Christian–Buddhist Polemics in Late Medieval/Early Modern Japan

James Baskind*
Kyushu Institute of Technology

Abstract

Until recently, there have been predominantly two ways of approaching Christian–Buddhist polemics during Japan's late medieval and early modern periods. One way is to look at the writings of European Jesuits. The other way is to look at the Buddhist response, largely seen in works produced by Zen monks. Until recently, we had yet to see an informed Japanese understanding of Christianity, nor an insider's critical treatment of Japanese Buddhism. In the person of Fukansai Habian, however, we see both of these things. Not only was he a convert to Christianity, but he was also a former Zen monk. We will examine his catechistic text, *Myōtei Mondō* (1605), and its recently discovered first fascicle on Buddhism as a nexus for considering Christianity's polemical challenge to Buddhism. We will see how the meeting of radically different worldviews regarding such fundamental issues as salvation, the afterlife, ethics, the 'soul', and the nature of Ultimate Reality/God came to a climax in the person of Habian and found its most thorough and informed exposition in *Myōtei Mondō*. Within this discussion, we will also address the Buddhist response to the charge that it is based on emptiness, nothingness, and void.

Christianity and Buddhism represent two of the world's great religions, not only in terms of geographical scope and the number of adherents but also in their history of a rich and varied polemical interaction with each other. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Catholic Christianity's East Asian mission, seen most prominently in the activities of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in China and Japan during the 16th and 17th centuries. The fact that both were subject to intense evangelization, yet remain overwhelmingly non-Christian countries, says much about the compatibility of their respective traditional worldviews. The absolute God of Christian monotheism with its eternal heaven and hell did not mesh well with native beliefs and practices that included a vast panoply of heavenly beings, belief in transmigration, and an entrenched tradition of ancestor worship. It should be pointed out, however, that not only is this phenomenon based on doctrine and philosophy—there are equally deeply rooted political and ideological reasons as well. This is especially the case in Japan, where the ascendant Tokugawa warlords, who required the absolute loyalty of their subjects, could not tolerate a Church with its ultimate allegiance to Rome.[1] In the end, Christian missionaries and converts were painted as subversive to the political order, being portrayed as agents of foreign powers who had designs to invade Japan.[2] Although not the only, this was one of the contributing causes for the harsh persecution that effectively eradicated Christianity in Japan from roughly 1630 until the beginnings of the modern era.

Japanese Buddhism in the late medieval/early modern period cannot be discussed without reference to Christianity. The reason is simple: the advent of Christianity to Japan was *the* formative factor in the subsequent institutional development that marked the transition from medieval to early modern Buddhism and redefined the place of Buddhism in Japanese society (McMullin 1984). The Tokugawa military government instituted the 'temple parish system' (*danka seido*)[3] and the 'temple registration system' (*terauke seido*) as a direct result of

Christianity. After the government officially proscribed the religion and embarked upon an intense period of persecution, these systems were ways of ensuring that everyone belonged to a Buddhist temple and thus at least nominally was not Christian (Williams 2005; Hur 2007).[4]

Doctrinally speaking, this period also witnessed a unique situation in Japanese religious history. By this time, meaningful religiosity had moved beyond the confines of the court and aristocracy, and all levels of society were participants in religious discourse. What is termed Kamakura New Buddhism (*Kamakura shin bukkyō*), represented by the three streams of Pure Land, Zen, and Lotus Sutra teachings, was also well established in Japan by the late 16th century.[5] These forms of popular religious expression provided the commoners with a seemingly clear means of control over their own salvation as opposed to the earlier forms of Buddhism that required elaborate and costly rituals and thus were only available to social elites. In the Pure Land schools, afterlife discourse was particularly pronounced, which provided a template, as well as a rival, to the Christian teachings on the afterlife that the missionaries introduced (Kinryū 1998; Takeda 1998).[6]

The history of Christianity in Japan starts in earnest in 1549 with the arrival of St Francis Xavier (1506–1552), disciple of St Ignatius of Loyola and one of the founding members of the Jesuit order. By the time of his arrival, Japan had been in a state of internecine civil war for nearly a century. The Ōnin War (1467–1477)—a conflict that started as a succession dispute over the next Ashikaga shogun and eventually escalated into an armed struggle that spread throughout Japan—was a defining moment not only in Japanese political and military history but also in the religious sphere. Although history records the war as only lasting ten years, it served as the tinderbox for a period of incessant fighting among rival warlords that lasted until the country was finally put under centralized control starting with Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) and Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598) and then stabilized and codified by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616). The volatility and precariousness of the times gave a new immediacy to salvation and afterlife discourse, a prominent and clearly defined aspect of Christian teaching.

Christianity and Japanese Buddhism on First Contact

Both Catholic Christianity and Japanese Buddhism were already highly developed systems when they came into contact for the first time. When we consider the Semitic background of Christianity and Indian source of Buddhism, it is not surprising that the two traditions are characterized by radically different worldviews. Xavier and the early missionaries' understanding of Buddhism and the Japanese understanding of Christianity were also impeded by faulty information supplied by an uneducated native informant and part-time pirate, Anjirō (Miyazaki 2003, p. 6; Krämer 2010, p. 78).[7] Nevertheless, a certain degree of mutual understanding was eventually achieved. What became increasingly apparent, however, was that, notwithstanding superficial similarities, their respective discourses on the 'soul', salvation/afterlife, ethics, and the nature of the Absolute, or God, differed considerably. Nonetheless, the Jesuit missionaries enjoyed enormous success in the first several decades of their endeavors, giving rise to what is now termed the 'Christian Century in Japan' with some estimations of the total Christian population going as high as 750,000 believers (Boxer, 1967, p. 187).[8] Ikuo Higashibaba observes that by the time the missionaries had arrived, syncretism, or the accommodation/reconciliation of different traditions and practices, had long been the established pattern of religious behavior (Higashibaba 2001, p. x). It was this characteristic of pre-modern (and modern, to an extent) Japanese religiosity that allowed the combination of traditions of different origins such as Shinto, Buddhism, Confucianism,

and Daoism to seamlessly meld into unique Japanese expressions (Teeuwen and Rambelli 2003, pp. 1–53).[9] Christianity also played into this tendency. Following this line of argument, Higashibaba advances that Japanese Christians[10] accepted Christian symbols either as replacements of or additions to similar elements in their existing religious system (Higashibaba 2001, p. xxii).

Due to the exclusivist nature of Christianity, which fundamentally does *not* allow the inclusion or accommodation of competing doctrines and practices, it was incumbent upon the missionaries to show the Japanese the 'error' of their religious expressions only after which they could lead them to true faith.[11] For this reason, a large part of the early missionary efforts were directed toward refuting Japanese forms of religiosity. The two most significant examples of this genre are *Nihon no Katekizumo* (Japanese Catechism; 1581) by Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), the Italian Jesuit and Visitor of the East Asian mission, and *Myōtei Mondō* (The Myōtei Dialogue; 1605) written by Fukansai Habian, a Japanese convert and former Zen monk.

Recent Trends in the Study of Christian–Buddhist Polemical Discourse: *Myōtei Mondō*

Recent scholarly attention has increasingly gravitated toward Habian and *Myōtei Mondō*.[12] There are several reasons for this. While Habian's relevance to the study of the Japanese language and literature is well known,[13] it is only relatively recently that the importance of his role in the history of Japanese thought and religious discourse has come to be emphasized. For a long period, Habian was a peripheral figure, viewed in an overwhelmingly negative light—he appeared in the 1637 chapbook *Kirishitan monogatari* (Tales of Christians) as an evil magician, and in the work *Rushiheru* (Lucifer, 1917) by the great Taishō period writer, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927), he is portrayed as meeting the devil with whom he ultimately identifies and commiserates. One of the reasons for his resurgence is due to the recognition of his significance as the first and only Japanese to write an informed critique of all the major thought/spiritual systems in contemporaneous Japan, and furthermore, from the perspective of a Japanese Christian. The great Japanese scholar of Christianity, Ebisawa Arimichi goes as far as to assert that *Myōtei Mondō* represents the precursor to the rational spirit that came to characterize early modern Japan and, furthermore, that it is the finest example of critical writing of its time (Ebisawa 1964, pp. 117–118).[14] The Japanese political theorist Maruyama Masao went so far as to call the work 'the greatest masterpiece' in part owing to its head-on criticism of native systems (Maruyama 1992, p. 245). More recent commentators also point to it as the best example of indigenous Japanese Christian thought of the period (Paramore 2008, p. 236). The text itself is composed of three fascicles: the first is a refutation of the various schools of Japanese Buddhism; the second fascicle debunks Confucianism and Shinto, the 'indigenous' religion of Japan; and the third fascicle asserts the truth of Christianity's creation theory, its views on the nature of the human soul, and why it represents the only valid path to salvation in the afterlife. As we will see in more detail below, Habian's wholesale refutation of Buddhism is based on his contention that Buddhism in general, and Zen in particular, is based on emptiness, nothingness, and void (Baskind 2012). This same discourse later found its way through missionary writings into European discourses on Buddhism, which morphed into an overarching 'Oriental philosophy', atheist in nature and based on nothingness and emptiness (App 2012).

Open dissemination of Christian texts became nearly impossible after the Tokugawa proscription on Christianity in 1612. Those in circulation were destroyed, and a strict system of monitoring imported documents ensured no further ones would enter Japan. *Myōtei Mondō* lay hidden away for over 300 years until the discovery of an incomplete manuscript

in the library of the Ise Shrine in 1917 (Shinmura 1973, Shaku 2009). This find, while momentous, completely lacked the first fascicle that treats Buddhism. What comprised the rough lineaments of the first fascicle was discovered by Anesaki Masaharu (1873–1949), known as the 'father of Japanese religious studies', in a bare set of notes that he came across in a copy of *Yaso kyō sōsho* (Library of Christian Writings) in the University of Tokyo library (Ide 1995).[15] Sueki Fumihiko argues that while this text is a greatly truncated version of the lost first fascicle, it nonetheless provides important insights into Habian's understanding of, and approach to, Buddhism (Sueki 2014). The discovery of the first fascicle in its entirety would have to wait until 1973 when Nishida Nagao found the text in the library of Tenri University (Nishida 1974). The discovery of the first fascicle on Buddhism has provided an enormous boon for insights into early modern Japanese Buddhism and how the various schools were understood. In it, Habian makes an informed and thorough critique of each school of Japanese Buddhism, which he refutes on Christian terms. Since the find of the first fascicle, research in Japanese has continued unabated, with Ide Katsumi (1978, 1995) Kobayashi Chigusa (1978, 1979), and Sueki Fumihiko (2011) focusing on the Buddhist studies–related aspects of *Myōtei Mondō*. Sueki and members of his research team at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies are currently in the final stages of preparing a monograph, *Myōtei Mondō no kenkyū* (Research on *Myōtei Mondō*) that includes the first complete modern Japanese annotated translation of the first fascicle as well as a series of cutting-edge essays that discuss *Myōtei Mondō* from linguistic, literary, religious, and philosophical perspectives (Sueki 2014).

Representative Western-language scholarship on Habian and *Myōtei Mondō* can be seen in the work of Pierre Humbertclaude (1938,1939),[16] the German Jesuit scholar, Hubert Cieslik (1972), and also George Elison with his groundbreaking book, *Deus Destroyed* (Elison 1973). Elison's work makes a close study of the political factors and historical background of the Jesuit mission during the period around Habian's lifetime, as well as the details of Christianity's fortunes after the Tokugawa proscription. It also presents a complete English translation of Habain's post apostate work, *Hadaiusu*, in which he refutes Christianity from a predominantly Buddhist perspective.[17] Paramore's *Ideology and Christianity in Japan* (2009) is the most important work in recent decades as it examines *Myōtei Mondō* in its political and historiographical contexts, from which it challenges received notions about the text and its agenda. Paramore traces how Habian and *Myōtei Mondō* were presented through the prism of Tokugawa anti-Christian discourse that projected him as an example of the clash between Japan and the West. Paramore comments that Habian's pre and post apostate ideas and actions 'came to be understood in terms of an imagined, constructed conflict between images of "Japaneseness" and "non-Japaneseness"' (Paramore 2009, p. 11). This research dispels the traditional historiography of mutually exclusive categories of 'Eastern thought' versus 'Western thought' pervasively seen in scholarship on Habian and his (and other) Japanese Christian writings (Paramore 2009). In addition to the modern Japanese translation of the first fascicle that is forthcoming, a complete English translation of *Myōtei Mondō* along with research articles is currently underway. This will be the first complete translation of the text in a single volume in any language and looks to stimulate further investigation into this fascinating and important work.

Myōtei Mondō's Anti-Buddhist Polemics—Emptiness, Nothingness, and Void

As soon as the missionaries' understanding was adequate enough to discern the three main native Japanese traditions—Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism—it was not long before it became apparent that Buddhism represented their most formidable opponent. At this time

in Japanese history, the demarcation between 'Buddhism' and 'Shinto' was still amorphous and on the level of popular religiosity was all but non-existent. Nevertheless, Western Christianity with its clear definition of what constitutes religion and a strict insistence on an exclusive religious identity (something conspicuously absent in contemporaneous, or modern, for that matter, Japan), it was crucial to their missionary efforts to first isolate each tradition to which they could then apply their informed refutation. By the late 16th century, among the three traditions, it was Buddhism that was by far the most organized, had the clearest and most elaborate doctrinal basis, and had captured the imagination and post-mortem hopes of a populace inured to the vagaries and volatility of a country perpetually at war. Even well before Habian had written his *Myōtei Mondō*, Xavier and Valignano had already recognized Buddhism as the biggest challenge to successfully converting the Japanese.[18]

Concomitant with the introduction of new teachings, it is always incumbent upon the missionary to refute the old ones lest the conflict between the two systems of thought prevents the new discourse from taking root. The missionaries wasted no time in finding a basis for their refutation of Buddhism. One of the earliest debates between the missionaries and Japanese Buddhist monks took place in Yamaguchi with Cosme de Torres (1510–1570) and his translator Juan Fernandez (1526–1567) presenting the case of Catholic Christianity. This debate took place directly after Xavier had left Yamaguchi for Bungo, and his replacement de Torres took up the mantle. Issues discussed included Deus/God, the nature of humanity, reason, the soul, the creator, salvation, the afterlife, and nothingness. Within the debate, in answer to Torres' question 'How does one become a saint [in Buddhism]?', one of the monks responded 'There are no saints. There is absolutely no need to try to become one. That is to say, all existence comes from nothingness (*mu*) and returns to nothingness' (Schurhammer 1964, Kamio trans, p. 129; Maekawa 2014, p. 4). According to Hisashi Kishino, this is the first instance that appears in the missionary writings in Japan that applies the concept of 'nothingness' to Buddhist religious goals (Kishino 1998, p. 225).[19] From this point on 'emptiness', 'nothingness', and 'void' became the rallying cry of the missionaries as they set about their wholesale refutation of Buddhism (Kishino 1998; Maekawa 2014). It is from this basis that Habian took his cue.

Habian's insider perspective allowed him to extend this discourse on nothingness and emptiness to a whole new level. The first fascicle of *Myōtei Mondō* is comprised of 11 subsections, within which the ten schools of contemporaneous Japanese Buddhism are individually taken up, explained, and refuted on the common basis that they are all based on and have their ultimate goal in 'nothingness' and 'emptiness' (Baskind 2012). While in a Buddhist context, 'nothingness' and 'emptiness' are value-neutral terms that are accompanied by an elaborate doctrinal basis, for the most part, Habian passes over the doctrinal subtleties and presents them as simple nihilism. The reason is that this Buddhist nihilism must be negatively contrasted with the nature of the absolute God and human soul that are based on an eternal substance/existence, which serves as the basis for Christian eschatological discourse (Baskind 2012, p. 318). In no other contemporaneous text does one find such a sustained, critical treatment of Buddhism from the Christian perspective. It has been pointed out by Sueki and Maekawa that although Habian's Buddhist learning is substantial and on the whole he thoroughly critiques the tradition, his criticism of the various schools is not uniform in scope or treatment and is described as 'patchwork' in parts (Sueki 2014; Maekawa 2014).

Enlightenment Is Empty and the Pure Land Is Void: Salvation and the Afterlife in Myōtei Mondō

Myōtei Mondō takes the form of a dialogue between the two fictional ladies of Myōshū, a nun of the Pure Land school of Japanese Buddhism, and Yūtei, a Catholic nun. It is thought that these two characters are not completely fictional, but rather are based on figures that Habian

met during his missionary activities (Ide 1978, p. 56). Didactic literature in this sort of dialogic format has a long history in Japan, and in its polemical tone, *Myōtei Mondō* can also said to belong to the genre of religious debates (*shūron*) that were prevalent in Japan since at least the Heian period (794–1185). In fact, one of the most well-known debates of the late medieval/early modern period, the Azuchi shūron (1579), occurred only roughly two decades prior to the production of *Myōtei Mondō*.[20]

Within the dialogic format of the text, Myōshū presents her understanding of as well as questions on Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism, which Yūtei answers from the Christian perspective, in effect refuting these native systems on Christian terms. Predictably, the text ends with Christianity prevailing as Myōshū recants her Buddhist faith and resolves to receive baptism. The central points that Yūtei posits in her refutation of Buddhism are its lack of a creator deity, its inability to provide meaningful salvation, and most prominently (which is also the basis of the two aforementioned points) its foundation in emptiness and nothingness. In the context of *Myōtei Mondō*, 'salvation' is synonymous with the 'afterlife' as the normative religious discourse of the missionaries presented the ultimate goal of human life to be the attainment an eternal life of the spirit in heaven. Buddhist religious aspirations such as enlightenment—achieving a psychological transcendence—and rebirth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha—the primary goal of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism—were perceived as ineffectual and immaterial to the real and only aim of uniting with God in heaven. In fact, for Habian, both of these Buddhist eschatological discourses were two ways of expressing the same things: namely, emptiness, nothingness, and void (Baskind 2012, p. 317).

In *Myōtei Mondō*, enlightenment in the Zen context is said to be nothing more than understanding that the mind is empty, and the Pure Land—that abode where the faithful are said to be reborn after death—is nothing more than a return to the void, or, in other words, ceasing to exist (Ebisawa 1993, p. 353). In fact, through the vehicle of Yūtei, Habian asserts that of all the schools of Japanese Buddhism, it is the Pure Land school that surpasses all the others in its negation of the afterlife. This reasonably sounds counterintuitive as the eponymous name of the school—the Pure Land school—denotes the very post-mortem locale of its theology. He arrives at this conclusion by claiming that the hyperbolic descriptions of Amida Buddha—the host of the Western Pure Land—and the Pure Land itself are ways of expressing the void (Ebisawa 1993, p. 353–354).

It is interesting to compare Habian's refutation of the Pure Land with that of Alessandro Valignano as it appears in *Nihon no katekizumo*. Valignano, rather than attacking Pure Land doctrine for its basis in emptiness and nothingness, argues that its existence is a logical impossibility based on its sensuous nature. He cites scriptural passages on the Pure Land that talk of pleasant sounds and scents to buttress his argument (Valignano, Ieiri trans, 1969, p. 40). For Valignano and other Christian missionaries, a fundamental aspect of post-mortem existence was its purely spiritual nature. An emphasis on corporeality and physicality is a marked characteristic of the Pure Land as it appears in scripture, and indeed, Mahayana Buddhism as a whole is 'full of bodies' (Bowring 1998, p. 245). This represents an interesting point of departure between Habian and the European missionaries.

It is probably fair to say that the issue of the afterlife and the assertion of sole access for its attainment was the missionaries' most persuasive tool. The afterlife has been and continues to be a central theme of normative religious discourse across cultures. In Christianity, either directly or indirectly, the afterlife is the connecting tissue of the tradition as an organic whole and thus serves as the nexus for all other aspects of religiosity. Ethics is one such aspect.

Ethics and Creation in Myōtei Mondō

As has been demonstrated in recent research, it is not only on the grounds of the afterlife that Habian refutes Buddhism and the other Japanese systems of thought/spirituality, but on ethical ones as well (Paramore 2009). One tack of Habian's argument is to assert that the moral order, in effect human ethics, absolutely requires the need for an omnipotent and omniscient God who can apportion out rewards in heaven or punishments in hell as incentives toward good behavior. This, of course, is the age-old argument that has been used by missionaries throughout the world to help assuage the ravages wrought by the problem of evil, and to guarantee restitution in the next life. The Buddhist teaching of karma and cause and effect are too impersonal from the Christian perspective, and for orthodox Christianity, which does not recognize the doctrine of reincarnation, the idea of having to wait until the next life in order to set things straight is a non-starter. In the section on the Zen school within the first fascicle, Habian clearly asks that if the Buddhists do not believe in an afterlife or have the fear of God, what is it that they can possibly value? He also clearly states that if there is no God or afterlife, good and bad go unrewarded and unpunished, and all that is left is 'emptiness' (Ebisawa 1993, pp. 342–343).

In the third fascicle, the one that details Christian doctrine and why it is the only valid path to salvation, Habian lays out creation theory and his understanding of the ethical system of Christianity. The three Japanese systems of thought are also criticized based on their inability to adequately explain creation: Buddhism because it is based on emptiness and Confucianism and Shinto because they posit the primal substance of Yin and Yang (*inyō*) as the basis of the creation of the universe. According to Habian, since this primal Yin/Yang substance lacks sentience, will, and knowledge, it is incapable of being the source of creation. He asserted that these two forces could not function without a creator. In effect, Habian is employing the teleological watchmaker argument that simply asserts that a design implies a designer and a creation implies (necessitates) a creator. As Yin and Yang is not the original cause, but clearly a creation, it cannot exist without its own creator. Some commentators have concluded that the differing approaches regarding the nature of creation highlights the fundamental difference between Western thinking, based on contrivance (Jp. *sakui*) and Eastern thought based on spontaneity (Jp. *jinen*) (Tomoeda 1976, p. 736).[21] This is a simplistic approach, however, that attempts to paint the picture in overly broad strokes.

Habian's understanding of human nature and what allowed it to attain the afterlife as a 'soul' was based on a system of scholastic metaphysics predicated on the Aristotelian *anima* categories. It was only human beings who possessed *anima rationalis*, by which they are able to discern right from wrong and to possess knowledge, and it was this essence that lived on in the afterlife (Paramore 2009, p. 16). In *Nihon no katekizumo*, Valignano writes that although there is no sense perception in heaven or the afterlife, memory, intelligence, and will survive along with the soul to eternity (Valigano, Kamio trans, 1969, pp. 67–68). Although Habian develops these points in the third fascicle that treats Christianity, they clearly refer back to the Buddhist position that he paints as advancing a return to nothingness after death that precludes the survival of a discernible soul that could be possessed of memory, intelligence, and will. What Habian paints as Buddhism's basis and ultimate ontological goals in emptiness and nothingness (without alluding to the profound doctrinal chasm that separates these two terms/concepts) serves as the nexus of his argument against all Buddhist schools. It is also the means by which he negates the existence of a 'soul' in the Buddhist worldview, as well as the afterlife, thereby precluding any question of post-mortem salvation. Finally, it is the same common thread by which he refutes any Buddhist claims to ethical standards as he posits an omniscient God as a prerequisite for claim to any ethical discourse.

This former Zen monk turned Christian apologist paints a very grim picture of Buddhism, especially Zen, his former affiliation. It may be appropriate to ask here how the Buddhists responded to this.

The Buddhist Response: Zen Monks at the Vanguard

The Tokugawa bakufu embarked upon its suppression of Christianity less than a decade after the production of *Myōtei Mondō*, thereby preventing contemporaneous commentators from directly addressing Habian's text head on. So thorough and complete was the Tokugawa proscription that even anti-Christian texts such as the *Kengiroku* by the Jesuit apostate Christovão Ferreira (1580–1650) were prevented from circulating due to its discussion of Christian doctrine.[22] Even though by 1630 Christianity was effectively wiped out, it was only several decades after this that anti-Christian texts started appearing in force. In the second half of the 17th century, Zen monks such as Suzuki Shōsan (1579–1655) and Sessō Sōsai (1589–1649) wrote works attacking Christianity, but by and large, they were more focused on the religion's political threat, rather than on doctrinal ones (Aomori 1976, p. 13, Ōkuwa 1984, Paramore, 2009, p. 64). Hayashi Razan (1583–1657), the doyen of early Neo-Confucianism during the Tokugawa period, wrote a work entitled *Haiyaso* (Attacking the Christians) that alleges that he debated Habian the year after the production of *Myōtei Mondō*, although doctrinal issues are hardly touched upon, and some scholars doubt the veracity of this meeting.[23] Ironically enough, the most informed and sustained response to Habian's arguments in *Myōtei Mondō* is that found in his anti-Christian tract, *Hadaiusu*, written after his apostasy and a year before his death. While the work does not make a point-by-point refutation of *Myōtei Mondō*, it does directly attack fundamental tenets of Christian doctrine such as the idea of original sin, Deus as an omnipotent and merciful Supreme Being, the nature of the soul, and much more (Elison 1973). A particular point of interest of Habian's refutation of Christianity in *Hadaiusu* is that the crux of his former anti-Buddhist argument—emptiness and nothingness—becomes the 'absolute truth' that 'the likes of the adherents of Deus can never understand' (Elison 1973, p. 265; Baskind 2012, p. 326). This about-face on Habian's doctrinal position faithfully reflects not only the change in his religious orientation but also the complex religious, political, and historical factors that were played out on his person during the tumult of the late medieval/early modern period.

Conclusion

In broad terms, the topic of Buddhist-Christian polemical interaction in Japan encompasses a large number of personalities and texts, but perhaps none so cross-culturally articulate and contradictory as Fukansai Habian and his catechistic work, *Myōtei Mondō*. To be sure, Habian was not the only Buddhist, or monk for that matter, that converted to Christianity, but the alacrity—one could say vehemence—with which he took to his adopted faith and later turned against it makes him unique not only in the history of Christianity in Japan, but in its literary and intellectual history as well. With the text only rediscovered in the 20th century and the first fascicle on Buddhism only coming to light in the last 40 years, the importance of this text as a monument of critical analysis, interreligious polemics, and as a Japanese understanding/interpretation of Christianity not long after its arrival will continue to generate debate and stimulate further research. Already, this is evident in recent publications and the numerous projects underway. Today, Buddhist-Christian dialogue is a prominent issue in interreligious discourse, and even if polemics have given way to an emphasis on common dialogue, the lessons of Habian and his text are still relevant.[24] Having served as a spokesman

for both traditions, modern scholars and students can still glean insights from Habian's example on how religious traditions are transmitted among cultures, and doctrines processed by individuals and then disseminated according to the political winds.

Acknowledgment

Short Biography

James Baskind is an associate professor in the Department of Human Science, at the Kyushu Institute of Technology. His current research topics include the following: *Myōtei Mondō* and the history of ideas in Buddhist–Christian interaction in the early-to-mid Edo period, the Ōbaku school of Zen and the history of Sino-Japanese intellectual exchange during the 17th and 18th centuries, and the fusion of Zen and Pure Land Buddhism in China and Japan. He is currently co-editing a volume that includes the first single-volume translation of *Myōtei Mondō* in any language. His recent publications include the following: 'The Matter of the Zen School: Fukansai Habian's *Myōtei Mondō* and His Christian Polemic on Buddhism' (*Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 2012), 'A Daoist Immortal among Zen Monks: Chen Tuan, Yinyuan Longqi, Emperor Reigen and the Obaku Text, *Tōzuihen*' (*The Eastern Buddhist* 2011), and 'The Nenbutsu in Obaku Zen' (*Japanese Religions* 2008). He holds a BA from the University of Iowa, MA degrees from the University of Hawai'i and Yale University, and a PhD degree from Yale University.

Notes

[1] The intricate details of the early Tokugawa proscription on Christianity are presented by Gonoi (1983, pp. 119–154).
[2] In discussing this 'invasion theory', Paramore notes that the theory has its roots in anti-Christian texts and documents such as the *Bateren tsuihō no fumi* (Expulsion of the Padres Edict), *Kirishitan Monogatari* (Tales of the Christians), and *Hakirishitan* (Smashing the Christians). The invasion was not perceived necessarily as a military takeover, but rather the effect that Christianity would have on the Japanese people. See Paramore (2009, p. 65). It should be noted, however, that the military invasion theory was not completely without precedent. In the *San Felipe Incident* (1596), a Spanish galleon loaded with rich cargo ran aground off the coast of Tosa (modern-day Kōchi prefecture). The pilot of the ship is held to have told the local authorities that Spain's common strategy was to send the missionaries first to soften up the populace after which conquering soldiers would arrive. The Franciscan side asserted that this story was concocted by the Jesuits in order to malign the Spanish Franciscans, although the truth of the matter is unclear. See Boxer (1967, pp. 163–167), Elison (pp. 136–141), and Üçerler (2008, p. 161).
[3] While the translation of *danka seido* as 'temple parish system' is commonly used in the field, it is not wholly precise as Nam-lin Hur points out. He writes '…the *danka* system has little to do with the idea of "parish," which connotes a clear geographical setting for the affiliations between patron families and funerary temples. On the contrary, the *danka* system simply indicates the affiliation between patron households (or individuals) and funerary Buddhist temples—an affiliation that is formed when the former, with free will and no restrictions on location, choose the latter' (Hur 2007, p. 9).
[4] See in particular chapter 2 'Registering the Family, Memorializing the Ancestors: The Zen Temple and the Parishioner Household' in Williams, and chapters 1–4 (pp. 37–140) in Hur.
[5] The 'Kamakura New Buddhism' discourse belongs to the 'reformation model' of interpretive methodologies that are applied to medieval Japan. This model was rejected by Japanese social historian Kuroda Toshio, whose own 'Exoteric-Esoteric Establishment' theory largely replaced it. Kuroda's own model has since been questioned, although its influence remains strong still today. See Kuroda (1975). For an informative summary of all three interpretive models, see Bodiford (2006, pp. 173–178).

[6] Kinryū and Takeda both present interesting studies of missionary perceptions of Pure Land teachings, in particular those of the True Pure Land school. Kinryū's article appears in English in Blum and Yasutomi (2006, pp. 72–82).

[7] Anjirō, also known as Yajirō (nd) first met Xavier in Malacca in 1547. He cannot be faulted for his mistranslations, as he was not an educated man and his Portuguese was very limited, but his efforts were the cause of more trouble than help. By force of circumstances, he had no choice but to use Buddhist terminology for central Christian concepts such as 'the Pure Land' (a Buddhist vision of the afterlife) for *Paraiso* (paradise or heaven), and 'Dainichi' the cosmic Buddha of the Shingon school of Buddhism, for Deus. Translation of Christian terminology into Japanese is an interesting and involved discussion that cannot be pursued here. For particularly fertile treatments, see Kaiser (1996) and App (2012). For a direct account of Xavier's impressions regarding Japan and Buddhism as seen in his letters, see Costelloe (trans 1992, pp. 293–343).

[8] It is extremely difficult to qualify these statistics. The common practice was that if a feudal lord converted, by fiat all of his subjects also converted. Obviously, this makes for a very low quality of convert—if one may call them a convert at all—so much so that Alessandro Valignano said that they should not even receive baptism. See Higashibaba (2001, p. 20). Although it was directly before the start of the harsh persecution, Christians in Japan reached their numerical apogee in the first decade of the Tokugawa period. See Boxer (1967, pp. 186–187).

[9] Teeuwen and Rambelli provide an extensive introduction that details combinatory religion and the *honji suijaku* (translated as 'original forms of deities and their local traces') paradigm in pre-modern Japan. Syncretism has been a conspicuous characteristic of Japanese religion since the earliest times, and *honji suijaku* is one manifestation of this phenomenon that achieved a high level of codification. For interesting perspectives on the development of *honji suijaku*, see Iyanaga (2003), Scheid (2003), and Rambelli (2003). It should be noted that Teeuwen and Rambelli, following the lead of Alan Grapard, do not accept the label 'syncretism' as it tends to imply separate, discrete traditions. This was clearly not the case in pre-modern Japan as regards Shinto and Buddhism. For a representative work that details this phenomenon and provides a case study, see Grapard (1992).

[10] Higashibaba refers to Japanese Christians by their Japanese appellation, 'Kirishitan' in order to distinguish between the 'orthodox' Christianity of the missionaries and the unique expression of the Japanese converts.

[11] It should be mentioned here that this 'exclusivist nature' should not be applied to Christianity *per se*, but to the form under consideration in this essay, namely, pre-20th century European Christianity. There are many forms and strands of Christianity where this is not the case, a conspicuous example being Indian Christianity.

[12] For a good summary in Japanese of the pre-modern and modern history of *Myōtei Mondō*, see Nishimura (2014).

[13] Japanese linguists' interest in Habian is largely based on his work *Amakusa-bon Heike Monogatari* (The Amakusa Edition of the Tale of the Heike), produced in 1592. The *Heike Monogatari* is the famous Japanese epic that chronicles the 12th century conflict between the two warrior clans of the Taira and the Minamoto. Habian's text, transcribed from the original Japanese into Portuguese Romanization, was intended to serve as a primer on Japanese history for the missionaries. It remains a treasure trove for scholars of medieval Japanese. The great Japanese linguist Shinmura Izuru (1876–1967) was the first to write extensively on the work as well as *Myōtei Mondō*. See Shinmura (1971).

[14] Ebisawa admits that the late medieval period (especially the last decades of the 16th century) is rather poor in philosophical/religious texts, but he rates *Myōtei Mondō* the most interesting of the era, and far superior to those that came after by such figures as the great Confucian scholar Hayashi Razan (1583–1657) and the Zen monk and Christian critic Suzuki Shōsan (1579–1655) (Ebisawa 1964).

[15] This bare set of notes was published under the title *Buppō no shidai ryaku nukigaki* (An Account of Buddhism: Abbreviated Extract), Ide (1995, p. 228).

[16] Humbertclaude published an incomplete translation of *Myōtei Mondō* in Tokyo during 1938–1939 in two issues of *Monumenta Nipponica* (vol. 1–2). His translation completely omits the section on Shinto, which was most likely a deliberate oversight considering the highly nationalistic period in which he published the work. See Elison (1973, p. 180).

[17] Elison's book also includes the English translation of other important anti-Christian documents such as *Kengiroku* (Deceit Disclosed) by Cristóvão Ferreira, *Kirishitan Monogatari* (Tale of the Christians), an anonymous chapbook, and *Hakirishitan* (Christians Countered/Smash the Christians) by the Zen monk Suzuki Shōsan (Elison 1973).

[18] For a treatment of Xavier's original impressions and plans for evangelization in Japan, see Kishino (1996, pp. 9–26).

[19] For an in-depth look at the Yamaguchi debate as well as Xavier's use of 'Dainichi' for 'Deus', see Kishino (1998, pp. 211–236). For a study specifically on the Yamaguchi debate, see Toyosawa (1999) and Toyosawa (2002).

[20] Well-known early examples of didactic works in the dialogic format include the *Ketsugonjitsuron* (818–821?) by Saichō (767–822) and *Sangōshiki* (797) by Kūkai (774–835). The *Azuchi shūron* was held in Oda Nobunaga's castle in 1579. The debate pitted the Pure Land school (Jōdo shū) and the Nichiren (Lotus) school against each other. The Pure Land school emerged the victor, but the reasons for awarding the victory were more politically driven than doctrinally. See Ooms (1985, pp. 36–37).

[21] While Tomoeda treats Habian in terms of a man in conflict and trying to reconcile Eastern and Western thought, Paramore has persuasively shown the historical fallacy of treating Habian and his work within the two mutually exclusive categories of 'Eastern thought' and 'Western thought' (Paramore 2008, pp. 232–34, 2009).

[22] Christovão Ferreira recanted his Christian faith under torture and became a monk of the Zen school, taking the Japanese name Sawano Chūan. For an in-depth study of Ferreira, see Cieslik (1974).

[23] There are numerous textual and contextual inconsistencies that suggest this debate never took place. See Paramore (2009, p. 68).

[24] For a treatment of Christian–Buddhist interaction in the early modern and modern period, see Thelle (1996).

Works Cited

Aomori, T. 青木透 (1976). 'Suzuki shōsan ni okeru kinsei bukkyō shisō no keisei' 鈴木正三における 近世仏教思想の形成, *Bukkyōshigaku kenkyū* 仏教史学研究, vol. 18, no. 1, Bukkyōshigaku kenkyūkai, Tokyo, Japan.

App, U. (2012). *The Cult of Emptiness: The Western Discovery of Buddhist Thought and the Invention of Oriental Philosophy*. Rorschach/Kyoto: University Media.

Baskind, J. (2012). The matter of the Zen school: Fukansai Habian's *Myōtei Mondō* and his Christian polemic on Buddhism, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 39(2), pp. 307–31.

Blum, M. L. & Yasutomi, S. eds. (2006). *Rennyo and the Roots of Modern Japanese Buddhism*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bodiford, W. M. (2006). The medieval period: eleventh to sixteenth centuries. In: PL Swanson and C Chilson (eds.), *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Boxer, C. R. (1967). *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bowring, R. (1998). Preparing for the Pure Land in late tenth-century Japan. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 25(3–4), pp. 221–257.

Cieslik, H., フーベルト・チースリク (1972). 'Fabian Fukanden nōto' ファビアン不干伝ノート, *Kirishitan bunka kenkyū kaihō*, 15, pp. 244–250.

Cieslik, H. (1974). 'The Case of Cristóvão Ferreira,' *Monumenta Nipponica*, 29(1), pp. 1–54.

Costelloe, M. J., trans. (1992). *The Letters and Instructions of Francis Xavier*, St Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources.

Ebisawa, A. 海老沢有道 (1964), Nanbanjikōhaiki, Jakyō taii, Myōtei Mondō, Hadaiusu 南蛮寺興廃記・邪教大意・妙貞問答・破提宇子, Heibonsha, Tokyo, Japan.

Ebisawa, A., ed. (1993). *Kirishitan kyōrisho* キリシタン教理書, Tokyo, Japan: Kyōbunkan.

Elison, G. (1973). *Deus Destroyed*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.

Gonoi, T. 五野井隆史 (1983). *Tokugawa shoki kirishitanshi kenkyū* 徳川初期キリシタン史研究. Tokyo, Japan: Yoshikawa kōbunkan.

Grapard, A. (1992). *The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Higashibaba, I. (2001). *Christianity in Early Modern Japan: Kirishitan Belief and Practice*, Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Humbertclaude, P. (1938). Un apologetique chretienne japonaise de 1605, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 1(2), pp. 515–548.

Humbertclaude, P. (1939). Un apologetique chretienne japonaise de 1605, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 2(1), pp. 237–267.

Hur, N.-L. (2007). *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

Ide, K. 井手勝美 (1978). Habian to *Myōtei Mondō* ハビアンと妙貞問答, *Kikan shisōshi* 季刊思 想史, 6, pp. 51–74.

Ide, K. (1995). Kirishitan shisōshi kenkyū josetsu キリシタン思想史研究序説, Perikansha, Tokyo, Japan.

Iyanaga, N. (2003). *Honji suijaku* and the logic of combinatory deities: two case studies. In: M Teeuwen and F Rambelli (eds.), *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, London: Routledge Curzon, UK.

Kaiser, S. (1996). Translations of Christian terminology into Japanese, 16–19th centuries: problems and solutions. In: J Breen and M Williams (eds.), *Japan and Christianity: Impacts and Responses*, London, UK: Macmillan Press LTD.

Kinryū, S. 金龍静 (1998). Iezusukai shiryō no ikkō shū イエズス会史料の一向宗, in *Rennyo no sekai* 蓮如の世界 Rennyo Shōnin gohyakkaiki kinen ronshū/Ōtani Daigaku Shinshū Sōgō Kenkyūjo hen. 蓮如上人五百回忌記念論集 / 大谷大学真宗総合研究所編 ,Buneidō, Kyoto, Japan.

Kishino, H. 岸野久 (1998). *Zabieru to nihon* ザビエルと日本. Yoshikawa kōbunkan: Tokyo, Japan.

Kishino, H. (1996). Furanshisuko Zabieru no nihon fukyō kōsō: paionia to shite no ichi to yakuwari フランシスコ・ザビエルの日本布教構想—パイオニアとしての位置と役割, in *Kirishitan shi no shin hakken* キリシタン史の新発見, Yūsankaku, Tokyo, Japan.

Kobayashi, C. 小林千草 (1978). 'Habiancho "Myōtei Mondō" ni kansuru nichikōsatsu: ikyo/kanren shiryō wo meguru' ハビアン著「妙貞問答」に関する一考察—依拠・関連資料をめぐって, *Kokugo kokubun* 国語国文, 47: p. 5.

Kobayashi, C. (1979). Habiancho 'Myōtei Mondō' Hossōshū no koto to 'Hossō nikanshō' ハビアン著「妙貞問答」法相宗之事と「法相二巻抄」, *Gengo to bungei* 言語と文芸, no. 87.

Krämer, H. M. (2010). This Deus is a fool's cap Buddha: "The Christian Sect" as seen by early modern Japanese Buddhists, *Zeischrift fur Globalgeschichte, und Vergleichende Gesellschafts forschung* 20, Heft 4, S. pp. 75–97.

Kuroda, T. 黒田俊雄 (1975). *Nihon chūsei no kokka to shūkyō* 日本中世の国家と宗教. Tokyo, Japan: Iwanami shoten.

Maekawa, K. 前川健一 (2014). Bukkyōshi kara mita Myōtei Mondō 仏教史から見た『妙 貞問答』in *Myōtei Mondō o yomu: Habian no bukkyō hihan* 『妙貞問答』を読む──ハビアンの仏教批判, Hōzōkan, Kyoto, Japan.

Maruyama, M. 丸山真男 (1992). *Chūsei to hangyaku: tenkeiki nihon no seishinshi teki isō* 忠誠と反逆──転形期日本の精神史的位相. Chikuma shobō Tokyo: Japan.

McMullin, N. (1984). *Buddhism and the State in Sixteenth-century Japan*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ.

Miyazaki, K. (2003). Roman Catholic mission in pre-modern Japan. In: MR Mullins (ed.), *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*. Brill: Leiden, Netherlands.

Nishida, N. 西田長男 (1974). *Tenri toshokan shozō yoshida bunko bon* 天理図書館所蔵吉田文庫本, *Biburia, Tenri toshokanpō, tenseki gakkai*, pp. 13–84, Nara, Japan: Tenri daigaku.

Nishimura, R. 西村玲 (2014). 'Kinsei shisōshijō no Myōtei Mondō' 近世思想上の妙貞問答 in *Myōtei Mondō o yomu: Habian no bukkyō hihan* 『妙貞問答』を読む──ハビアンの仏教批判, Hōzōkan, Kyoto, Japan.

Ōkuwa, H. 大桑斉 (1984). Sessō Sōsai: Zen to kokka to kirishitan 雪窓宗崔──禅と国家とキリシタン, Dōhōsha shuppan, Kyoto, Japan.

Paramore, K. (2008). Early Japanese Christian thought reexamined; Confucian ethics, Catholic authority, and the issue of faith in the scholastic theories of Habian, Gomez, and Ricci, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 35, pp. 231–62.

Paramore, K. (2009). *Ideology and Christianity in Japan*, New York, NY: Routledge Curzon.

Rambelli, F. (2003). *Honji suijaku* at work: religion, economics, and ideology in pre-modern Japan. In: M Teeuwen and F Rambelli (eds.), *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, London: Routledge Curzon, UK.

Scheid, B. (2003). "Both parts" or "only one"? Challenges to the *honji suijaku* paradigm in the Edo period. In: M Teeuwen and F Rambelli (eds.), *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, London: Routledge Curzon, UK.

Schurhammer, G. & Shōji, K. 神尾庄治 trans. (1964). *Yamaguchi no tōron* 山口の討論, Tokyo, Japan: Shinseisha.

Shaku, T. 釈徹宗 (2009). *Fukansai Habian: kami mo hotoke mo suteta shūkyōsha* 不干斉ハビアン 一神も仏も棄てた宗教者. Tokyo, Japan: Shinchō sensho.

Shinmura, I. 新村出 (1971-1973). *Shinmura Izuru zenshū* 新村出全集16 vols, Chikuma shobō, Tokyo, Japan.

Sueki, F. 末木文美士 (2010). *Kinsei no Bukkyō: Hana hiraku shisō to bunka* 近世の仏教──華ひらく思想と文化, Tokyo, Japan: Yoshikawa kōbunkan.

Sueki, F. (2011a). Nihon no kosei, shūkyō de yomitoku Nihon no rekishi 日本の個性・宗教で読み解く日本 の歴史, *Rekishi dokuhon*, pp. 254–259.

Sueki, F. (2011b). Nihon no kosei, shūkyō de yomitoku Nihon no rekishi 日本の個性・宗教で読み解く日本 の歴史, *Rekishi dokuhon*, 7, pp. 286–294.

Sueki, F. ed. (2014). *Myōtei Mondō o yomu: Habian no bukkyō hihan* 『妙貞問答』を読む──ハビアンの仏教批判, Hōzōkan, Kyoto, Japan.

Takeda, T. 武田武麿 (1998). Kirishitan no seiki ni okeru shinshū (ikkō shū) no ichiyōsō: ibunka ni byōsha sareta minshu kyōdan キリシタンの世紀における真宗（一向宗）の一様相──異文化に 描写された民衆教団──, in *Rennyo no sekai* 蓮如の世界 Rennyo Shōnin gohyakkaiki kinen ronshū ／ Ōtani Daigaku Shinshu Sōgō Kenkyūjo hen. 蓮如上人五百回忌記念論集 ／ 大谷大学真宗総合研/ 所編, Buneidō, Kyoto, Japan.

Teeuwen, M. & Rambelli, F., eds. (2003). *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm*, London: Routledge Curzon, UK.

Thelle, N. R. (1996). Christianity encounters Buddhism in Japan: a historical perspective. In: J Breen & M Williams (eds.), *Japan and Christianity: Impacts and Responses*. London, UK: Macmillan Press LTD.

Tomoeda, R. 友枝龍太郎 (1976). Fukansai Habian to shushigaku 不干斉ハビアンと朱子学 in *Chūgoku bungaku ronshū-Obi hakase taikyū kinen* 中国文学論集──小尾博士退休記念, Daiichi gakushūsha, Tokyo, Japan.

Toyosawa, H. 豊澤一 (1999). '"Yamaguchi no tōron" ni tsuite ichi'「山口の討論」について（一）, *Yamaguchi daigaku bungaku kaishi*, 山口大学文学会誌 49, pp. 173–188.

Toyosawa, H. (2002). '"Yamaguchi no tōron" ni tsuite (ni)'「山口の討論」について（二）, *Yamaguchi daigaku tetsugaku kenkyū* 山口大学哲学研究, 11, pp. 23–36.

Üçerler, M. Antonio, J. (2008). The Jesuit enterprise in sixteenth-and seventeenth century Japan. In: T Worcester (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Valignano, A. & Toshimitsu, I. 家入敏光 trans. (1969). *Tenri toshokan sankō shiryō dai nana Nihon no katekizumo* 天理図書館参考資料第七　日本のカテキズモTenri toshokan, Nara, Japan.

Williams, D. R., 2005, *The Other Side of Zen: A Social History of Sōtō Zen Buddhism in Tokugawa Japan*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.