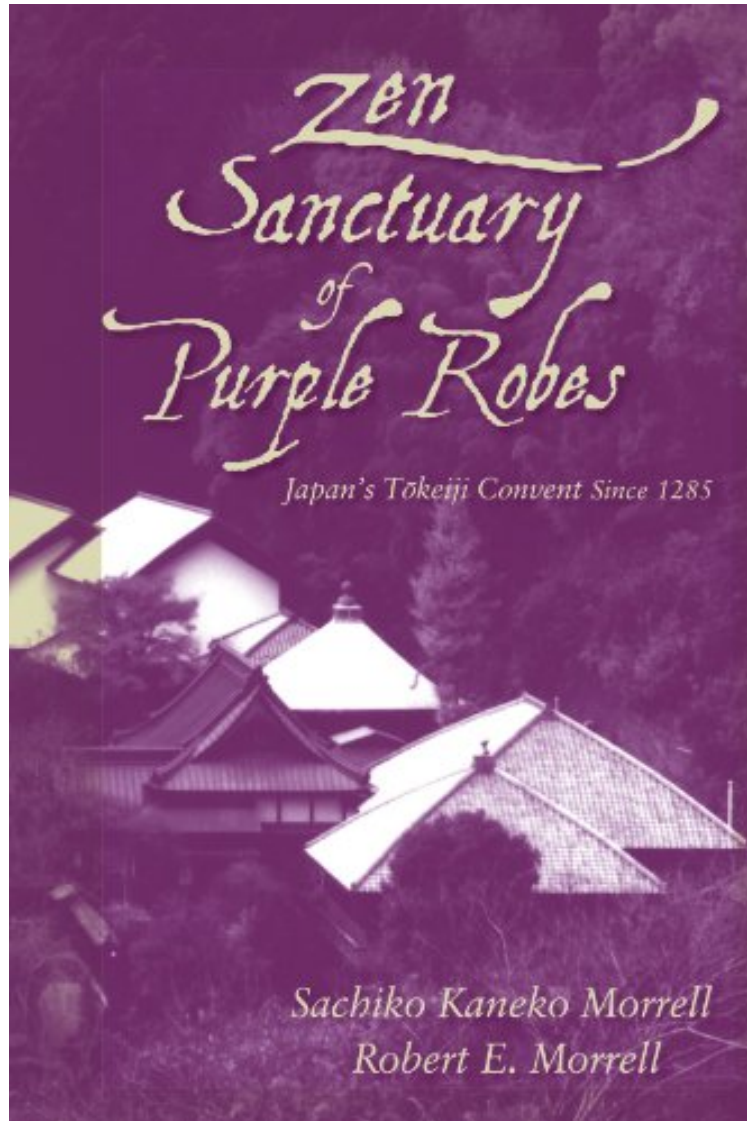


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## Zen Sanctuary of Purple Robes: Japan's Tokeiji Convent Since 1285

*Sachiko Kaneko Morrell, Robert E. Morrell*  
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**Sachiko Kaneko Morrell, Robert E. Morrell : Zen Sanctuary of Purple Robes: Japan's Tokeiji Convent Since 1285** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Zen Sanctuary of Purple Robes: Japan's Tokeiji Convent Since 1285:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. World-class ScholarshipBy Randall R. ScottI'm almost finished with Zen Sanctuary of Purple Robes and I'm quite impressed with the organization and attention to detail. The Morrells have contributed heavily here to three fields -- Japanese history, Japanese literature, and Japanese Buddhism. The new

and carefully-researched details they bring to light on the Tokeiji's history as sanctuary and, later, divorce temple for women, are both timely and historically valuable. In addition, their inclusion of much new translation also sets this book apart. Muju Ichien's (1226-1312) *Mirror for Women* (1300), for instance, provides valuable insight into not only this monk's advice for women and men both, but into the general belief system of medieval Rinzai Buddhism as well. The volume also includes translation of numerous *senryu* ("light verse," from the mid- to late Edo Period, 1603-1868), which particularly bring home the contemporary Japanese attitudes (both positive and negative) toward the Tokeiji as a unique refuge and recourse for women in domestic turmoil. The book's appendixes, endnotes, cross-referenced guide to cited texts, bibliography, and index complete this first-class effort. Well done indeed, and many thanks!

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Runaway Success By Crazy Fox I thoroughly enjoyed this excellent book. It has a lot more personality and spunk than most academic titles today, and approaches the subject of Buddhism in very interesting and important ways. Yeah, it also has some oddities and awkward moments, but these are significantly outweighed by its positive qualities. "Interdisciplinary" is such a buzzword in the ivory tower's postmodern discourse, and yet this book, so adamantly anti-postmodern and thankfully free of francophonic jargon and snide mud-slinging, is ironically one of the most truly interdisciplinary books I've seen. Social History, Buddhist Studies, and Literature are combined in a potent mix along with illuminating illustrations, and translations from a great variety of genres (vernacular sermons, satirical poems, temple records, regional guides, travel diaries, ritual invocations, and such) are used to great effect. All of this gives the reader a richly complex kaleidoscopic view of the Tokeiji Convent and its guiding principles (religious pluralism and the provision of sanctuary) through time. This focus keeps the book well-grounded in specifics even as wider implications for our understanding of Japanese Buddhism in general are addressed--in a rather refreshing unabashedly opinionated manner. I especially liked the authors' take on Mahayana Pluralism as articulated particularly in the Lotus Sutra--indeed, this was not sloppy syncretism or cowardly compromise but an informed, explicit spiritual stance with scriptural basis. Also, the translations are masterfully done and are mostly unabridged so that we can better judge the total effect and intent of the text. The book also rambles a bit and sometimes goes off on tangents, and it uses D.T. Suzuki's description of practice at Engakuji Monastery to extrapolate what religious practice was probably like at Tokeiji Convent--this seemed like a rather haphazard method to me despite the two temples' institutional ties, and this quote from another English language source seemed way too long in any case. Also I was sometimes uncomfortable with the way that certain traditions were depicted as almost purely negative; Confucianism certainly comes across as the bad guy here, for instance. To invoke another buzzword, a little "nuance" wouldn't have hurt. But don't let these almost trifling nitpicks interfere with your appreciation of this fine book. The primary appeal will of course be to those interested in Buddhism and its history in Japan, but it has much to offer in the way of Japanese literature too, especially the chapter devoted to *senryu* (haiku's witty and worldly cousin). And if by chance you are going to Kamakura to visit some temples, you'll definitely want to read this book on the way.

*Zen Sanctuary of Purple Robes* examines the affairs of Rinzai Zen's Tkeiji Convent, founded in 1285 by nun Kakusan Shid after the death of her husband, HJ Tokimune. It traces the convent's history through seven centuries, including the early nuns' Zen practice; Abbess Yd's imperial lineage with nuns in purple robes; Hideyori's seven-year-old daughter--later to become the convent's twentieth abbess, Tenshu--spared by Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Battle for Osaka Castle; Tkeiji as "divorce temple" during the mid-Edo period and a favorite topic of *senryu* satirical verse; the convent's gradual decline as a functioning nunnery but its continued survival during the early Meiji persecution of Buddhism; and its current prosperity. The work includes translations, charts, illustrations, bibliographies, and indices. Beyond such historical details, the authors emphasize the convent's "inclusivist" Rinzai Zen practice in tandem with the nearby Engakuji Temple. The rationale for this "inclusivism" is the continuing acceptance of the doctrine of "Skillful Means" (*hben*) as expressed in the Lotus Sutra--a notion repudiated or radically reinterpreted by most of the Kamakura reformers. In support of this contention, the authors include a complete translation of the *Mirror for Women* by Kakusan's contemporary, Muju Ichien.

"This long-awaited tome on Tokeiji through the ages is chock full of witty insights, poetic excerpts, irascible comments, and fascinating information. A delightful read." "This cultural history of the famous Tokeiji Convent is rich in detail and generous in providing translations of the prose and poetry speaking to both its Rinzai Zen cult and its popular reputation as a sanctuary for women escaping from abusive marriages. This is engaged scholarship." From the Back Cover

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About the Author Sachiko Kaneko Morrell is retired from her position as East Asian Librarian at Washington University in St. Louis. Robert E. Morrell is Professor Emeritus of Japanese Literature and Buddhism at Washington University in St. Louis and the author of Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishu): The Tales of Muju Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism, also published by SUNY Press, and Early Kamakura Buddhism: A Minority Report.