masterful job of weaving together into a compelling narrative his extensive and well-documented historical sources. . . . This is an important contribution to modern Japanese religious history. -- Choice [A] richly detailed and clearly written work. . . Jaffe provides abundant material for anyone interested in state-religion issues. . . . A must read for anyone interested in Japanese religious history, Buddhism, or Japanese history. -- Stephen G. Covell, Japanese Journal of Religious Studies This work carefully integrates a deep understanding of Buddhist doctrine with historical detail and ethnographic description. On the issue of clerical marriage in Japanese Buddhism, not only is Jaffe's book the only show in town, but it is a show that no one interested in Japanese Buddhism, Meiji history, church-state relations, religious celibacy, modernization, or secularization would want to miss. -- John S. LoBreglio, Journal of Asian Studies One of the most commonly misunderstood aspects of Japanese Buddhism involves the marriage of clerics. Buddhists from most other countries consider this a sign of the overall decline of Buddhism in Japan and think that Japanese clerics are simply incapable of controlling their desires. . . . Both sides of this complex issue are presented clearly, and the idea of over-all decline is thoroughly debunked. This cross-disciplinary book is important not only to studies of religion but also to those of

anthropology and history. -- Sarah Horton, *Religious Studies* Jaffe's work is beautifully referenced and composed, full of illuminating sidelights and contextual explorations, and displaying powerful detail and tireless pursuit of textual evidence. . . . Jaffe's research performs a quite groundbreaking synthesis in any language. -- Galen Amstutz, *Journal of Japanese Studies* From the Inside Flap "First-rate. Jaffe's research is utterly original; virtually none of the issues covered have been seriously investigated in any other Western-language study, and there are precious few Japanese secondary studies in the area. The book is well organized, well balanced, and a delight to read."--Robert Sharf, University of Michigan "That the male Buddhist clergy in Japan is almost entirely married is an anomaly within Buddhism as a whole. Jaffe's subject is the problem of how this came about. What were the implications for the Buddhist understandings of marriage, sexuality, and reproduction? What accounts for the fact that almost all Buddhist male clergy marry, while virtually no nuns do? What does 'monasticism' mean in modern Japanese Buddhism? These are some of the questions animating Jaffe's study."--Helen Hardacre, Harvard University From the Back Cover "First-rate. Jaffe's research is utterly original; virtually none of the issues covered have been seriously investigated in any other Western-language study, and there are precious few Japanese secondary studies in the area. The book is well organized, well balanced, and a delight to read."--Robert Sharf, University of Michigan "That the male Buddhist clergy in Japan is almost entirely married is an anomaly within Buddhism as a whole. Jaffe's subject is the problem of how this came about. What were the implications for the Buddhist understandings of marriage, sexuality, and reproduction? What accounts for the fact that almost all Buddhist male clergy marry, while virtually no nuns do? What does 'monasticism' mean in modern Japanese Buddhism? These are some of the questions animating Jaffe's study."--Helen Hardacre, Harvard University