Faking Liberties: Religious Freedom in American-Occupied Japan. By Jolyon Baraka Thomas. Chicago University Press, 2019. 356 pages. $32.50 (paperback). ISBN 022661882X.

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Faking Liberties is divided into two main sections, each consisting of four chapters, with an introduction and conclusion outside of these sections. The sections, respectively, describe the attitudes toward religious freedom before and after the 1945 Occupation of Japan began. The chapters in the first section are (chap. 1) "The Meiji Constitutional Regime as a Secularist System," (chap. 2) "Who Needs Religious Freedom?," (chap. 3) "Domestic Problems, Diplomatic Solutions," and (chap. 4) "In the Absence of Religious Freedom." The chapters in the latter section include (chap. 5) "State Shintō as a Heretical Secularism," (chap. 6) "Who Wants Religious Freedom?," (chap. 7) "Universal Rights, Unique Circumstances," and (chap. 8) "Out of the Spiritual Vacuum." Although the chapters follow a largely chronological progression, the chapters of each section also follow a pattern of matching themes that compare the two time periods. The first and fifth chapters focus on the nature of the idea of secularism and its relation to notions of religious freedom. The second and sixth chapters describe how competing interest groups interpreted that religious freedom. The third and seventh chapters explain the "tension between universalist aspirations of religious freedom language and particularist applications thereof" (p. 9). Finally, the fourth and eight chapters explicate how religious studies scholars of each time demarcate "good" and "bad" forms of religion, while communicating such conclusions to policy makers. Because of this unique structure, Jolyon Thomas invites readers to explore the volume either chronologically or thematically (reading in order chaps. 1, 5, 2, 6, etc.).

Thomas also states the argument works the same if reading the latter four chapters prior to the earlier chapters.

Chapter 1 drives home one of the main themes of the first half of the volume, that there is a significant flaw in the frequently described portrait that Japan had no legitimate religious freedom until the US occupation helped establish it as part of the new democracy. Thomas surveys some of the Western portrayals of Japanese religious freedom; some scholars may admit that Japan included a clause on religious freedom within the Meiji Constitution, but the overwhelming view is that the Japanese failed to truly understand or apply that freedom until they were liberated by the Occupation. They also claim that Meiji rights failed to protect Christians and other marginalized groups. While Thomas admits the Meiji regime was unjust, he paints a complex picture of views and practices related to religious freedom during the timeframe he identifies as the "Meiji Constitutional Period" (1890–1945).

He argues that, due to problems with the term "secular," especially the fact that a translation of the word had not yet been established in Japanese at this point in time, the more appropriate way to define the distinction they made was between "religion" and "not-religion." Thomas is concerned throughout this chapter by the decisions of policy makers in distinguishing such categories in the name of noninterference, "but in doing so, they inevitably make doctrinal claims and adjudicate empirically unverifiable matters" (p. 26). In making such definitions and declaring who is encompassed by them, governments and state actors ultimately declare which aspects of religion they consider legitimate and which they do not.

The second part of the chapter more specifically addresses the claims regarding establishment of a state religion and the lack of religious freedom. Thomas shows that although certain ceremonies were required by law, the Japanese considered these to be cultural and national legacies rather than aspects of religion. Many scholars debated where these linguistic borders existed and informed policy makers through extensive dialog. Even outside of Japan, there were figures such as the pope, who issued a proclamation in 1936 requesting Catholic missionaries respect the Japanese devotion for their country and encouraging appreciation of their religious freedom. Shinto rites themselves were divided into civic rites and religious rites, so that each form was compartmentalized to establish its legal standing. The

debates around these issues made consistent reference back to the constitutional article on religious freedom, showing how seriously scholars and legislators took the article. Thomas stresses that Japanese decisions on religion-state relationships were different than those in the US, but those differences themselves do not delegitimize the Japanese notions of religious freedom that were being established and clarified throughout this half-century time period.

Chapter 2 begins to build on the themes introduced in the previous chapter. Thomas examines three different Buddhist responses to legal issues that arose at the end of the nineteenth century. Each of them shows how aware Japanese Buddhists were of the nuances of various legal precedents for religious freedom. These records show that their responses were far from uniform. They also show how Shinto did not function as a national religion, nor were its practices central to the lived public reality. The first of these legal issues was sparked when a Buddhist priest fired four prison ministers working with the Sugamo prison and replaced them with a single, recently baptized Christian minister. This decision was challenged through a multiplicity of arguments by Buddhists and ultimately overturned by the House of Commons. A second issue ensued with the treatment of foreign Christian residents in Japan, who enjoyed certain liberties that were denied to Japanese Buddhists. The issue sparked protests and organized lobbies to government officials, yet the movement was torn by divisions in Buddhists' views of what religious freedom actually represented. A third issue arose due to a controversial religions bill that was advanced in 1899. The debates around the bill within government and external organizations displayed many complex arguments about the role of religion in society and about who qualified as members within different religions. For example, who was a "real" Buddhist?

Chapter 3 shifts focus to Hawai'i, especially through the experience of Japanese Americans and their lives as Buddhists within a Christian dominant society. According to Jolyon Thomas, chapter 3 has three aims: (1) to show that US religious freedom was just as "incoherent" as its Japanese counterpart during the interwar years by highlighting Japanese American immigrant experiences in Hawai'i; (2) to show the existence of racist double standards in how religious freedom was represented within international affairs; and (3) to show there were impediments for Japanese American Buddhists to use religious freedom claims to challenge majority Christians in society. This discussion

begins with a brief introduction to broader Western discourse on freedom of religion dating back to Europe and Puritan travels across the Atlantic, showing how entrenched Christian perspectives have been throughout that history. Thomas then places the hypocrisy on display by showing how Christians gained land from natives through arguments of religious freedom, while Japanese American Buddhists were denied rights and privileges on the same grounds. Thomas also traces discourse of "Mikadoism," or views that Japanese worship the emperor, within American publications, and how such views contributed to stigmatizing Japanese Americans and their religious practices. He shows how language of "Americanization" often had implications of Christianization, and how this impacted Japanese Buddhist communities in Hawaiʻi.

Chapter 4 challenges assumptions "that Buddhist resistance to controversial religious legislation was necessarily politically progressive, that Buddhist complicity with state initiatives required capitulation to illiberal principles, that the state suppression of religious movements completely ignored the transcendent principles of religious freedom, or that victims of police persecution were all martyrs who championed religious liberty" (p. 107). He details the cases of three men to illustrate his points. According to Thomas, Chikazumi Jōkan (1870–1941) showed that asking why Buddhists failed to resist oppressive legislation is actually the wrong question to be asking. Chikazumi and his colleagues regularly opposed legislation through meetings, letters to politicians, and publications. Yet because Chikazumi did not see religious freedom as egalitarian, neither he nor his associates met the expectations of what postwar scholars thought resistance should look like. Andō Masazumi (1876–1955), who was a prominent lay Buddhist devout in trying to protect religious freedoms, contributed to the Religious Organizations Law and regularly supported social service organizations. However, he was also passionately devoted to the war effort and encouraged many Buddhist priests to join imperialist projects. Makiguchi Tsunesaburo (1871–1944) died in prison protesting his religious freedom. Yet he passed on the chance to defend himself on such grounds in court because of his adamant views on the superiority of the *Lotus Sutra* above all other religious views. Thomas explicates these cases to refute common assumptions in scholarship and asserts that the actual state of affairs was far more complex than is typically recorded.

Chapter 5 shifts focus to the Occupation and its rhetoric of religious freedom. Thomas points out that part of the Occupation's challenge was how vague America's own definitions of religious freedom were at the time. He asserts that it "was only over the course of the Occupation that religious freedom actually became a human right in any concrete sense ... through collaborations between bureaucrats and academics, journalists and legal experts, Americans and their Japanese interlocutors. Simply put, the occupiers did not introduce the human right of religious freedom to a place where it was absent. Rather, the peculiar circumstances of the Occupation demanded that they cooperate with Japanese people in inventing it" (p. 144). Thomas also introduces Lieutenant William K. Bunce (1907–2008) as a critical figure in negotiating the definition of religious freedom and its related policies. A great challenge for Bunce was the fact that Japan's earlier constitution explicitly stated that they did not have a state religion. Yet Bunce was charged with eliminating "National Shinto." Thomas also points out the hypocritical nature of this task of eliminating a religion in the name of religious freedom. Bunce relied on religious studies scholarship that treated state rites as religion and ultimately settled on the phrasing of "State Shinto" because it allowed him to treat Japan's pre-Occupation claims of separation of religion and state as flawed. Religious studies scholarship thus informed international policies even as those arguments were manufactured for specific political aims.

Thomas also shows that there were competing claims to defining religious freedom both in Japan and broadly. Other voices in the Occupation lobbied for policies that would more explicitly help Christianity spread in Japan. This was, after all, a period when the US added "God" to its monetary bills and its Pledge of Allegiance in the name of religious freedom. Although Bunce relied on some of earlier alarmist works to discredit Japan's previous laws on religious freedom, Bunce ultimately fought back against some of those claims in an effort to gain greater acceptance for the Occupation's vision of religious freedom among the Japanese. Thomas concludes the chapter by outlining the role religion scholarship can play in shaping public policies. Even while trying to stay neutral, scholarly models can influence how state actors view the legitimacy or illegitimacy of various beliefs, practices, and traditions.

Chapter 6 continues conversation on the development of religious freedom rhetoric by Bunce and the Religions Division of the

Occupation while they fought influence from numerous parties, such as General MacArthur's evangelistic tendencies, advisors within the Occupation who firmly believed democracy was equated specifically with Christianity, and Japanese religious groups who were historically accustomed to aligning themselves with government. Thomas describes how much of the Occupation rhetoric was racialized and described the "yellow" Japanese views as barbarism compared to the "white," democratic, and Christian civilization of the West. He also outlines the process by which rules and defining terms were created for the Religions Division to clarify their goals. He points out that those within the Religions Division seemed dedicated to the project of creating a paradigm through which religion could operate outside the influence of government, despite various calls to influence the policy from outside the Division. Thomas also describes issues of power and legitimacy as Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity had direct lines of communication with the Religions Division, but there was no access or voice representing any new religions. These communication lines were very important, however, for helping Japanese to understand and implement new policies.

Chapter 7 shows that the Occupation was a period during which policy makers were forced to delve deeply into the meanings of religious freedom. Discussions in Japan at the time helped clarify those meanings and their relationship to the broader discussion of human rights. He shows that it was not simply a one-way definition that was forced onto the Japanese by occupiers but actually a relatively broad discussion that occurred across disciplines between both Japanese and Americans. The rise of Russian power around that time further contributed to emphasis on religious freedom as fundamental to human rights. These discussions about what could fit into "religion," however, still ultimately involved declaring what movements did and did not qualify for freedom. The chapter also discusses the creation of the Occupation Constitution's Article 20, which defined religious freedom and separated religion and state far more strictly than in the US.

Chapter 8 focuses particularly on academic contributions to the Occupation discourse on religious freedom, especially its legal implications. Through this chapter, Thomas aims to demonstrate that such discourses, which tended to frame which religions were "good" and which were "bad," helped decide who obtained legal protections. The chapter also serves to further emphasize the influence of this

Occupation discourse on shaping global understandings of religion and religious freedom. One example Thomas explores is the category of "new religions," which developed to describe selected groups in Japan, before spreading as a category to describe traditions elsewhere. This category was not only the province of scholars, but developed by those within new religions to help gain political power and acceptance that was previously limited to larger or "traditional" religions. Thomas also explores the cases of State Shinto and war responsibility of Buddhists to show how each category involves scholars helping to define for policy makers who is categorized as good or acceptable religion and deserving of the associated legal freedoms.

In the concluding chapter, Thomas draws on the previous chapters to expand discussion of religious freedom to contemporary discourse about religious freedom more broadly in the world. Public discourse regularly trumpets the values of religious freedom and proclaims its propensity to cure cultural problems with little evidence for such assertions. The ways freedoms are defined paradoxically tend to constrain religious choice and favor established or culturally dominant traditions. The volume also ultimately asks far more questions than it answers, not only about Japan and religious freedom, but about religious studies as a field. Thomas questions the objective of religious studies. He examines issues such as cultural sensitivity and tolerance. He asks, as "scholars of religion, do we *want* policy makers, legislators, and journalists to hear us? If so, what messages do we want them to hear?" He also questions the vaguery of terms such as "religion" and "freedom" within popular discourse and the consequent challenges for communicating messages, as well as the uneven distribution of freedoms globally. However, he does assert that Japan ultimately has the right to self-determine what religious freedom means for them if they choose to do so and that the US has little right to proclaim itself a bastion of freedom while that freedom comes at the expense of many underprivileged populations.

Finally, an epilogue personalizes the aim and scope of the volume through which Thomas describes his own experiences with racial injustice, power dynamics, and cultural experiences in Japan. He uses his personal experience to link the themes of the volume to broader discourses in the world and speculate on the place of religious studies within that world both now and going forward.

Faking Liberties is an incredible academic achievement not only for students of Japanese religions, but for the many intersecting fields Thomas includes: human rights, law, history, etc. Any flaws in the meticulous volume are relatively minor. However, the lack of women's voices was very apparent. Although women may have had little representation in Japanese and American governance or academia at the time, it would have been beneficial to have some inclusion within the volume. For example, how were women impacted by the government's decisions? What was keeping them out of the roles of visibility and power? What other resources were available that would include their perspectives? At least some treatment of women could have also helped round the volume out beyond the ivory towers of the academe and the esteemed halls of governance, connecting those arguments more deeply on the ground, for what they meant to most people in society.

The book is still, however, a great achievement. Thomas presents a very convincing argument that should lay to rest any further assertions in academia that the Japanese lacked freedom of religion before the Occupation. Moreover, the extent to which Japanese partook in ultimately defining freedom of religion, connecting it to the human rights movement, and helping formulate those meanings for religious studies and global understandings are all thoroughly argued and presented over the course of the volume. Thomas also displays the power both academics and policy makers bear in *who* receives freedom. The text would be valuable to add to any of a number of syllabi in the myriad fields it touches.