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The Legendary Siege of Anxi: Myth, History, and Truth in Chinese Buddhism

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INTRODUCTION

The figure of Vaiśravaṇa, the World-Protecting King of the North, is relatively familiar to scholars working in the field of East Asian Buddhism. He appears fairly early in the history of East Asian Buddhism and has played an outsized role throughout East Asia as a protector deity, often specializing in military conflict.¹ The East Asian mythology of Vaiśravaṇa is often considered in relation to a rather well-known and widespread myth concerning the intervention of this deity on behalf of the Tang emperor Xuanzong (玄宗, r. 712–765) and at the command of the Esoteric Buddhist monk Amoghavajra (不空金剛, 704–774)—a tale that I refer to as the “Legendary Siege of Anxi.” In previous studies, the Legendary Siege of Anxi has been considered as an etiological myth explaining practices contemporary with the source in which it appears, but bearing little if any relationship to actual historical events. The historical accuracy of the account is broadly rejected on the basis of discrepancies between the events it describes and those attested in independent sources. Thus, rather than an accounting of events from the mid-eighth century, the tale has been read instead as evidence of practices current in China during the Song dynasty (960–1279).² Here I would like to return to the Legendary Siege of Anxi and consider it anew by approaching the story as myth and as reflective of historical events, and by setting aside expectations and considerations rooted strictly in contemporary historiography, text-critical logical positivism, and conceptions of genre literature.

The developed Legendary Siege of Anxi familiar from Song dynasty sources is a hybrid tale emerging from a collection of earlier mythic

elements. The stories and history that lead to the accepted association of a Buddhist monk (Amoghavajra), a martial figuration of an Indic deity (Vaiśravaṇa), and a Tang emperor (Xuanzong) is a pastiche of several narrative elements and developments. In the first of these narrative movements we see the recapitulation, merger, and metamorphosis of a mythic tradition deriving ultimately from the Hellenic world of the Mediterranean that was transplanted to Central Asia. This element is reimagined and reframed according to particular historical events surrounding the An Lushan Rebellion in the second half of the eighth century. Reading the story in this manner is based on the assumed primacy of a shared objective world to which the story has only a secondary and imagined relation. However, rather than simply explaining and justifying practices contemporary with its retelling, the Legendary Siege of Anxi acted as the impetus for the creation of indigenous Sinitic scriptures and practices. In reversing the assumptions concerning the relationship between fact and fiction, history and myth, and cause and effect we are pushed to reevaluate our expectations and approaches to Chinese documentary sources and their relationship with historical events and practices.

MYTH: THE LEGENDARY SIEGE OF ANXI

The version of the Legendary Siege of Anxi most often cited in scholarship comes from the thirteenth century *Comprehensive Record of the Buddhas and Patriarchs* (Fozu tongji, 佛祖通記) by Zhipan (志磐):

In the first year of Tianbao (天寶, 742/3 CE) the Western Regions, Samarqand,³ the Arabs,⁴ and the Five Kingdoms invaded Anxi (安西) (the Tang court had established four prefectures: Andong, Anxi, Annan, and Anbei). The emperor summoned Trepitaka Amoghavajra to enter the inner palace and perform the recitation of the secret language of the *Kingdom-Protecting Humane Kings* [Scripture]. His Highness personally held the incense brazier and after fourteen recitations His Highness saw some five hundred divine men standing in the palace courtyard. The master said, “This is the second son of King Vaiśravaṇa of the Northern Heaven, Dujian (獨健), blessing Your Majesty’s prayerful request to save Anxi.” And he asked [the emperor] to lay out food and to then send him off.

In the fourth month (May 13–June 11, 742) Anxi memorialized, saying: “On the eleventh day of the second month (March 26, 742), golden-armored men more than a *zhang* tall were seen in a black cloud to the northeast of the city. In the sky, drum and horns sounded,

shaking Heaven and Earth. Among the invaders' banners there were golden rats that gnawed and severed their bowstrings. The Five Kingdoms immediately ran off. At that moment, the Heavenly King was visible above the city towers." His Highness commanded that it be investigated and it was the day the spell was recited. (Now city towers and army encampments set up the Heavenly King because of this.)

天寶元年。西域康居大石五國。入寇安西(唐朝置安東安西安南安北四府)帝召不空三藏入內。持誦仁王護國密語。上親秉香鑪。方二七遍。上見神人可五百餘立於殿廷。師曰。此北天毘沙門王第二子獨健。副陛下禱往救安西。請設食發遣。四月安西奏云。二月十一日。城東北黑雲中見金甲人身丈餘。空中鼓角聲振天地。寇人帳幙間有金鼠齧斷弓弦。五國即時奔潰。須臾見城樓上天王見形。上令驗之。即誦呪曰也(今城樓軍營立天王者因此)⁵

The historicity of the events described in this and cognate accounts is broadly dismissed. In his monumental *Buddhism under the T'ang*, Stanley Weinstein characterizes the account as "suspect" given that the events of the narrative do not appear in eighth century accounts of Amoghavajra's life.⁶ MATSUMOTO Bunzaburō rules out the possibility of these events occurring based on a number of factors, chiefly that there is no record of Anxi being besieged in 742 and that Amoghavajra was in the southern Indic regions from 741–746.⁷ Taking the Legendary Siege of Anxi to be historically inaccurate, those who have considered it have instead approached it as an etiological myth, a tale invented in order to explain then-current practices in medieval China. Valerie Hansen, for example, reads the Legendary Siege of Anxi as an explanation for "the appearance of Vaiśravaṇa's image in cities, barracks, and monasteries all over China" from the Song dynasty.⁸ While the explanatory function of the Legendary Siege of Anxi is clearly given in extant sources, we may note that the Legendary Siege of Anxi is itself a human product, one that emerged as the result of complex systems of interaction, transcription, revision, publication, and dissemination. As such, the Legendary Siege of Anxi may be subject to an exploration of its origins. There is an etiological account to be given of the tale itself.

The Legendary Siege of Anxi, with relatively little variation from the thirteenth century version above, appears in several earlier sources. We find it in Zanning's (贊寧, 920–1001) *Song Dynasty Biographies of Eminent Monks* and in his *Brief History of the Sangha*.⁹ In the *Anthology of the Patriarchal Hall*, Mu'an Shangqing (睦庵善卿, fl. 1088–1108) reproduces Zanning's account.¹⁰ The *Ritual Procedures of Vaiśravaṇa*, a ritual manual attributed to Amoghavajra with a *terminus a quo* circa 862–865,

also contains a version of this story.¹¹ The persistence of specific details of the story in each these sources suggests that the standard version of the Legendary Siege of Anxi had developed no later than the mid-ninth century and was unquestionably in circulation from the eleventh century onward. Tracing the development of this story in the textual record reveals that the Legendary Siege of Anxi is a composite tale that took shape in large part through the merger of two earlier, independent stories, which, like both Vaiśravaṇa and Amoghavajra, were of non-Chinese origin. The first of these stories comes from the Hellenic world, the second from Central Asia.

The Legendary Siege of Anxi developed out of earlier tales. The first, recorded in the fifth century BCE by Herodotus, concerns the intervention of rats in defense against an otherwise insurmountable foreign enemy.

Next on the throne after Anysis was Sethos, the high priest of Hephaestus. He is said to have neglected the warrior class of the Egyptians and to have treated them with contempt, as if he had been unlikely to need their services. He offended them in various ways, not least by depriving them of the twelve acres of land which of them had held by special privilege under previous kings. As a result, when Egypt was invaded by Sennacherib, the king of Arabia and Assyria, with a great army, not one of them was willing to fight. The situation was grave; not knowing what else to do, the priest-king entered the shrine and, before the image of the god, complained bitterly of the peril which threatened him. In the midst of his lamentation he fell asleep, and dreamt that the god stood by him and urged him not to lose heart; for if he marched boldly out to meet the Arabian army, he would come to no harm, as the god himself would send him helpers.

By this dream the king's confidence was restored; and with such men as were willing to follow him—not a single one of the warrior class, but a mixed company of shopkeepers, artisans, and market-people—he marched to Pelusium, which guards the approaches to Egypt, and there took up his position. As he lay here facing the enemy, thousands of field-mice swarmed over the Assyrians during the night, and ate their quivers, their bowstrings, and the leather handles of their shields, so that on the following day, having no arms to fight with, they abandoned their position and suffered severe losses during their retreat. There is still a stone statue of Sethos in the temple of Hephaestus; the figure is represented with a mouse in its hand, and the inscription: 'Look upon me and learn reverence.'¹²

This story from the Hellenic world reached China via Xuanzang's (玄奘, ca. 600–664) *Great Tang Record of the Western Regions*. In Xuanzang's report, however, the story has been transformed from one concerning an Egyptian priest-king and the god Hephaestus into a tale about the Central Asian city-state of Khotan, referred to as Kustana (瞿薩旦那), Yutian (于闐), or Tian (闐) in medieval Chinese sources. I will refer to this story as “**Xuanzang A.**”

One hundred fifty or sixty *li* to the west of the royal city [Khotan], along the main road through the great desert there are small mounds that are heaps of earth dug out by rats. I heard that local tradition says that the rats in the desert are as large as hedgehogs, that if their fur is gold or silver colored they serve as chiefs, and that every time they came out of their holes, the other rats follow them as attendants. In the past, the Xiongnu (匈奴) led several hundreds of thousands of troops to attack and plunder the frontier city [of Khotan] and they garrisoned beside the rat mounds. At that time the king of Khotan¹³ led [only] some tens of thousands of soldiers and feared that their strength did not match [that of the enemy and] was not strong enough to resist the enemy. He knew that in the desert there were strange rats, but no deities. By the time the invaders arrived, there was none he could ask to come to his aid. The lord and subjects trembled in terror and could think of no stratagem. In desperation they set up an offering of burning incense and asked the rats [for help], hoping that there might be some supernormal (靈) strengthening of their army. In a dream that night the king of Khotan saw a large rat that said, “I respectfully wish to assist you, and hope you will dispatch your troops early in the morning. At daybreak I will join the battle and you will win certain victory.” The king of Khotan knew that he had supernormal help and then assembled his cavalry and commanded his officers to go before it was yet light and make a surprise attack. The Xiongnu heard of this and there was none who was not frightened. Just as they were about to harness their chariots and don their armor, they found that the belts and ties of their saddles and dress and the strings of their bows and the ties for the armor had all been gnawed through by the rats. The enemy soldiers were upon them, their hands were [as if] tied, and they were subject to slaughter. As a result, [the Khotan forces] killed their generals and captured their soldiers. The Xiongnu were awestruck, thinking that [the Khotan forces] had help from gods. In response to the generous kindness of the rats, the king of Khotan built a temple and established offerings [to them].

王城西百五六十里。大沙磧正路中有堆阜。並鼠壤墳也。聞之土俗曰。此沙磧中鼠大如蝸。其毛則金銀異色。為其群之首長。每出穴遊止則群鼠為從。昔者匈奴率數十萬眾寇掠邊城。至鼠墳側屯軍。時瞿薩旦那王率數萬兵。恐力不敵素知磧中鼠奇而未神也。泊乎寇至無所求救。君臣震恐莫知圖計。苟復設祭焚香請鼠。冀其有靈少加軍力。其夜瞿薩旦那王夢見大鼠。曰敬欲相助願早治兵。旦日合戰必當克勝。瞿薩旦那王知有靈祐。遂整戎馬。申令將士。未明而行。長驅掩襲。匈奴之聞也。莫不懼焉。方欲駕乘被鎧。而諸馬鞍人服弓弦甲縛。凡厥帶系鼠皆齧斷。兵寇既臨面縛受戮。於是殺其將虜其兵。匈奴震攝以為神靈所祐也。瞿薩旦那王。感鼠厚恩建祠設祭。¹⁴

Here we plainly see the basic elements of Herodotus' story now transplanted to the world of Central Asia. Speculation regarding the socio-historical events and forces that led to this transplantation and transformation are clearly beyond the scope of the present essay, but this modified Mediterranean tale, in which an otherwise invincible force of foreign troops is defeated through the miraculous intercession of rodents destroying enemy materiel, is the first of the two narrative elements making up the Legendary Siege of Anxi.

A second antecedent tale to the Legendary Siege of Anxi is also recorded by Xuanzang. This story concerns the miraculous intercession of the deity Vaiśravaṇa and his role in defeating an army of foreigners. This story will be “**Xuanzang B.**”

Outside of the city [of Balk]¹⁵ to the southwest there is a Navāp (納縛) monastery. A previous king of this kingdom built it. North of the great snow mountains, of all the masters commenting [on the scriptures], only in this monastery has the good work not declined. Its Buddha image is lustrous with precious [substances] and the eaves of its halls are adorned with rare treasures. Consequently, the lords of various kingdoms considered it to their benefit to plunder [the monastery]. In the past this monastery had an image of the Heavenly [King] Vaiśravaṇa, who was supernormally reliable to provide mysterious protection. Recently, the son of the Turkish Yabgu Quaghan, Si Yabgu Quaghan, mobilized his tribesmen and led them on a military expedition making a surprise attack on the monastery in hopes of lucre. He stationed his troops in the field not far from this [monastery]. That night in a dream he saw the Heavenly [King] Vaiśravaṇa, who said, “What strength do you have that you dare to despoil the monastery?!” Following this, he ran [the Quaghan] through the chest and back with a two-pointed spear. The Quaghan awoke in shock and experiencing an intense pain in his heart. Then he declared what he

had dreamed to his crowd of followers and sent [envoys] to ask the monks that he may express his repentance, but they had not yet returned when his allotment ended and he died at the monastery.

城外西南有納縛僧伽藍。此國先王之所建也。大雪山北作論諸師。唯此伽藍美業不替。其佛像則瑩以名珍。堂宇乃飾之奇寶。故諸國君長利之以攻劫。此伽藍素有毘沙門天像。靈鑒可恃冥加守衛。近突厥葉護可汗子肆葉護可汗。傾其部落率其戎旅。奄襲伽藍欲圖珍寶。去此不遠屯軍野。次其夜夢見毘沙門天曰。汝有何力敢壞伽藍。因以長戟貫徹胸背。可汗驚悟便苦心痛。遂告群屬所夢咎徵。馳請眾僧方申懺謝。未及返命已從殞歿。¹⁶

Navāp is variously identified as modern Shanshan (鄯善, i.e., Charqliq) in Xinjiang, as Yixun (伊循), or as a reference to the Stone City Garrison (石城鎮) in Tang. However, the location of these events related by Xuanzang is in the vicinity of the Central Asian city-state of Bactria. Xuanzang's reference to Navāp here appears to be an allusion to a particular style of monastery that he identifies with Navāp rather than a specific location. As a location, though, Navāp is not in Central Asia in the Pamirs, it is on the eastern edge of the Tarim Basin. In other words, reading Navāp as a *location* places the events firmly in the center of the Tang protectorate Anxi. This ambiguity is likely a contributory factor in the eventual shifting of location of these events from Central Asia in antecedent versions to the Tang protectorate in the fully-developed *Legendary Siege of Anxi*.

The two preceding narratives, which would eventually become the *Legendary Siege of Anxi*, are blended into a single tale recorded by Li Quan (李筌) in the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon*.¹⁷ Arguably dating to the second half of the eighth century, the received version dates to the seventeenth century.¹⁸ In the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon*, the two stories recorded by Xuanzang—Xuanzang A, which is Herodotus' account of the Egyptian king Sethos refigured as a tale concerning the Central Asian city-state of Khotan, and Xuanzang B, concerning Vaiśravaṇa's defense of a Buddhist monastery near Balkh—are merged to form a proto-version of the *Legendary Siege of Anxi*, which I will refer to as “**Li Quan A.**”

In Khotan (Tian, 阼) there was a temple with a statue (身) [of Vaiśravaṇa] clad in gold armor. His right hand held a two-pointed lance and his left hand supported a pagoda. He was venerated by the masses as a deity for his remarkable form and his unusual shape. This is a matter for foreigners.

In previous years, the Tibetans (吐蕃) surrounded Khotan. At night they saw a golden man holding a two-pointed lance arise above the city. All in the throng of some one hundred thousand Tibetans broke out in blisters. None was able to [fight] victoriously. Their weapons were also affected (化) by black rats that gnawed through the bowstrings. There was none that was not severed. The Tibetans, having been relieved of their illness, escaped. The people of the kingdom knew it was that deity [who caused this] and there was a command to erect temples [to him] on the frontier. Marshals also painted his image on their banners. These are called Deity Banners (神旗). They are the leading banners of a deploying army. Therefore, an army would deploy and they would sacrifice to him. To this day there are many garrisons, prefectures, and counties that set up Heavenly King temples.

於闐城有廟身被金甲，右手持戟，左手擎塔，祇從群神殊形異狀，胡人事之。往年吐蕃圍於闐，夜見金人被發持戟行於城上，吐蕃眾數十萬悉患瘡疾，莫能勝，兵又化黑鼠，咬弓弦，無不斷絕；吐蕃扶病而遁，國家知其神，乃詔於邊方立廟，元帥亦圖其形於旗上，號曰：神旗。出居旗節之前。故軍出而祭之，至今府州縣多立天王廟焉。¹⁹

In this version of the developing legend we have the defeat of enemy invaders through the intercession of Vaiśravaṇa, who visits disease on the soldiers and wrecks their materiel with rats. This story is a hybrid created through the merger of Xuanzang A and Xuanzang B. The location of the events (Kustana or Khotan, referred to as Tian by Li Quan) and the wrecking of enemy materiel by rats derive from Xuanzang A. The appearance and intervention of Vaiśravaṇa are drawn from Xuanzang B. We may speculate that the basis of this merger may have been the well-established close connection between Khotan (the location of Xuanzang A) and Vaiśravaṇa (the agent in Xuanzang B).

In any case, I suggest that Li Quan A represents an early stage in the development of what would become the standard Song dynasty version of the Legendary Siege of Anxi as recorded in later sources. Missing from Li Quan A, though, is the narrative frame concerning Emperor Xuanzong and Amoghavajra, which serves to refigure the story as a tale concerning the Tang imperium rather than a Central Asian city-state. These elements are included in an alternative account that appears in the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon*. This second story will be “Li Quan B.”

In the past the Tibetans (吐蕃) surrounded Anxi (安西) and Beiting (北庭). They [Anxi and Beiting] memorialized requesting assistance. Tang's Primordial Ancestor (元宗) [Emperor Xuanzong] said, "Anxi is located twelve thousand *li* from the metropolitan area. It would take eight months to arrive there. Even if troops arrive, there will be nothing left." The Left and Right Ministers requested that he summon Trepitaka Amoghavajra and command him to engage the Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa. The master arrived and requested that the emperor hold the incense burner [while] the master recited the mantra (真言). The emperor suddenly saw an armored officer (士) standing before him. The emperor asked Amoghavajra and Amoghavajra said, "The Heavenly King has sent his second son Dujian to lead troops to relieve Anxi. He has come to report to Your Majesty."

Later, Anxi memorialized: "In misty clouds thirty *li* northwest of the city we saw soldiers each one *zhang* tall and arrayed [in battle formation] of five or six *li*. At the *you* (酉) hour (5pm–7pm) there was a sound of drums and horns. The ground shook for three hundred *li*. It stopped after two days. Samarqand and the Five Kingdoms withdrew their troops. Within their encampment were golden rats that gnawed through the strings of their bows and crossbows; their apparatus was equally damaged. At that instant the Heavenly King manifested his form [at the] Northern Pavilion."

昔吐蕃圍安西，北庭表奏求救，唐元宗曰：「安西去京師一萬二千裏，須八月方到，表則無及矣。」左右請召不空三藏，令請毘沙門天王，師至，請帝執香爐，師誦真言，帝忽見甲士立前，帝問不空，不空曰：「天王遣二子獨捷將兵救安西，來辭陛下。」後安西奏雲：「城東北三十裏雲霧中，見兵人各長一丈約五六裏，至酉時鳴鼓，角震三百裏，停二日。康居等五國抽兵彼營中，有金鼠咬弓弩弦，器械並損，須臾，北樓天王現身。」²⁰

With this account we have what appears to be the earliest recorded version of the Legendary Siege of Anxi, though we may note some slight variations between this version of the legend and that recorded in Song dynasty sources. Reference to the *Scripture of Humane Kings* does not appear in Li Quan B, for example. Now, it is clearly possible that this version of the Legendary Siege of Anxi in the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon* is an interpolation. This would certainly go toward explaining why the text contains two versions of the story (Li Quan A and Li Quan B). But if Li Quan B is an interpolation, it does not appear to be a very late one. The absence of any reference to the *Humane Kings* suggests to my mind a pre-Song insertion. The *Humane Kings* was produced by Amoghavajra in 765 and although it was not an insignificant text and

ritual, it was only one among many sponsored by the Tang imperial court. The perception of the importance of this text and its attendant ritual stems from Song dynasty sources that tend to refer to it as a synecdoche for Amoghavajra's textual and ritual corpus during the Tang. It is also perhaps noteworthy that Emperor Xuanzong is not referred to by his posthumous temple name (Xuanzong), but by his reign name: Tang Primordial Ancestor (唐元宗). Though by no means a certainty, this suggests that Li Quan B was composed no later than 762.

On my reading of the evidence, the Legendary Siege of Anxi assumed its basic form as Li Quan B in the second half of the eighth century. This tale, repeated with minimal variation in elite Buddhist sources over the following centuries, is a hybrid produced by the blending of two previously separate stories. The first of these concerns the king of Khotan being assisted by rats as reported by Xuanzang (Xuanzang A, which is a transplanted version of Herodotus' story). The second is the Khotanese tale of Vaiśravaṇa killing Si Yabghu Qaghan (Xuanzang B). These two mythic accounts are merged by Li Quan in the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon*—foreign armies are defeated by a combination of rats and Vaiśravaṇa at Khotan (Li Quan A). This merging may have been based on or facilitated by the known relationship between Vaiśravaṇa and Khotan, though it might simply reflect only vague knowledge of or indifference to the political geography of Central Asia. In any case, the hybrid account of Li Quan A is further transformed into a legend concerning the Tang imperium rather than Khotan through the grafting of a narrative frame concerning Amoghavajra and Emperor Xuanzong in Li Quan B. The essential elements of Li Quan A—the improbable defeat of a foreign siege through the intercession of Vaiśravaṇa and the wrecking of enemy materiel by rats—are retained within an account centered on Amoghavajra and Emperor Xuanzong as the protagonists. In other words, at some point as early as the second half of the eighth century—following my interpretation of the sources—the legend came to be not about (just) Vaiśravaṇa, but also about Amoghavajra and the Tang emperor.

HISTORY: AMOGHAVAJRA AND THE TANG EMPERORS

If we shift our gaze away from the etiology of the Legendary Siege of Anxi itself and adopt instead a pseudo-euhemerist view, we may seek the true historical basis of the story and its evident circulation. But if the Legendary Siege of Anxi is based on true historical events, they

clearly were not those specific to the story, for the historical record provides no indication that the Tang protectorate of Anxi was besieged in the 740s and Amoghavajra was in the southern Indic regions at the time the events of the Legendary Siege of Anxi are purported to have occurred. The Legendary Siege of Anxi may be read as reflecting Emperor Xuanzong's interest in the propagation of a Vaiśravaṇa cultus—an implied reading of the tale that may be supported in other sources.²¹ But whether Xuanzong may justly be credited with initiating Vaiśravaṇa centered practice, the existence of such a cult in the Tang military is evident from the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon*.²² There are two accounts for the origin of the Tang military practice of supplicating Vaiśravaṇa while on campaign in the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon*. The first is Li Quan A, the combination of Xuanzang A and B in which an army of invaders is defeated by Vaiśravaṇa and the intercession of rats that wreck the enemy materiel. The second account is the earliest account of the Legendary Siege of Anxi, Li Quan B, which is possibly an interpolation intended to establish the legitimacy of this military cultus by moving its origins from the barbarous western regions to the court of Tang Xuanzong. However, in my view, this does not adequately account for the inclusion of Amoghavajra in the Legendary Siege of Anxi. It may be that the narrative frame concerning Amoghavajra and Xuanzong derives, *mutatis mutandis*, from real historical events, and Amoghavajra may prove to be the key in discovering them.

Considered in terms of its fundamental structure, the Legendary Siege of Anxi is about a Chinese emperor facing an intractable situation presented by a massive army of confederated foreigners. Otherwise hopeless, the predicament is resolved with the help of Amoghavajra, who ritually invokes and deploys a martial deity in defense of the imperium. In these general terms, the Legendary Siege of Anxi reflects actual historical events of the second half of the eighth century. While particular details of the Legendary Siege of Anxi are drawn from mythic elements introduced to China by Xuanzang in the seventh century—a besieging army of foreigners is defeated by rats and by Vaiśravaṇa—the narrative concerning Amoghavajra and Emperor Xuanzong appears based on the fact of Amoghavajra's military assistance to the Tang throne during and following the uprising of An Lushan (安路山) and his epigones in rebellion.

The effects of An Lushan's rebellion for the Tang imperial state can hardly be overemphasized. The salient events of the rebellion

period are widely known and need be treated only briefly here. On December 20, 755 An Lushan led an army of veteran Luo (羅), Xi (奚), Khitan (契丹), and Shiwei (室韋) troops out of Fanyang (范陽, modern Beijing) in rebellion against the Tang ruling house.²³ Advancing rapidly, An Lushan's forces had already captured Gao City (藁城), some 170 miles south of Fanyang, only eight days later.²⁴ Having met only token resistance by Tang troops and governors—if not their complete capitulation—An Lushan stood in possession of the secondary capital of Luoyang (洛陽), effectively controlled the Central Plains, and was in striking distance of Chang'an (長安), about two hundred miles to his west, within a month of beginning of his campaign for the throne.²⁵ However, his rapid progress was halted at Tong Pass (潼關), which was defended by fortified troops drawn from the northwestern Military Command Regions (*jiedushi*, 節度使) and under the command of Geshu Han (哥舒翰).²⁶ Although holding a strong tactical position, the Tong Pass defense was undermined by weaknesses in command. Geshu Han was ill at home when he was summoned to defend Tang and he delegated many of his responsibilities to fractious officers.²⁷ Represented in the sources as a result of operational micromanagement by palace officials seeking personal advantage, the Tang forces at Tong Pass were led in an assault on the rebel position.²⁸ The loyalist troops were routed. Geshu Han was captured (he would be executed ten months later by An Qingxu).²⁹ The way to Chang'an was open.³⁰ In the face of this development, the imperial family and the chief officials fled the capital heading west. Emperor Xuanzong went southwest to Shu (蜀), where he could hole up in the tactically superior location of the Sichuan Basin. The crown prince, who would subsequently be known by his temple name Suzong (肅宗), went northwest to Lingwu (靈武),³¹ the seat of Shuofang Military Command Region (*Shuofang jiedushi*, 朔方節度使) formerly administered by Geshu Han, and assumed the throne on August 12, 756.³² After nineteen months of chaos and shifting fortunes, on the fifteenth of November, 757, Emperor Suzong received official report of victory from the Guangping Prince.³³ On December 18, 757 Emperor Suzong entered the imperial capital for the first time in his sixteen-month reign.

Although the capitals had been recovered and Tang rule formally restored, military operations were far from over. Rebel generals continued to emerge hydra-like. An Qingxu, who had assumed command of the rebellion after assassinating his father, An Lushan, remained at

large and in command of troops, but was assassinated and succeeded by Shi Siming (史思明), who claimed the title of Emperor of the Yan Dynasty for himself. Shi Siming initially capitulated to the Tang in February of 758, but subsequently rose again in rebellion and recaptured Luoyang on June 7, 760.³⁴ Siming was murdered and rebel leadership devolved to his son, Shi Chaoyi (史朝義). Chaoyi eluded capture by loyalist forces but in the end was abandoned by his own troops and killed in 763.³⁵ In November of that same year, though, an irresistible force of Tibetans invaded the Wei Valley, drove the emperor from the capital, and installed the luckless Chenghong, Prince of Guangwu (廣武王承宏) as a puppet emperor.³⁶ The Tibetans were driven out of Chang'an by gangs of thugs organized for the purpose by the retired general Wang Fu (王甫), but Tibetan forces continued to encroach on Tang, seizing territory on the western border of the imperium in February 764.³⁷ In September of 765 the Tibetans returned to the Wei Valley, this time joined by the foot and horse of the Uighurs, Qiang (羌), Hun (渾), and Nula (奴剌).³⁸ They were also joined by Pugu Huai'en (僕固懷恩), a general of Tiele Turk descent who had earlier served the throne during the rebellion.³⁹ In short, from 756 to 765 Tang was beset by a Stygian chaos wrought by waves of confederated foreign troops and rebellious generals. It was during this period of political disruption and military conflict that Amoghavajra rose to prominence in the Tang court.

There were several factors involved in Amoghavajra's rise to prestige. Perhaps most important among these were his close connections with the elite of the Shuofang military command and his performance of rituals aimed at destroying rebellious troops and commanders on behalf of the Tang rulers. Amoghavajra was situated in Lingwu, where he had been headquartered since 754 at the request of Geshe Han and his subordinates, when he was recalled to Chang'an by Emperor Xuanzong in response to An Lushan's uprising.⁴⁰ Amoghavajra's presence and ritual services were clearly conceived as an important element in the Tang military resistance to the rebellion initiated by An Lushan.

Evidence suggests that the Tang emperors of the rebellion period—Xuanzong, Suzong (肅宗), and Daizong (代宗)—held Amoghavajra's performance of Esoteric Buddhist rites to be militarily effective. The editors of the *Older Tang History* attributed Emperor Daizong's support of Amoghavajra to his perception that military disasters were

leavened by the monk's ritual services.⁴¹ Though the court literati who composed the Standard Histories viewed this with disdain, it is quite probable that the Tang rulers perceived a supernormal agency behind certain events during the rebellion period. For example, though An Lushan met with immediate success, moving rapidly and almost without resistance to within striking distance of the imperial capitals, he was murdered by his son, An Qingxu, with the support of his own commanders.⁴² An Qingxu was himself murdered by a trusted associate, Shi Siming (史思明), who was likewise assassinated by his own son, Shi Chaoyi (史朝義), who in turn was abandoned by his own troops and killed in 763.⁴³ The invasion and occupation of Chang'an that same year by Tibetan forces was defeated by a gang of rabble. When a force of confederate foreigners organized by Pugu Huai'en invaded the Wei Valley west of Chang'an in 765, their advance was halted by rivers swollen by heavy rain and they were defeated by infighting.⁴⁴ The turncoat general Pugu Huai'en slunk off to the northwest where he fell ill and died.⁴⁵ All of these events were exceedingly fortuitous for the Tang ruling house and although there is no direct evidence that these events were attributed to the supernormal intercession of beings commanded by Amoghavajra, it is quite probable that they were. This was certainly the case regarding the assassination of Zhou Zhiguang (周智光) in 767. Zhou was military commissioner exercising command northeast of the imperial capital in Tongzhou (同州) and Huazhou (華州) but was suspected of being an insurrectionist. Emperor Daizong dispatched an envoy to meet with Zhou and ascertain his intentions. Upon reaching Zhou's headquarters, though, the envoy found him unguarded and he simply chopped off Zhou's head and delivered it to the emperor.⁴⁶ Hearing this news, Amoghavajra sent Daizong a letter of congratulations.⁴⁷ In his reply, Daizong suggests that Amoghavajra played a role in killing Zhou Zhiguang:

Zhiguang, violent and murderous, dared to harass frontier supply posts (關鋪). The Princely Master⁴⁸ [Amoghavajra], entirely unexpected, from him there was an execution.⁴⁹ The numinous power of the ancestral and tutelary divinities—the great sage deployed their blessings. The master's protective recollection—inauspicious signs forever purified.

智光兇狂敢擾關鋪。王師暫舉自有誅夷。宗社威靈大聖敷祐。師之護念氛縈永清。⁵⁰

The conventional means by which Zhiguang met his end was that he had his head chopped off by an intrepid imperial envoy, but evidently to Daizong's mind this was a manifestation of or was ultimately predicated on the performance of Buddhist rites by Amoghavajra. It is evident that the martial and violent application of these rites was recognized by the Tang emperors, who employed them for such purposes.

We cannot ascertain with complete certainty the specific rites Amoghavajra performed during the early years of the An Lushan Rebellion. Representations from the Song dynasty onward and in modern scholarship tend to emphasize Amoghavajra's performances of ritual centered on the *Humane Kings Scripture*. But although ritual performances deriving from this scriptural source have had a long and significant history in East Asia, this tradition, which is essentially virtue-based and prophylactic in nature, was not established until the reign of Daizong in 765, a decade after An Lushan rose in revolt. It is exceedingly unlikely that the rites performed by Amoghavajra in support of Emperor Suzong's war against An Lushan, An Qingxu, et al. were based on the *Humane Kings Scripture*. Feixi (飛錫), who composed Amoghavajra's memorial stele in 774, reports that while residing in the imperial capital during its occupation by rebels, Amoghavajra performed the rites of the *Banner of Acala and the Divinities of the Eight Directions Scripture* on the emperor's behalf.⁵¹ There is no extant text of this name, but Acala is a well-known deity in the Esoteric Buddhist pantheon and he appears in several texts that Amoghavajra himself produced or to which he had access.

Of the three extant Acala texts attributed to Amoghavajra, two are more certainly his. These two are also the most obvious in their applicability during the rebellion period of 755–765 when Amoghavajra was working on behalf of Tang in the imperial capital against enemy troops. The titles given these two texts are almost identical: the *Trisamaya Secret Recollection and Recitation Methods of the Worthy Immovable, the Wrathful King Envoy* and the *Trisamaya Recollection and Recitation Methods of the Worthy Immovable, the Wrathful King Envoy*.⁵² I will refer to these respectively as *Trisamaya I* and *Trisamaya II*.⁵³ Both of the extant *Trisamaya* texts attributed to Amoghavajra contain rituals by which an army can defeat an opposing force, and the description of these rites in the two *Trisamayas* are functionally equivalent. There are some variations between the two—*Trisamaya I* contains a rite for corpse reanimation not

mentioned in *Trisamaya II*, for example—but the main difference between the militarily-applicable rites described in them is stylistic.

The instructions in the *Trisamaya* texts are given to Vajrapani by Śākyamuni and follow a standard structure for Esoteric rites involving purification of the mind via mantra, purification of the body and of the ritual space, meditative (re)construction of the ritual arena, offerings, and so forth. After completing all of the necessary preliminaries, the practitioner may perform particular rites for specific effects, including methods by which one may target an enemy army. Among these is a procedure by which an opposing army may be rendered immobile and, one would imagine, easy prey:

There is also a method for those who wish to restrain another's army, causing them to be unable to move: on your own army's pennants paint the Immovable Worthy [with] four faces, four arms, and a yellow body. [His] teeth protrude above and below and he makes a wrathful gaze—a fearsome appearance. About his body is a radiant fire made of the power of heavenly troops. The practitioner, by displaying these pennants to the other army and imagining the Sage [Acala] binding the other troops with a rope, [causes] the other army to be completely unable to move.

Trisamaya I: 又法欲禁他軍令不得動者。於旗幡上畫無動尊。身作黃肉色四面上下出牙。四臂作怖畏瞋怒狀。遍身火焰。作吞他兵勢。持法人以旗示彼人。又想聖者以羈索縛彼兵眾。彼即無能動也。又法欲禁他軍令不得動者。於旗幡上畫無動尊。身作黃肉色四面上下出牙。四臂作怖畏瞋怒狀。遍身火焰。作吞他兵勢。持法人以旗示彼人。又想聖者以羈索縛彼兵眾。彼即無能動也。

Trisamaya II: 又法欲禁他軍陣眾令不動者。於自旌上畫不動尊。四面四臂身作黃色。上下出牙作大忿怒瞋怖畏狀。遍身火光作天兵勢。行者以旌示彼軍眾。復想聖者以羈索縛彼兵眾。即彼軍眾盡不能動。⁵⁴

One may empower an army's banners with mantra and thereby win certain victory:

There is also a method for those who wish to cause another's army to be routed: empower your own army's pennants ten times each. Grasp them and go out in front of the army. The other's army will be routed and will retreat.

Trisamaya I: 又法取旗幡誦明一千遍。執於軍陣前能破他陣。

Trisamaya II: 又法欲令他軍陣破散者。加持自軍旌一十遍。執出在軍前。彼軍陣破散退走。⁵⁵

One can target an enemy commander with rites resulting in certain death:

There is also a method for those who wish to cause another's army and commander to perish and flee: obtain salt, soil, wax, silk, and leaves. Mix them up into a paste and make the form of those others and place it on the ground. Recite the empowering spell and hack it up. Those others will then perish.

Trisamaya II: 又法欲令他軍主終亡者。取鹽土蠟苦練葉。和擣為泥。作彼形狀置於地上。誦明加持斫斷。彼即終。⁵⁶

Should more indirect means of victory be desired, one may starve an enemy army out of the field:

There is also a method for those who wish to cause another's army to be impoverished and cut off from provisions: obtain some rice paddies and empower them [with the spell] and those others will then be impoverished.

Trisamaya II: 又法欲令他軍貧窮絕糧者。取稻穀加持彼即貧矣。⁵⁷

A more lethal method is also provided:

There is also a method for those who wish to cause enemies to perish: obtain rice chaff, recite the spell empowerment, and cast [the chaff] into a fire to burn. Also imagine those enemies bound with ropes by the envoy [Acala], lead to the southern direction of stifling suffering, vomiting blood, and perishing. Those [enemies] and their ilk will all be unable to recover. Not a single one will survive.

Trisamaya I: 若欲令燒設都嚕卒者。取稻糠燒當燒之時。想聖者以索縛彼捨都嚕。將向南方困苦吐血。彼等族類皆不得存也。

Trisamaya II: 又法欲令捨靺鞨終亡者。取稻糠誦明加持擲火中燒。又想彼捨靺鞨。被使者以索縛。將向南方困苦吐血而終。彼等族類。皆不得痊一無存在。⁵⁸

Through the ritual procedures of performing a *homa* offering of rice chaff empowered with mantra while visualizing Acala binding one's human enemies with his noose and, in that visualization, dragging them off to the malarial southern regions, those people serving in the enemy army will die.

Many of these rites clearly require battle conditions for their performance, but whether the enemy die of one of the many diseases endemic to army camps, besieged cities, and battlefields in medieval China or whether their lives are violently snuffed out—cut, cleaved, crushed, pierced, poisoned, or burnt by a human agent—these would

be understood only as proximate causes of death. It is Acala, fierce and mighty, and his gang of demonic subordinates who rub out one's enemy and they are specifically deployed to do this by the ritual specialist. With these rites Amoghavajra could putatively bring about the deaths of tens of thousands of human beings and evidence suggests that the Tang emperors believed that he did.

I suggest that the collective memory of Amoghavajra's service—violent and martial in imagery and in effect—to the Tang court during the An Lushan Rebellion period provides the narrative frame for the Legendary Siege of Anxi. Therein, we have Amoghavajra preforming rites in response to and in the context of an imperial military operation. An irresistible force of confederated foreign troops besieges a Tang outpost. The tactical situation appears hopeless, but Amoghavajra is summoned to court where he performs a ritual. As a result, the barbarian enemy is miraculously defeated. This narrative frame of the Legendary Siege of Anxi is, *mutatis mutandis*, a representation of true historical events from the rebellion period.

TRUTH: VAIŚRAVAṆA IN CHINESE BUDDHISM

May we say that the Legendary Siege of Anxi is true? If we approach the Legendary Siege of Anxi as myth, we may adopt Bruce Lincoln's view and aver that "myths are neither false stories, nor true, but simply stories that claim to speak with authority about issues of deep importance."⁵⁹ What is at issue, then, is not simply a matter of truth or falsity, but one of authority. The matter of truth reduces to a matter of trust or belief. This insight applies not only to myth. It is also true of history.

Our etiological account of the Legendary Siege of Anxi begins with Herodotus, who may be said to provide us with our own intellectual beginnings. Does Herodotus not articulate a certain history of religions approach when he writes, "My business is to record what people say, but I am by no means bound to believe it"?⁶⁰ The contemporary historiographical project seeks to establish its own authority through verification and validation, through logic, evidence, and a scrupulous documentation of sources. But we are still subject to our own beliefs. Primary among these is our notion of causality, though we will likely agree with Paul Veyne that historical causal relations are "the effect of a *post eventum* analysis or even a retrospective illusion."⁶¹ But at the root of our historical analyses are fundamental assumptions

concerning what is primary, what is real, and, therefore, what may be counted as cause rather than as effect. This is all well and good as far as it goes, but the disparity between our beliefs and those of our informants may prevent us from understanding their actions and the events of the past. This is particularly true when our assumptions of truth and falsity—often masked by genre designations such as “history,” “myth,” or “scripture”—are not those of our informants. This disconnect may lead us to miss important, alternative understandings and implications of our material. In short, the Legendary Siege of Anxi may not have (only) been created, preserved, and propagated as an *effect* of medieval Chinese events and practices, it may have been their *cause*.

It is broadly recognized that indigenous Chinese history is fundamentally didactic in nature. It is a narrative that, not unlike the histories that we create, purports to reveal the real, that postures itself as being true. But the truth that it contains is not the ostensibly disinterested historical truth of the modern, critical historian. It is a prescriptive truth. History, in the well-known Sinitic metaphor, is a mirror. It holds a truth that is to be discerned from reported events of the past and actualized in the present. This recognition should encourage us to reconsider the causal relationships involved in our reading of Chinese historical sources. As it is recorded in multiple elite texts narrating Chinese history, we may flip our approach to the Legendary Siege of Anxi from one of skepticism to one of credulity—or suspended doubt, at least—and thereby see it as functioning not as a passive, mythic *description* of established activities and practices in medieval East Asia but as an active *prescription* for the present and the future. We may consider subsequent elements and developments in Sinitic Buddhism as reflections of the Legendary Siege of Anxi. This leads us to a consideration of Vaiśravaṇa in China.

Vaiśravaṇa is, of course, a venerable deity in the pan-Asian Buddhist tradition. He is mentioned in a few Pāli *suttas*—the *Janavasabha-sutta*, in which King Bimbisara appears reborn as a *yakkha* (Skt. *yakṣa*) in the retinue of Vaiśravaṇa (Pāli, Vessavaṇa) and the *Sakkapaṇḍita-sutta*, in which Vaiśravaṇa’s wife, Bhunajati, attends the Buddha in a brief episode.⁶² Vaiśravaṇa also often appears as a god of wealth in a variety of Pāli sources. But the *Aṭṭanāṭṭiya-sutta* (Skt. *Aṭṭanāṭṭiya-sūtra*) is the early *locus classicus* for Vaiśravaṇa.⁶³ Punyodaya is said to have produced a translation of the *Aṭṭanāṭṭiya* in 663, but the text was lost by 730.⁶⁴ The earliest extant Chinese translation of the *Aṭṭanāṭṭiya-sutta* dates to the

tenth century.⁶⁵ This text is fairly close to the version found in the Pāli canon. The major difference is the inclusion of a transliterated Sanskrit mantra that is not present in the Pāli version.

The early image of Vaiśravaṇa in China essentially derives from the *Scripture of Golden Light*.⁶⁶ First translated in China by Dharmakṣema (Tanwuchen, 曇無讖) in the early fifth century,⁶⁷ the sixth chapter of the *Scripture of Golden Light* is dedicated to the Four Heavenly Kings. The scripture is praised by those deities for its ability to produce the happiness of sentient beings, empty the earth-prisons, eliminate terrors, protect against grain failure, extinguish “evil stars” and other astral anomalies, and heal illnesses. In addition to these, the scripture is also claimed to hold the power to repulse the hated enemies of other lands.⁶⁸ This is accomplished by means of a ruler paying homage to the *Scripture of Golden Light* and to those Buddhist monks who possess it. As a consequence of which, the Four Heavenly Kings and the innumerable deities, spirits, and ghosts that serve them will protect the kingdom.⁶⁹ The same holds good in Yijing’s (義淨) translation produced in 703 CE, the *Scripture of Golden Light, Most Victorious King of Scriptures*.⁷⁰

The textual and archeological record testifies to the fairly early and persistent presence of Vaiśravaṇa in the Chinese Buddhist world. But, if my proposed approach to the Legendary Siege of Anxi as a pre-scriptive indigenous history has merit, we should expect to see particular changes in the figuration of Vaiśravaṇa from at least the eighth century onward, and these changes should be broadly consistent with the narrative of the Legendary Siege of Anxi. In other words, we should most basically expect to see Vaiśravaṇa represented in a more martial, potentially lethal manner, his power should be seen as actively effective against human enemies, and we should see him appearing in association with Amoghavajra and the techniques of Esoteric Buddhism (e.g., ritual performances involving mantras, *mudrās*, etc.).

Five texts attributed to Amoghavajra and concerning Vaiśravaṇa are extant in the modern Taishō canon, but only one is attested among those scriptures that he formally submitted to the Tang court. This is the *Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa Scripture*.⁷¹ It was personally submitted among Amoghavajra’s other translations in 771 and it is listed in Yuanzhao’s *Continuation of the Kaiyuan Catalogue*, completed in 795–796.⁷² This text describes a series of rites involving Vaiśravaṇa to various ends. The description of the rites is somewhat disjointed and the text has a cobble-together feel—the scripture begins *in media res* with the phrase

“at that time,” which typically occurs in sūtra texts announcing a transition in the narrative. Vaiśravaṇa is then described declaring his mantra before the Buddha for the plenitude of future sentient beings and the protection of kingdoms. Vaiśravaṇa speaks his mantra and describes the attendant elements of its ritual performance—offerings of incense and the formation of *mudrās*. Upon completion of this brief rite Vaiśravaṇa’s son Janeśa (敕爾娑) will appear and ask the practitioner what is desired, at which point one announces one’s wish to obtain wealth in order to make offerings to the Three Jewels.⁷³ This wish will be met by the subsequent miraculous appearance of gold coins, strangely fragrant, by the practitioner’s head as he sleeps. With this miraculous fund of wealth, the practitioner is then directed to make offerings to the Three Jewels. Here another technique is introduced. These procedures are said to command the blessings of Vaiśravaṇa and his retinue of “male and female followers, inner and outer relations by blood and marriage, his envoys and battalions (營從).”⁷⁴ These benefits are a mixed bag of mundane and soteriological effects including freedom from rebirth, unlimited longevity, understanding animal language, and attaining further material plenitude. For these, one is directed to have a painting made of Śākyamuni attended by the deity Lucky Heavenly Lady. This is the (originally) Hindu goddess Mahāśrī, often identified with Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and fortune.⁷⁵ This painting accomplished, one makes the usual offerings of incense, flower garlands, lamps, etc. to the Buddha Śākyamuni. Vaiśravaṇa will then, if he “sees” the rites and takes pity on the performer, appear in the form of a lad or a lay Buddhist, pay homage himself to the image of the Buddha, and grant the practitioner’s wishes. The text concludes with a description of the root *mudrā* and the *mudrā* of Mahāśrī, followed by another brief mantra in both Chinese transliteration and in Siddham script. Although the ritual narrative conforms to that of the Legendary Siege of Anxi in the appearance of Vaiśravaṇa’s son as an intermediary between the Heavenly King, the Vaiśravaṇa in this text appears in his early guise as a deity of wealth. This text produced by Amoghavajra is only minimally consistent with the narrative of the Legendary Siege of Anxi. However, from the ninth century we find evidence of indigenous Chinese scriptures attributed to Amoghavajra and apparently modeled on the Legendary Siege of Anxi.

Again, reading the Legendary Siege of Anxi as indigenous Sinitic history and therefore as fundamentally prescriptive in nature, I suggest

that the creation and circulation of the Legendary Siege of Anxi led to the production of a scripture based on the legend. This is the *Mantra Method for the Protection of Armies that Follow Vaiśravaṇa, the Heavenly King of the North* attributed to Amoghavajra.⁷⁶ Appearing neither in the list of titles Amoghavajra submitted to the Tang court in 771 nor in official Tang catalogues, this text was reportedly obtained in Tang China by Engyō (圓行) in 840 CE.⁷⁷ Although it is attributed to Amoghavajra and the specifics of the ritual procedures that it describes are consonant with those appearing in his verifiable textual corpus, the *Mantra Method for the Protection of Armies* is an indigenous Chinese scripture. Its creation seems to have been motivated by and predicated on the Legendary Siege of Anxi in China.

The *Mantra Method for the Protection of Armies* begins immediately with the titular mantra. No narrative context is provided. According to the instructions, if one wishes to perform the mantra, one should paint a polychromatic image of Vaiśravaṇa adorned in bejeweled robe and armor, standing atop two *yakṣas*, bearing a two-pointed lance in one hand, and presenting his pagoda to Śākyamuni with the other. His mien is furious and awesome. One paints this image on cloth and, for the purposes of commanding Vaiśravaṇa and his heavenly troops in defense of the kingdom, performs offerings to Vaiśravaṇa's image. The practitioner is advised to mark off a ritually clean space using cow dung and incense paste, to bathe, and to don clean clothes. On the night of the full moon one makes a *homa* offering of food and drink, flowers and incense, while reciting the mantra ten thousand times. Thereupon, Vaiśravaṇa will appear in the sky and grant one's requests, or the wind will kick up clouds around the ritual space, thereby assuring the ritual's success. This rite is claimed to produce a number of effects. These include obtaining the affection of others and of protection against highwaymen, wild beasts, illness, and poison. Also included are rites specific to an army in the field:

There is also a method if one wishes to vanquish masses of enemy troops from various kingdoms. You should paint an image of [Vaiśravaṇa's] form and the *gua* with armor of the highest quality pure gold. In a clean room burn an assortment of excellent incense such as⁷⁸ first-rate *kunduruka*⁷⁹ and make an offering of flowers of various colors and food and drink. Recite the Heavenly King's mantra one hundred thousand times with vehement rage and hatred.⁸⁰ The Heavenly King will lead Heavenly Troops to come and attack. The enemy troops of that kingdom will of themselves retreat and scatter.

If you are able to recite day and night without interruption, then the Heavenly King will dispatch his crown prince, Dujian, to lead thousands of troops to protect you and not leave your side. That for which you wish will be as you intend and will accord with your intention—all will be accomplished.

There is also a method if you wish to vanquish masses of the front line. In a clean room hold a *zhai* and paint an image of the Heavenly King and the *gua* with armor of the highest quality pure gold. Hang [the image] from a two *zhang* pole fifty paces in front of the army and pointing toward the enemy. The seal [that renders] enemies unable to cause trouble: each of the little fingers are hooked. The ring fingers are both outside, erect and perpendicular. The two middle fingers and two index fingers inversely interlocked. The two thumbs are both outside, erect and perpendicular. The palms are joined together and this is the seal.

又法若欲降伏諸國兵賊眾者。當畫一像身卦紫磨真金甲。於淨室中燒眾名香乳頭薰陸香。諸色香花飲食供養。瞋心誦念天王真言十萬遍。天王領天兵來助。他國兵敵自退散。若能晝夜誦念不絕。天王使太子獨健。領天兵千人衛護不離其側。所求如意應念隨心。皆得成就。又法若欲降前敵眾者。於淨室持齋畫一天王形像卦紫磨真金甲。於二丈竿懸。軍前五十步指其敵。其敵不能相患。印相二小指相鉤。二無名指向外直豎。二中指二頭指反相叉。二大母指向外直豎。手掌背合即是其印。⁸¹

The rites described here in this text with a *terminus a quo* of 840 CE correspond to specific details of the Legendary Siege of Anxi and to the practice of marching behind a banner depicting Vaiśravaṇa described by Li Quan in the second half of the eighth century. The ritual procedures—the performance of *mudrā*, recitation of mantra, offerings presented to a painted image of the deity—also correspond to those found throughout the scriptures Amoghavajra produced in China during the second half of the eighth century. However, given its absence from the list of titles Amoghavajra submitted to the Tang throne, from subsequent imperial bibliographies, and from the Korean canon, we are most likely dealing here with an indigenous scripture attributed to Amoghavajra and in part modeled on the ritual procedures that he popularized. The specific reference to the *gua* is also a strong indication of the Chinese rather than Central Asian or Indic provenance of this text.

YORITOMI Motohiro's 1979 *Chūgoku Mikkyō no Kenkyū* (中国密教の研究) remains the most significant study of the imperial cult of Vaiśravaṇa and its connection with the Esoteric Buddhist traditions emerging from

the eighth century.⁸² In that study, Yoritomi dates the development of the imperial Vaiśravaṇa cult to the late Tang and Five Dynasties periods, and, consequently to sources other than Amoghavajra's career in the mid-eighth century. He appears led to this conclusion on the basis of his sources, the most significant of which is Zanning's (贊寧, 920–1001) *Great Song Dynasty History of the Saṃgha*.⁸³ However, evidence from the eighth century challenges this view, arguing for an earlier emergence of a Vaiśravaṇa cultus. And it is clear that there was a decided shift toward violence in the eighth century that accompanied this development. Evidence indicates that a military cult centered on Vaiśravaṇa had been established in China by the mid-eighth century, very probably resulting from a more general establishment of Central Asian peoples and cultural artifacts in Tang China. However, in a case of life imitating art, the Legendary Siege of Anxi seems to have spurred the creation of indigenous Chinese Esoteric Buddhist rituals devoted to the martial and violent Vaiśravaṇa.

The Legendary Siege of Anxi not only spurred the development of new, indigenous Chinese texts and ritual practices. It is also possible that the circulation of the story precipitated an alternation in Vaiśravaṇa's iconography. Vaiśravaṇa is typically depicted as grasping a weapon—typically a two-pointed spear—in his right hand and holding a pagoda in his left, though there are variations. A color image of Vaiśravaṇa on silk recovered at Dunhuang depicts him holding the two-pointed spear in his right hand with a pagoda sitting atop a cloud emanating from his left hand.⁸⁴ At the Longmen Grotto (龍門石窟), Vaiśravaṇa holds a pagoda in his right hand and his left hand rests on his hip. One still finds Vaiśravaṇa figured with this iconography in Chinese temples today. However, it is not uncommon to see Vaiśravaṇa holding not a pagoda in his right hand, but a rat. This is the manner in which he is depicted in the recently carved image at Lingyun Temple (凌雲寺) at the Great Buddha of Leshan site in Sichuan, for example. This iconography may reflect the shared association of Vaiśravaṇa and rats with wealth within a Chinese symbolic nexus, but it is just as likely a graphic reflection of the pairing of Vaiśravaṇa with rats in the Legendary Siege of Anxi.

CONCLUSION

The distinctions between myth and history, between truth and falsity, even between cause and effect are largely cultural determinations.

As scholars invested in the study of persons culturally different from ourselves—whether this springs from temporal or geographic distanciation—we must be alive to the fact that this determination in our culture, that of the modern academy, is not always consonant with that in which our sources were produced, circulated, encountered, and received. Scholarly analyses and considerations rooted in text-critical logical positivism and contemporary conceptions of genre literature, I would suggest, often spring from a failure to recognize this distinction. Such assumptions have limited our analyses of medieval Chinese literature and its relationship with real-world practices and events. They can preclude consideration of text as a constructive and dynamic motivator of historical events and developments.

Previous analyses of the Legendary Siege of Anxi have been based on assumptions concerning the causal relationship between myth and history, between fiction and fact, between the fictive narrative of the Legendary Siege of Anxi and actual Song dynasty practices. Following these readings, it is the established Song practices that spur the telling of the legend—Zanning relates the tale as a means of explaining the installation of Vaiśravaṇa images on city walls in the Song, for example. In the analyses provided above, I have sought to show that the dynamics behind the production of the Legendary Siege of Anxi and the causal relation between the telling of the tale and the real-world practices that it is related to are more complex than have heretofore been recognized. As deriving from Hellenic and Central Asian tales, the Legendary Siege of Anxi may be analyzed as the result of mythic diffusion and productive ambiguities in the Sinitic travel narrative genre, for example. But the Legendary Siege of Anxi also reflects the historical fact of Amoghavajra's assistance to the Tang emperors during the rebellion period. Through deconstructing the archeology of the narrative, the particular Sinitic contributions to the finished tale—the narrative frame concerning Amoghavajra and Emperor Xuanzong—are revealed. By considering this element from a structural perspective and in relation to documented historical events, we can see that the Legendary Siege of Anxi possesses a certain facticity. Finally, by recognizing the dynamics of Sinitic history, which possesses a facticity of a rather different nature than that of the modern historiographical enterprise, we may see the Legendary Siege of Anxi as a productive force in the development of Sinitic Buddhism. Represented by those who reproduced and disseminated the Legendary Siege of Anxi over

the centuries as an account of true historical events and presumably perceived as such by those who read it, the world of medieval Chinese Buddhism was made to conform to the reality of the text. The practice of installing Vaiśravaṇa on city walls may have been as much the effect of the Legendary Siege of Anxi as it was the cause of its retelling. Life imitates art. In this light we may consider the Legendary Siege of Anxi, and other such tales, as bearing a certain existential weight that contemporary historiographical approaches tend to ignore. We may reconsider our textual sources as dynamic, creative elements of the historical past rather than merely static descriptors.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Paul Demieville's references in the recently published English translation of his 1957 article "Bouddhisme et la guerre": Paul Demieville, "Buddhism and War," in *Buddhist Warfare*, ed. Michael K. Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17–57.

2. Valerie Hansen, for example, has approached the tale as a window into the influence of Central Asian cultic traditions on the development of city god traditions in China. Phyllis Granoff considered it in reference to the development of a widespread Vaiśravaṇa cult in China and Japan. Valerie Hansen, "Gods on Walls: A Case of Indian Influence on Chinese Lay Religion?" in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 75–113; Phyllis Granoff, "Tobatsu Bishamon: Three Statues in American Museums and the Rise of This Cult in East Asia," *East and West* 20, nos. 1–2 (1970): 144–168.

3. *Kangju* (康居), an independent kingdom located at what is still called Samarqand in Uzbekistan.

4. The text reads *dashi* (大石), which I take to be a variation of *dashi* (大食). *Dashi* (大食) is a transliteration of the Persian word *Tāzik*. Deriving from the name of the earliest Arab tribe to encounter the Persians, *Tāzik* came to connote "Arab/Arabic" (C.E. Bosworth and B.G. Fragner, "Tādik," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 2nd ed. [Leiden: Brill, 2010]; retrieved April 24, 2010, http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-1142). *Dashi* likely refers here to the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258) and its subjects. See Marc S. Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 221n5.

5. *Complete Record of the Buddhas and Patriarchs* (Fozu tongji, 佛祖統紀, T. 49.2035.375b4–13) by Zhi Pan (志磐), completed in 1269 CE.

6. Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T'ang* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 170n41.
7. MATSUMOTO Bunzaburō 松本文三郎, *Bukkyōshi zakkō* 仏教史雑考 (Ōsaka: Sōgensha, 1944), 287–290.
8. Valerie Hansen, “Gods on Walls,” 87.
9. T. 50.2061 and T. 54.2126, respectively.
10. *Xuzang jing* 續藏經 (Hongkong: Longmen shudian, 1968), T. 64.1261.390b13–c01.
11. T. 21.1248.
12. Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.141 (Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey De Sélincourt [London: Penguin, 2003], 153).
13. Xuanzang refers to the city-state as Kustana (Qusadanna, 瞿薩旦那). I have taken the liberty of changing this to Khotan for the sake of consistency.
14. T. 51.2087.944a21–b11.
15. In modern northern Afghanistan.
16. T. 51.2087.872c07–872c16.
17. *Taibai yin jing* (太白陰經). This translation of the title is based on Li Quan’s memorial of submission, the relevant line of which reads, “Your servant has heard that *Taibai* is the lord of arms and serves as general-in-chief, *yin* is the lord of killing. Therefore, in employing arms theirs is the method” (*Taibai yin jing* 1. submission memorial.1b). The precise meaning and proper translation of the title is, however, a source of some disagreement. Ralph Sawyer takes *yin* to refer to the moon (“Military Writings,” in *A Military History of China*, ed. David Andrew Graff and Robin Higham Graff [Boulder, CO, and Oxford: Westview, 2002], 108). David Graff tends to leave the title untranslated (see Graff and Graff, *A Military History of China*, 8; see also David A. Graff, “Narrative Maneuvers: The Representation of Battle in Tang Historical Writing,” in *Military Culture in Imperial China*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009], 143–164). The issue hinges on whether *tai* applies only to *bai* (*taibai*, Grand White; i.e., the planet Venus) or whether it has a distributive property and applies also to *yin* (*taiyin*, Grand Yin; i.e., the moon). If *tai* does not also apply to *yin*, then *yin* might have an adjectival function and the title would be translated as the *Secret* (or *Hidden*) *Scripture of Venus*. This is how Christopher Rand chooses to read the title (Christopher C. Rand, “Li Ch’uan and Chinese Military Thought,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39, no. 1 [June 1979]: 112). But based on the memorial of submission, I do not believe this to be accurate.
18. The precise dating of the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon* has been a source of disagreement. The memorial of submission, addressed to Emperor Suzong (肅

宗, r. 756–762), that accompanies the received version of the text is dated June 2, 759, when, according to that memorial, Li Quan was serving as a military official stationed in Youzhou (幽州), a prefecture-level administrative region in northern Hebei Circuit. Guo Shaolin (郭紹林), however, takes the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon* to have been written in 751 CE. Though it is not explicitly clear in Guo's essay, this is probably based on the standard biography of Li Quan contained in Du Guangting's (850–933 CE) *Biographies of People Who Encountered Divinities and Transcendents* (*Shenxian ganyu zhuan*, 神仙感遇傳, *Daozang* [Zhonghua daoang, 中華道藏] 592, fasc. 1 [Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2004]). According to that account, which is repeated in the *Comprehensive Record of the Taiping Era* (*Taiping guangji*, 太平廣記) completed in 978 CE, the *Scripture of Venus and Yin* (called the *Secret Tallies of Venus*, 太白陰符經, by Du) was composed when Li Quan was serving as a general and prior to his dismissal by Li Linfu (李林甫). Li Linfu died Dec. 26, 752 (*Jiu Tangshu*, 舊唐書, 9.226; Liu Xu [887–946], ed. [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju chubanshe, 1975; repr., 2002]). The preface to the received version of the text is dated the fourth year of Daizong's (代宗) *Yongtai* (永泰) reign period, an impossible date as there was no fourth year of this reign period. The reign title was changed in the second year of *Yongtai* to *Dali* (大曆) on Dec. 22, 766. It is quite possible that the erroneous date found in the preface to the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon* stems from an ignorance of such events due to disrupted communications between the central government and the provinces. If this is the case, then the preface would be from 768/9. For his part, Guo takes this date to be a copyist's error, but he accepts that the text was submitted during the reign of Emperor Daizong (r. 762–779). This supposition and the 759 date on the memorial of submission lead Guo to theorize that the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon* was written in 751 and originally submitted to Emperor Suzong during the An Lushan Rebellion period (755–ca. 765). Guo conjectures that the text was not initially well-received and was therefore resubmitted during Daizong's reign. I find this theory somewhat doubtful, but I see no compelling reasons to doubt that the *Scripture of Venus and the Moon* dates to the mid-eighth century. See Guo Shaolin 郭紹林, "Tangdai wenren Li Quan de bingshu Taibai yin jing" 唐代文人李筌的兵書《太白陰經》 ("The Tang Dynasty Literatus Li Quan's Military Text, *Taibai yin jing*"), *Xi'an waiguoyu xueyuan xuebao* 西安外國語學院學報 10, no. 2 (2002): 114. Also see FANG Li, *Taiping Guang Ji*, 10 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju: Xin hua shu dian Beijing fa xing suo fa xing, 2003), 1:101–102.

19. *Taibai yin jing*, fasc. 7, sect. 75, pp. 1b–2a.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Lu Hongzheng's (盧宏正) *Record of the Establishment of Tang Temples to the Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa* (*Xing Tangsi Pishamen tuanwang ji*, 興唐寺毗沙門天王記) from 838 relates the establishment of a Vaiśravaṇa cultus to the practice initiated by Emperor Xuanzong of painting the deity on banners

(*Quan Tangwen*, 全唐文, fasc. 730). In the Song dynasty *Annals of Images and Information* (*Tuhua jianwen zhi*, 圖畫見聞誌), Guo Rouxu (郭若虛), citing the stele at Xianguo Temple in Henan, reports that Xuanzong sent the artist Che Daozheng (車道政) to Khotan in order to obtain a model image of Vaiśravaṇa, which was subsequently used as the basis for painting his image at Xianguo Temple.

22. *Taibai yin jing*, 7.78.5b–6a.

23. The Luo, Xi, Khitan, and Shiwei were all non-Han peoples whose territories were on the northeastern frontier of the Sinitic imperium in what is now Heilongjiang (黑龍江) and eastern Inner Mongolia (內蒙古). See Elina-Qian Xu, *Historical Development of the Pre-Dynastic Khitan*, Publications of the Institute for Asian and African Studies, 7 (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2005), 155–236.

24. Modern Shijiazhuang (石家莊) in Hebei (河北).

25. *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, ed. SIMA Guang 司馬光 (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), fasc. 217, 天寶 14, sec. 19.

26. Near modern Sanmenxia (三門峽) on the Shanxi (山西) border of Henan (河南). Feb. 5, 756, the day that An Lushan announced the establishment of the Yan dynasty, was the first, and therefore auspicious, day of the year. *Zizhi tongjian*, fasc. 217, 德元年, sec. 1.

27. According to the *Comprehensive Mirror*, Geshu Han had been convalescing since Jan. 756 (*Zizhi tongjian*, fasc. 217, 天寶 14, sec. 17). For an account of the events at the Tong Pass see Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “The An Lu-Shan Rebellion and the Origins of Chronic Militarism in Late T’ang China,” in *Essays on Tang and Pre-Tang History*, ed. Edwin G. Pulleyblank (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 42–43.

28. Pulleyblank, “The An Lu-Shan Rebellion.”

29. *Zizhi tongjian*, fasc. 220, 至德 2, sec. 8.

30. *Jiu Tangshu* 104.3211.

31. *Jiu Tangshu* 10.241. Lingwu is on the Yellow River in Ningxia (寧夏) on the Inner Mongolian border.

32. *Jiu Tangshu* 10.242.

33. This is Li Yu (李豫), the eldest son of Emperor Suzong. Born Jan. 13, 727, he was enfeoffed as the Guangping Prince at the age of fifteen in 742–743 (*Jiu Tangshu* 11.267; *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 6.166 [ed. OUYANG Xiu 歐陽修 (Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju chubanshe, 1975; repr., 2002)]). In May to June 758 he became the heir apparent and was enthroned as emperor on May 16, 762 with the temple name Daizong (*Jiu Tangshu* 11.267–268).

34. *Zizhi tongjian*, fasc. 221, 上元 1, sec. 14.

35. Pulleyblank, "The An Lu-Shan Rebellion."
36. *Jiu Tangshu* 11.273–274.
37. *Jiu Tangshu* 11.274.
38. *Jiu Tangshu* 11.279; *Xin Tangshu*, 6.171, 224.6371. These are indigenous, non-Han peoples who inhabited what is now western Sichuan. (See Denis Crispin Twitchett and John King Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978], 428–430.)
39. *Jiu Tangshu* 11.279; *Xin Tangshu*, 224.6371. For the career of Pugu Huai'en and the events leading to his eventual rebellion and death, see Charles A. Peterson, "P'u-Ku Huai-En and the T'ang Court: The Limits of Loyalty," *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970–1971): 423–455.
40. For the specific vicissitudes of fortune that played out in battles between loyalist and rebel forces during the rebel occupation of Chang'an, see Pulleyblank, "The An Lu-Shan Rebellion."
41. *Jiu Tangshu* 68.3417. They specifically cite the *Humane Kings Scripture* in this regard.
42. *Jiu Tangshu* 10.245.
43. Pulleyblank, "The An Lu-Shan Rebellion."
44. *Jiu Tangshu* 49.6371.
45. *Jiu Tangshu* 11.279; *Xin Tangshu*, 49.6371.
46. *Jiu Tangshu* 114.3368–3370; *Xin Tangshu*, 224.6373–6374.
47. *Memorials and Edicts*, T. 52.2120.0834c02–0834c03.
48. *Wangshi* (王師); here parallel to Zhiguang, *wangshi* is a bureaucratic title for one of the crown prince's tutors. Here, though, it seems to refer to Amoghavajra as a "princely master" based on the reference in the concluding line concerning the "master's (*shi*, 師) protective recollection (*hu'nian*, 護念)."
49. *Zhuyi* (誅夷): literally "to punish Yi barbarians," invoking legal terminology and in reference to cultural or ethnic inferiority, the phrase most basically means to kill someone.
50. *Memorials and Edicts*, T. 55.2120.834c14–0834c15.
51. Even accurately predicting the date of Chang'an's recovery, if we are to believe Feixi's *Stele Inscription* (T. 52.2120.848c29–849a03).
52. *Dilisanmeiye budong zunshengzhe niansong mimi fa* (底哩三昧耶不動尊聖者念誦祕密法, *Trisamaya* I, T. 21.1201) and *Dilisanmeiye budong zun weinuwangshizheniansong fa* (底哩三昧耶不動尊威怒王使者念誦法, *Trisamaya* II, T. 21.1200).
53. Yuanzhao's *Record* includes a text referred to only as the *Trisamaya* (*dili*

sanmeiye, 底哩三昧耶). *The Great Tang “Honorable Prime” (785–805) Continuation of the “Opened Prime” [Period]* (Dec. 22, 713 to Feb. 9, 742) *Catalogue of Buddhist Teachings* (大唐貞元續開元釋教錄卷上, T. 55.2156.749a8).

54. *Trisamaya I* (T. 21.1201.21c27–22a2), *Trisamaya II* (T. 21.1200.11b25–29).

55. *Trisamaya I* (T. 21.1201.21c25–26), *Trisamaya II* (T. 21.1200.11b23–24).

56. *Trisamaya II* (T. 21.1200.11c8–10), *Trisamaya I* (T. 21.1201.22a20–22a22): 又法欲令設都嚕卒取土鹽蠟。苦練葉相和擣為泥。捻作彼形狀。置地上研斷。即卒若明稻穀燒。令彼捨都嚕即貧窮。

57. *Trisamaya II* (T. 21.1200.11c11–12), this roughly corresponds to *Trisamaya I* (T. 21.1201.22a22).

58. *Trisamaya II* (T. 21.1200.11c4–7), *Trisamaya I* (T. 21.1201.22a17–19).

59. Bruce Lincoln, “An Early Moment in the Discourse of ‘Terrorism’: Reflections on a Tale from Marco Polo,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 2 (Apr. 2006): 242.

60. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.152 (from Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. De Sélincourt, 468).

61. Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths?: An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 36.

62. *Dīgha Nikāya* 18 and *Dīgha Nikāya* 21, respectively. See Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 291–300, 321–334.

63. *Dīgha Nikāya* 32; Walshe, *The Long Discourses*, 471–478.

64. See Li-kouang Lin, “Punyodaya: Un propagateur du tantrisme en Chine et un Cambodge à l’époque de Hiuen-Tsang,” *Journal Asiatique* 227 (1935): 85–86, 89, 100.

65. The *Scripture of the Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa* (毘沙門天王經, T. 21.1249) translated by Dharmadeva (Fatian, 法天) in the tenth century is sometimes cited as an independent version of the *Aṭṭhānāṭiya* (Peter Skilling, *Mahāsūtras: Great Discourses of the Buddha*, Vol. 2, Parts I & II [Oxford: Pāḷi Text Society, 1997], 66).

66. There are three extant versions of the *Scripture of Golden Light* (*Jingguangming jing*, 金光明經): Dharmakṣema’s translation from 414–421 CE (金光明經, T. 16.663), the translation of Baogui (寶貴) from 597 CE (合部金光明經, T. 16.664), and Yijing’s (義淨) version from 703 CE (T. 16.665).

67. Dharmakṣema’s version is T. 16.663, *Jingguangming jing* (金光明經).

68. T. 16.663.340c25.

69. T. 16.663.343c5–6.

70. T. 16.665, *Jing guangming zuishen wangjing* (金光明昀勝王經).
71. *Pishamen tianwang jing* (毘沙門天王經, T. 21.1244).
72. *Collected Memorials and Edicts* (T. 21.2120.839c04); *Continuation of the Kaiyuan Catalogue* (T. 55.2156.749b05, 749c20–751a02).
73. *Foguang dacidian* (佛光大辭典), ed. Xingyundashi 星雲大師 et al. (Peking: Peking tu shu guan chu ban she, 1989), 6529.
74. T. 1244.0215b29–c01.
75. For Lakṣmī as a Buddhist goddess see Miranda Eberle Shaw, *Buddhist Goddesses of India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 94–109.
76. T. 21.1248, *Beifang Pishaen tianwang suijun hufa zhenyan* (北方毘沙門天王隨軍護法真言).
77. *Catalogue of the Numinous Peak Monastery* (Ryōgan-ji, 靈巖寺) Monk (靈巖寺和尚請來法門道具等目錄, T. 55.2164). The *Mantra Method* is cited at p. 1072b18.
78. Reading ru (如) for ru (乳).
79. *Xunluxiang* (薰陸香): *kunduruka* is a variety of frankincense.
80. There is a textual variant here. The Taishō editors chose to read this as *zhenxin* (真心), “sincerity, sincerely,” but a variant texts provides this as *chenxin* (瞋心), indicating a thought or intention characterized by intense rage and enmity. I have elected to follow the latter based on the character of this rite in particular and of the entire text itself and also based on an assumption that *zhenxin* (真心) is likely a bowdlerizing interpolation.
81. T. 51.1248.227a28–b11.
82. YORITOMI Motohiro 頼富本宏, *Chūgoku Mikkyō no Kenkyū: Hannya to Sannei no Mikkyō Rikai o Chushin to Shite* 中国密教の研究: 般若と贊寧の密教理解を中心として (Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha 大東出版社, 1979), 147–159.
83. *Da song seng shilu* (大宋僧史略, T. 4.2126).
84. Stein Painting 45.

Guṇabhadra and Bodhidharma: Remarks about Their School Affiliation

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Guṇabhadra (394–468 CE) was a brahmin from Central India, Madhyadeśa, converted to Buddhism by the *Miśrakābhīdharmahṛdaya*,¹ a Sautrāntika *śāstra*, commenting on Dharmaśreṣṭhin's *Abhidharma-hṛdaya*.² The author of the *Miśraka*^o was a Gandhāran Dharmatrāta writing in the early fourth century. Guṇabhadra must have been converted early in the fifth century. Non-Vaibhāṣikas were receptive to Mahāsāṅghika developments, reacting to them. Mahāsāṅghikas reacted to Sthāvirīya developments too.

SARVĀSTIVĀDA

Sarvāstivāda (proclaiming that everything exists) is a term which may be used throughout the history of this school (*nikāya*, or *bu*, 部). They were very heterogeneous, but they all agreed on *sarvāstivāda*. What *sarvam* (everything) and even *asti* (exists) really meant was debated among them. In the time of Kaniṣka I (155–ca. 179 CE³) a deep split occurred. A new Sarvāstivāda “orthodoxy” was established in Kaśmīra. It had an *Abhidharma* of seven Sanskrit texts, said to be proclaimed by Buddha in heaven, and a Sanskrit *Vinaya*, called *Daśabhāṇavāra*, “in ten recitations,” having removed most of the illustrating stories, *dr̥ṣṭāntas*, of the traditional *Vinaya*.⁴ Traditional Sarvāstivādins in northern India and in Jibin (罽賓, Uḍḍiyāna, Gandhāra, and also Bactria⁵), not agreeing with the *Abhidharma* of the new “orthodoxy,” could now be called Sautrāntikas. Their first master (*mūlācārya*) was Kumāralāta (ca. 150 CE⁶). Using the traditional, long *Vinaya* from Mathurā, they were also called Dārṣṭāntikas.⁷ Many modern scholars, discussing Sarvāstivāda Buddhism, normally reserve the term Sarvāstivāda for the new Vaibhāṣika “orthodoxy” in Kaśmīra. The non-Vaibhāṣikas gradually

accepted new “orthodox” ideas, as can be seen in the *vibhāṣās*⁸ on the *Aṣṭaśāstra* and in the commentaries on the *Abhidharmahṛdaya*.⁹ By the end of the seventh century the term *Mūlasarvāstivāda* appears. Because they use the long *Vinaya*, they may be seen as a continuation of *Dārṣṭāntikas*.¹⁰ *Vaibhāṣikas* now looked like just one more group of *Sarvāstivādins*.

*Sthaviravāda*¹¹ Buddhism spread from *Madhyadeśa* to traditional *Jibin* via *Mathurā*. *Sarvāstivāda* and *Pudgalavāda* (*Vātsīputrīya*/*Sāṃmitīya*) spread there. *Vibhajyavādins*, namely *Mahīśāsakas*,¹² went there too. *Mahāsāṅghikas* followed on the way to *Gandhāra*. *Bactria* became mainly *Sthavira* territory, namely *Sarvāstivāda*, *Pudgalavāda*, and *Vibhajyavāda*. *Gandhāra* became a mainly *Mahāsāṅghika* area, but the area close to the *Khyber Pass* was still *Sthaviravāda*. *Sthaviras* could still be seen in *Uḍḍiyāna*, to the north of *Gandhāra* proper.¹³ From *Uḍḍiyāna* there was easy access to *Hotan* (和田), certainly during *Kuṣāṇa* times (first to third century CE¹⁴). I should immediately add that *Mahāsāṅghikas* were not unimportant in *Bactria* too, e.g., in *Termez*. In *Madhyadeśa* non-*Vaibhāṣikas* and *Mahāsāṅghikas* were quite numerous. Many *brahmins* converted to Buddhism there (even during the lifetime of the Buddha); for example, *Harivarman* (ca. 300 CE)¹⁵ was converted to *Kumāralāta*’s kind of Buddhism.

KARMIC SEEDS AND A TATHĀGATA EMBRYO

Ever since the first schism between the *Sthaviras* and *Mahāsāṅghikas*, both groups reacted to the developments of their antagonists. For example, it is quite possible that *Nāgārjuna*’s Sanskrit southern *Mahāsāṅghika* *Madhyamaka* group must be seen in the context of the establishing of the new *Vaibhāṣika* “orthodoxy” to the north. *Mahāsāṅghika* emptiness and *Prajñāpāramitā* literature present in both *Gandhāra* and in *Madhyadeśa* seem to have resulted in the *Sarvāstivāda* belief in an existing *ālayavijñāna*, storehouse or receptacle-consciousness. The compilation of the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* is an early example of this development, which was composed no later than the third century.¹⁶ The receptacle contained karmic seeds. The *Saṃdhinirmocana* may be seen as a non-*Vaibhāṣika* reaction to *Mahāsāṅghika* emptiness, becoming “*Mahāyāna*” in the process. But apparently *Mahāsāṅghikas* did not react to *Cittamātra* Buddhism. *Asaṅga* (late fourth century), a *Mahīśāsaka* monk, continued the traditional *Yogācāra* of *Sarvāstivādins* in his native *Gandhāra*.¹⁷ Ever

since Kuṣāṇa times the so-called later Mahīśāsakas in Jibin were seen as a sub-group of Sarvāstivādins there.¹⁸ Asaṅga took in Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika ideas in his new Yogācāra, becoming "Mahāyāna" in the process. In Madhyadeśa the same rivalry must have taken place. Bactrian Sarvāstivādins seem to have known about a development from the idea of karmic seeds to a receptacle (*garbha*, womb) of an embryonic *tathāgata*. All living beings already have the buddha-nature (*foxing*, 佛性; *buddhagotra*),¹⁹ but it is covered over by impurity. *Xing* (性) hardly ever translates *dhātu* (element; *jie*, 界). This Sautrāntika development is very easy to understand. It may have taken place early in the third century.²⁰ Mahāsāṅghikas accepted that all living beings can grow to full buddhahood, are potential buddhas. Buddhābhadra (359–429 CE), a Sautrāntika whose Buddhism has a Bactrian origin, translated the first *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* in 420 CE.²¹ Is there, besides a natural development from seed to embryo, also a reaction to or an influence of popular Puṅgalavāda ideas in Bactria (*puṅgala*, *ātman*)? The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, as translated by Dharmarddhin in 421 CE, has a second part which may be of non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivāda origin.²² Today one may call non-Vaibhāṣikas Mūlasarvāstivādins, but in the fifth century the term did not exist. They were called Sarvāstivādins, Sautrāntikas, or eventually Dārṣṭāntikas, depending on their use of the *Vinaya*. Around 400 CE the road from Bactria to Kuqa (庫車) and Guzang (姑藏; Liangzhou, 凉州; Wuwei, 武威) was well travelled. Around that time Kroraina (Loulan, 樓蘭) was deserted. Niya (Jingjue, 精絕) had been deserted a while earlier. The southern road was controlled by Shanshan (鄯善), which was annexed by Wei (魏) ca. 445 CE.²³ The southern road remained important because of the link of Uḍḍiyāna with Hotan and on to Tibet. But at the end of the fourth century and later many Indians went to China from Bactria, and Chinese went to India, i.e., to Bactria. I mention the Sautrāntikas Saṅghadeva, Buddhābhadra, and Saṅghabhadra.²⁴ The Indians left Jibin, the Western Regions (Xiyu, 西域), namely Bactria.²⁵ The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* also seems to have travelled to China along this road. *Tathāgatagarbha* in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* is seen as the "true self," everlasting and pure, within all beings. Some non-Vaibhāṣika ideas in Bactria, e.g., belief in Avalokiteśvara, seem to have been taken up by Mahāsāṅghikas there, resulting in an *ekayāna*, unique vehicle.²⁶ The *dramatis personae* of such texts as the *Angulimāliya-sūtra*, a *tathāgatagarbha* text, e.g., Mañjuśrī (of Gandhāran Mahāsāṅghika origin), are a clear indication. This *ekayāna*

can be seen in such texts as the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Siwei lüeyao fa* (思惟略要法). This last text may have been written down by Chinese monks in Jiankang (建康), based on the instructions of a Bactrian Mahāsāṅghika monk there (Dharmamitra from Jibin, the Gandhāran area?).²⁷ The originally Sautrāntika *tathāgataḡarbha* idea seems to have been immediately taken up by Mahāsāṅghikas. This *ekayāna* is also found in the Avanti area (Paramārtha, 499–569 CE),²⁸ and in Madhyadeśa. Because links between Bactria and southeastern India were quite frequent,²⁹ it is no surprise that Mahāsāṅghikas in Andhra accepted the *tathāgataḡarbha* idea. The *Śrīmālāsīmhanāda-sūtra* may well have been written there in the third century.³⁰ The term *ekayāna* was used by Mahāsāṅghikas who had assimilated Sautrāntika developments. Mahāsāṅghika Mahāyāna acknowledged the Sarvāstivāda contribution in the use of the term *ekayāna*.

A SARVĀSTIVĀDIN CALLED MAHĀYĀNA: GUṆABHADRA (394–468 CE)

Guṇabhadra's biography is found in Sengyou's (僧祐, 445–518 CE) *Chu sanzang ji ji* (出三藏記集, T. 55.2145:105b17–106b21). Sengyou, a *Vinaya* specialist in southern China, certainly was very familiar with what had recently happened to Guṇabhadra there. Also Huijiao's (慧皎, 497–554 CE) *Gaoseng zhuan* (高僧傳, ca. 530 CE, T. 50.2059:344a5–34a23), informs us about Guṇabhadra. In these biographies Guṇabhadra (Qiuna Batuluo, 求那跋陀羅) is called Batuo (跋陀), omitting the *luo* from his “given name.” He was a brahmin from Madhyadeśa converted to Sarvāstivāda Buddhism by Dharmatrāta's *Misrakābhīdharmahr̥daya*. Many brahmins were converted to Sautrāntika Buddhism in northern India. He then also studied Mahāsāṅghika literature, namely *Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*. He received the bodhisattva precepts. He probably sailed from the port of Tāmraliptī to Śrī Laṅkā, sailing along the coast of Andhra. He then set sail to Guangzhou (廣州), where he arrived in 435 CE. The following year he reached the capital of the Liu Song (劉宋, 420–479 CE), Yangdu (楊都), Jiankang (Nanjing, 南京). Emperor Wen (文, 424–453 CE) had the Chinese monks Huiyan (慧嚴) and Huiguan (慧觀) assist him. Guṇabhadra did not know Chinese. He made his most influential translations in Jiankang during the years 436–446 CE. Baoyun (寶雲, 376–449 CE) did most of the translating, and Huiguan wrote down the Chinese. Huiguan and Huiyan were quite interested in the *Lotus Sūtra*, a text which was popular in Jiankang.³¹ They had become *ekayāna* believers. Guṇabhadra then

went to Jingzhou (荊州) and translated some more, assisted by Fayong (法勇). He stayed in Jingzhou for ten years. Sengyou (105c17–20) mentions eight titles of translations: *Wuyou wang* (無憂王), about Aśoka; *Guoqu xianzai yinguo* (過去現在因果); *Wuliangshou jing* (無量壽經), the smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha*; *Nihuan jing* (泥洹經, *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*); *Yangjue Moluo jing* (央掘魔羅經, *Aṅgulimālīya-sūtra*); *Xiangxu jietuo jing* (相續解脫經, *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*); *Ba jixiang jing* (八吉祥經); and *Diyiyi wu xiang lüe* (第一義五相略). REN Jiyou says that in Jingzhou he brought out his work about the Pure Land and paradise.³² In 454 CE his protector Liu Yixuan (劉義宣) attempted an ill-fated insurgency. This meant that the translation activities ended.

Sengyou brought out his famous and reliable catalogue, the *Chu sanzang ji ji* (出三藏記集), in 515–518 CE, not long after Guṇabhadra had passed away. In it (T. 55.2145:12c19–13a4) he mentions thirteen titles of texts by Guṇabhadra. Four had already been lost so soon after his death. The thirteen titles are:

1. *Za ahan jing* (雜阿含經, *Samyuktāgama*, T. 2.99, fifty fascicles). This text is a non-Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika Sarvāstivāda version, brought out in 443 CE, in the temple called Waguan Si (瓦官寺), according to Zhisheng's *Kaiyuan lu* (智昇 開元錄, T. 55.2154:528a23–24) of 730 CE. Zhisheng mentions that the *Gaoseng zhuan* says that the text was translated in the Zhihuan Si (祇洹寺, Jetavana Temple) in the capital. Sengyou (105c13) also says that the text was translated in the Zhihuan Si. Zhisheng (T. 55.2154:528a23–24) mentions that the translation was made by Baoyun, based on the Sanskrit text brought back from Śrī Laṅkā (Sengyou, T. 55.2145:112a25–26) to China by Faxian.³³ Both Chinese monks had travelled together to Gandhāra.

2. *Da fa gu jing* (大法故經, *Mahābherihāraka*, T. 9.270). A *tathāgata-garbha* text brought out in the Dong'an Si (東安寺).

3. *Shengman shizi hou yisheng da fangbian fangguang jing* (勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經, *Śrīmālāsīmhanāda*, T. 12.353), a *tathāgata-garbha* text. Baoyun is responsible for the translation. Did Guṇabhadra pick up this *ekayāna* text on his way to Śrī Laṅkā?

4. *Ba jixiang jing* (八吉祥經, T. 14.430). This text was brought out in 452 CE in Jingzhou, says Zhisheng's *Kaiyuan lu* (T. 55.2154:528b21–22). Zhisheng mentions that this is the third translation, after Zhi Qian's *Ba jixiang shenzhou jing* (支謙 八吉祥神咒經, T. 14.427), and after Dharmarakṣa's *Ba yang shenzhou jing* (八陽神咒經, T. 14.428). *Shenzhou* seems to mean *dhāraṇī*, a term which is mentioned in the text,

namely *tuoluoni* (陀羅尼; 75b29). The short text may be of Gandhāran Mahāsāṅghika origin. It mentions eight buddhas, their names, and their fields (paradises) to the east.³⁴ The contents of the text certainly help explain its popularity in China, an eastern “paradise.” Guṇabhadra’s text has been wrongly attributed to Saṅghavarman (Sengqie Poluo, 僧伽婆羅, 460–524 CE),³⁵ a monk from Funan (扶南, mainly Cambodia). He was active in Jiankang during the years 506–520 CE, during the reign of Wu (武) of the Liang (梁). The postface in Sengyou’s catalogue (T. 55.2145:68a2–8) mentions Guṇabhadra as the author.

5. *Lengqie abaduoluo bao jing* (楞伽阿跋多羅寶經, *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, T. 16.670). Its four fascicles were brought out in the Daochang Si (道場寺) in 443 CE. Baoyun translated and Huiguan wrote it down. This text combines storehouse-consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) and the *tathāgatagarbha* idea. Storehouse-consciousness is translated “phonetically” as *aliye shi* (阿梨耶識) or *alaiye shi* (阿賴耶識), and “meaningfully” as *zang shi* (藏識), *zang* (藏) meaning storehouse or receptacle. *Zang* also is the translation of *garbha* in *tathāgatagarbha*. This Chinese translation of *garbha* obscures the meaning(s) of *garbha*.³⁶ While storehouse-consciousness remained Sautrāntika, *tathāgatagarbha* immediately became *ekayāna*, an originally Sautrāntika development assimilated by Mahāsāṅghikas. This text was the first translation. Fei Zhangfang’s *Lidai sanbao ji* (費長房 歷代三寶紀, T. 40.2034:84b7 and 24) of 597 CE erroneously mentions a first, lost translation by Dharmarddhin. Sengyou does not mention this. Fei often attributes a translation of Baoyun to Dharmarddhin, e.g., Baoyun’s *Buddhacarita* of 421 CE.³⁷ In Fei’s catalogue Guṇabhadra is supposed to have translated seventy-eight titles. Zhisheng’s *Kaiyuan lu* (T. 55.2154:523b25 and 528c21) reduces this number to fifty-two. The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* is said by NAKAMURA Hajime, based on the work of D.T. Suzuki, to be compiled ca. 400 CE or in the fourth century. Did Guṇabhadra compose the text himself, having his own descent to Laṅkā in mind?³⁸ He certainly had the means, motive, and opportunity for this hypothesis. His educational background, writings, and social context points in that direction. Sengyou (T. 55.2145:106b16) says that all his life he was a vegetarian, as one should be according to the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, in which every sentient being has the buddha-nature. Guṇabhadra’s own doctrinal background was Sautrāntika and *ekayāna*. There are quite some brahmanical elements in the text. Thinking of the supposed visits of the Buddha to the island, the text is set in the fortress of Rāvaṇa, *rākṣasa* king of Laṅkā, known from the

Rāmāyana. The Buddha instructs Mahāmāti there. Sāṃkhya and other brahmanical schools are mentioned. If the brahmin Guṇabhadra did not compile the text himself, he certainly was very close. Because of this text he was sometimes considered the true last Indian patriarch of Chan (禪), who introduced Chan to China.³⁹ Early Chan became known as the Laṅkā school in China. Bodhidharma allegedly transmitted the four fascicles to his Chinese disciple Huīkē (慧可). There is a Tibetan translation based on Guṇabhadra's text, made by the bilingual Tibetan Chos'grub (active in Dunhuang ca. 832–865 CE in Mūlasarvāstivāda times), alias Facheng (法成).

6. *Yangjue Moluo jing* (央掘魔羅經, *Aṅgulimālīya-sūtra*, T. 2.120). A *tathāgatagarbha* text.

7. *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing* (過去現在因果經, T. 3.189). Narrative literature, not found in the *āgamas*.

8. *Xiangxu jietuo jing* (相續解脫經, *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*, T. 16.678), a partial and first Chinese version of the famous Cittamātra text, best known in Xuanzang's (玄奘) version, *Jie shen mi jing* (解深密經, T. 16.676).⁴⁰ As is so often the case, Xuanzang again translates a text previously brought out by Paramārtha, *Jie jie jing* (解節經, T. 16.677). This is a very early text about storehouse-consciousness. The final text was put together no later than 300 CE, but some material may be as early as the second century. Sautrāntikas believe that actions sow seeds in the mental continuum of a sentient being. This mental continuum continues through the lifetime. *Xiangxu* (相續) is this continuum (*saṃtati*, *saṃdhi*). *Jietuo* (解脫) means deliverance. Guṇabhadra knew this early Cittamātra text, not Asaṅga's Gandhāran Yogācāra.

9. *Diyiyi wu xiang lue* (第一義五相略), one fascicle, further unknown to me. Zhisheng also mentions this text (T. 55.2154:528c20).

Sengyou further mentions four texts, already lost. They are: 10. *Shi liushier jian* (釋六十二見), apparently an abhidharmic text about sixty-two wrong views, also mentioned by Zhisheng (T. 55.2154:528c10). 11. *Nihuan jing* (泥洹經), a *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. 12. *Wuliangshou jing* (無量壽經), one fascicle. Zhisheng (T. 55.2154:528b19) mentions that this text was the smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, a second translation, after Kumārajīva's version to the north. *Wuliangshou* (無量壽, Amitāyus), indeed, is the southern term for Amitābha. Is there maybe confusion here because of the larger *Sukhāvatīvyūha* (*Wuliangshou jing*, 無量壽經), brought out in Jiankang by Baoyun in 421 CE? This text fits in with Guṇabhadra's Sautrāntika Buddhism. The Pure Land was of Bactrian Sautrāntika

origin.⁴¹ Is Baoyun also the reason for the confusion concerning the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, a text being revised in Jiankang? 13. *Wuyou wang jing* (無憂王經), one fascicle, a text about King Aśoka, brought out in Jingzhou. The text is mentioned by Zhisheng (T. 55.2154:528c3). This king and his *stūpas* were used to promote Buddhism in southern China.⁴²

The Taishō edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka contains twenty-eight titles of texts attributed to Guṇabhadra, many of them narratives linked with *āgamas*, which is quite normal for a Sautrāntika. These include, for example, *Yingwu jing* (鸚鵡經, T. 1.79) and *Bimosu jing* (毘摩肅經, T. 1.90), for the *Madhyamāgama*; and *Si ren chuxian shijian jing* (四人出現世間經, T. 2.127), *Shiyi xiangsi nian Rulai jing* (十一想思念如來經, T. 2.138), and *Asuda jing* (阿遯達經, T. 2.141) for the *Ekottarikāgama*.⁴³ *Dayi jing* (大意經, T. 3.177) is about Mahāmati, who received instruction in Laṅkā. There are texts about Pure Land (*Ba yiqie yezhang genben de sheng Jingtu shenzhou*, 拔一切業障根本得生淨土神咒, T. 12.368) and paradise (*Da fanguang bao qie jing*, 大方廣寶篋經, *Kāraṇḍakavyūha*, T. 14.462). More narrative literature includes *Mohejiaye* (or *Mohe Jiaye*) *du pin mu jing* (摩訶迦葉度貧母經, T. 14.497). *Shen Rier ben jing* (申日兒本經, T. 14.536) and *Lao mu nü liu ying jing* (老母女六英經, T. 14.560) are very doubtful, says Li An.⁴⁴ *Shi er toutuo jing* (十二頭陀經, T. 17.783), about ascetic practices, had some influence in Chan circles. It reminds one of Buddhābhaddra's Yogācāra practices. The *Gaoseng zhuan* mentions that Guṇabhadra studied the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* in India. So does Sengyou (105b25–26). This text was translated to Chinese in 418–420/422 CE by Buddhābhaddra in *Da fanguang Fo huayan jing* (大方廣佛華嚴經, T. 9.278). He translated a text brought from Hotan by the Tokharian Faling (法領), who was sent to Central Asia by Huiyuan (慧遠) to look for more literature.⁴⁵ Was this text, of Mahāsāṅghika affiliation, translated by Buddhābhaddra because of his links with Huiyuan? Mahāsāṅghika Buddhism of Gandhāran origin was not Buddhābhaddra's kind of Buddhism, even though he also helped translate Faxian's text of the *Mahāsāṅghikavinaya*, *Mohesengqi* (or *zhi*) *lü* (摩訶僧祇律, T. 22.1425). It is quite possible that Guṇabhadra's alleged links with Hotan and Mahāsāṅghika Buddhism can be explained by his earlier studies in Madhyadeśa, and by the previous activities of Buddhābhaddra, who had passed away in 429 CE, and of his Chinese disciples in Jiankang. Also, T. 19.1013, *Anantuomuqu* (*Anantamukha*, 阿難陀目佉) *nihelituo* (or *tuo*, 尼呵離陀) *jing* (經), known as *Anantamukhanirhārādhārāṇī*, can be

explained in this context. Buddhābhadra also brought out his version, *Chusheng wuliang men chi jing* (出生無量門持經, T. 19.1012). What is the exact Sanskrit word for Guṇabhadra's *nihelituo* or *niheli tuo*? *Nirhāra* (*niheli*) *dhāraṇī* (*tuo*)? One may also consider a term such as *niḥśṛta* (*chusheng*, 出生). As a brahmin Guṇabhadra may have been familiar with *dhāraṇīs*. Sengyou (55.2145:105b20) mentions that in India he had studied *zhoushu* (咒術), which may be translated as *mantravidyā*. The text, *Wuliang men weimi chi jing* (無量門微密持經, T. 19.1011), was already in China with Zhi Qian in the third century. This short text was quite popular in China. Also Saṅghavarman (Sengqie Poluo, 僧伽婆羅) later brought a version, *Shelifu tuoluoni jing* (舍利弗陀羅尼經, T. 19.1016). There further are some titles, such as *Zui fu baoying jing* (罪福報應經, T. 17.747), *Shier pin shengsi jing* (十二品生死經, 17.753), and *Si pin xue fa jing* (四品學法經, T. 17.771), which deal with doctrinal matters. It may be remembered that for every erroneous attribution there is at least one reason. Finally there is *Zhongshi fen apitan lun* (眾事分阿毘曇論, *Prakaraṇapādaśāstra*, T. 26.1541), translated by Guṇabhadra and his disciple Bodhiyaśas in 443 CE. I have said that non-Vaibhāṣikas also had seven *abhidharma* texts, reacting to the “orthodoxy” in Kaśmīra. Their texts, of course, were not the Vaibhāṣika ones.⁴⁶ This text is one of them. In the days of Guṇabhadra Sautrāntikas already had grown doctrinally closer to the “orthodoxy.”

From all this it has become very clear that Guṇabhadra was a Sautrāntika brahmin, familiar with *avadāna* literature and with *āgamas*. He was familiar with non-Vaibhāṣika *abhidharma* and with the latest developments within Sautrāntika circles (*ālayavijñāna* and *tathāgatagarbha*, *Sukhāvati*). His Mahāsāṅghika background in India had made him a true believer of the buddha-nature idea, a true ekayanist. He even may have compiled the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* himself.

BODHIDHARMA (IN CHINA CA. 479, DIED CA. 530 CE)

Most sources say that Bodhidharma was the third son of “royalty” in South India. Daoxuan (道宣, 645 CE), Jingjue (淨覺, ca. 720 CE), and Du Fei (杜朏, ca. 710–720 CE) say that he was a brahmin,⁴⁷ but Daoyuan (道原, 1004 CE) says he was a *kṣatriya*.⁴⁸ Daoyuan also mentions that his family came from Xiangzhi (香至), Gandhavatī, i.e., the Gandhāran cultural area.⁴⁹ Tanlin (曇林, fl. 506–574 CE),⁵⁰ a disciple of Bodhidharma, says Bodhidharma came from South India, from Xiyu, the Western Regions.⁵¹ Xiyu may be the westernmost part of Jibin, of the Gandhāran

cultural area, i.e., Bactria. So, Tanlin says his master came from South India, from Bactria. We know that Sasanians attacked Bactria in 442 CE. Fighting ended in 467 CE, but even before that time Sasanians had destroyed Termez, ca. 360–370 CE.⁵² Furthermore, mid-fifth century Hephthalites were in Bactria.⁵³ The parents of Bodhidharma apparently left a troubled region and went south. He may have been a brahmin, but *kṣatriyas* are better known as traders. Yang Xuanzhi (楊衒之) writes in 547 CE that Bodhidharma was a westerner (*huren*, 胡人) from Persia, in the Western Regions.⁵⁴ Bodhidharma's family may well have been Persians from Bactria who went south. Links between Bactria and southeastern India had existed for centuries at the time.⁵⁵

Bodhidharma travelled by sea to China, arriving there in Nanyue (南越), in Liu Song territory.⁵⁶ It is mentioned that his teaching met with opposition. He went north to northern Henan (河南) during the Northern Wei (北魏, 386–534 CE; the capital was initially Pingcheng, 平城, but from 495 CE it was Luoyang, 洛陽). He indeed crossed seas and mountains on his way to northern Henan. In the period 516–526 CE he may have visited the Yongning Si (永寧寺) in Luoyang.⁵⁷ He is said to have gone to the Shaolin Si (少林寺) on Song Shan (嵩山), and to have practiced “wall contemplation.”⁵⁸ Songyun (宋雲), on his way back to Luoyang, reportedly met Bodhidharma in the “Onion Range” (Congling, 蔥嶺, Pamir). Songyun left Luoyang in 518 CE and returned in 522 CE.⁵⁹ Bodhidharma supposedly was on his way west. One should remember that his place of origin was Bactria. Bodhidharma may have died ca. 530 CE.⁶⁰ He is said to have passed on the four fascicles of Guṇabhadra's translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* to his disciple Huike (ca. 485–ca. 555 or 574 CE⁶¹).

SAUTRĀNTIKA-BASED TEACHING

Bodhidharma's Buddhism ultimately came from Bactria, the area of *tathāgatagarbha*. Because this idea was immediately taken up by Mahāsāṅghikas, as seen in their *Śrīmālāsīṃhanāda* in South India, this kind of Buddhism was called *ekayāna*, a Mahāsāṅghika term. Tanlin was a specialist in this text.⁶² Guṇabhadra, who also left the south to travel to China, brought the combination of storehouse-consciousness and *ekayāna* *tathāgatagarbha* to China in his *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*. It is quite understandable that his Buddhism and Bodhidharma's, coming from southern India, cannot be separated. Jingjue calls Guṇabhadra the first patriarch in China, but by far most scholars call Bodhidharma

the first patriarch. He was a man of practice, who apparently did not write or translate any text. When one looks at the lists of Chan patriarchs, it is striking that many names are of Sautrāntikas. The earliest list of Sautrāntika patriarchs can be found in Sengyou's catalogue (T. 55.2145:89a20–b30). Here one finds the names of fifty-three Sarvāstivāda patriarchs. The last few names make the link with Buddhābhadda and his teacher Buddhāsena clear. The list of twenty-eight Indian Chan patriarchs, beginning with Kāśyapa, still mostly contains Sautrāntika names, even many Bactrians, such as Dhītika. The fact that Bodhidharma did not write anything himself made him quite acceptable to Shenhui (神會, 684–758 CE), the dissident who from 730 CE on attacked what he called Shenxiu's (神秀) Northern school.⁶³ His dissent was the beginning of the so-called Southern school, which favored the “Diamond Cutter,” *Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. Kumārajīva's translation (*Jīngang boreboluomi jīng*, 金剛般若波羅蜜經, T. 8.235)⁶⁴ was quite influential at the time. Shenxiu and his disciples called their school the East Mountain Teaching, referring to Daoxin (道信, 580–651 CE) and Hongren (弘忍, 601–674 CE). So, the focus shifted to Mahāsāṅghika Prajñāpāramitā. One can see that the old Sthavira (Sautrāntika) versus Mahāsāṅghika dynamics were still active, even in China. The Chinese tradition that a school is not *Vinaya* based, but text based, helps explain the shift. Scholars have looked into the use of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* by the East Mountain school. But, as may be expected in a school which does not encourage scholarly learning at all, the use of this text has been seen as limited.

ACCESS VIA PRINCIPLE AND ACCESS VIA FOUR BEHAVIORS

This short text, *Er ru si xing lun* (二入四行論), was probably written by Tanlin, the scholarly disciple of Bodhidharma.⁶⁵ He may have written down the teaching of his master, informed by Huike. Tanlin then added his preface. Bodhidharma's disciples accepted this text as the core of the master's teaching.⁶⁶ The text explains the two accesses (*er ru*, 二入) of *li* (理), principle, and *xing* (行), practice or behavior. There are four behaviors, *si xing* (四行).

The text begins with an explanation of the “true nature” (*zhen xing*, 真性, *tattva*), i.e., the buddha-nature, the potential for buddhahood present in all sentient beings. In this passage “wall contemplation” is mentioned, meaning being “fixed in *śamatha*,” tranquillity (*zhi*, 止).⁶⁷ This practice reminds one of Zhiyi's (智顗, 538–597 CE)

writings. *Śamatha* is a practice developing one's ability to focus on an object. Principle (true nature) is the ultimate reality underlying all phenomena.

Then follows an explanation of the four kinds of behavior:

1. The practice of retribution of enmity, *bao yuan xing* (報怨行), i.e., accepting all suffering as fruition of one's past evil.
2. The practice of going along with the conditions, *sui yuan xing* (隨緣行, *pratyaya*).
3. The practice of absence of any wish, *wu suoqiu xing* (無所求行). *Qiu* (求) means *iṣṭ*°, to wish. Wishes mean suffering.
4. The practice of accordance with the dharma, *chen fa xing* (稱法行), i.e., doing away with wrong thoughts and practicing the six perfections (*pāramitās*), understanding emptiness.

These four practices constitute *vipaśyanā* (*guan*, 觀, insight), explained as *prajñā*, *dharmapracicaya* (investigation of factors).

What is immediately striking is the resemblance with *wu men chan* (五門禪), “five gates *dhyāna*,” but now *ru* (入), access, is used, not *men* (門), gate. *Wu men chan* is a traditional practice, very popular in China in the fifth century, but not only then. Five exercises are called gates to the first *dhyāna* of the material realm, *rūpadhātu*. They are known as a *prayogamārga*, path of preparatory application (*yoga* or *prayoga*, *fangbian*, 方便) in Sautrāntika *abhidharma*. Kumārajīva explained these Sautrāntika exercises in Chang'an in 402 CE, at the request of Sengrui (僧叡).⁶⁸ More relevant to the Buddhism of Bodhidharma is T. 15.618, Buddhābhaddra's text about the teaching of his master in Bactria, Buddhasena. This text is called *Xiuxing dao di* (修行道地) or *Xiuxing fangbian* (修行方便), *Yogācārabhūmi*,⁶⁹ erroneously called *Sūtra about Dharmatrāta's Dhyāna* (*Damo Duoluo chan jing*, 達摩多羅禪經). *Fangbian* (方便) often just means *yoga* (effort, application) in old translations. *Yoga* is sometimes rendered as *dao* (道, path), too. The five exercises vary from master to master, but *aśubhabhāvanā*, contemplation of impurity, and *ānāpānasmṛti*, mindfulness to breathing in and out, are always there. Not so in Bodhidharma's teaching. Buddhābhaddra does mention *maitrībhāvanā*, contemplation of friendliness, remedying hatred, *dveṣa*, and the contemplation of the chain of dependent origination, *pratītyasamutpāda*, remedying delusion or ignorance, *moha*. This agrees with the second practice of Bodhidharma's teaching. Bodhidharma's practices one, two, and three are about *dveṣa*, *moha*, and *lobha*, the three fundamental afflictions of hatred or enmity, ignorance or delusion,

and desire. The first practice tells us to look at our own past evil. Did Bodhidharma mention this first because he had been encountering opposition? He does not advocate the practice of friendliness. The fourth practice adds the practice of emptiness. The four practices and the first access can certainly be seen in the context of “five gates *dhyāna*.” The five exercises have been used in different contexts. There is a series of three stages of the wise, *san xian* (三賢), made up of five contemplations to stop thoughts, *wu ting xin guan* (五停心觀), i.e., the five gates of preparatory application, plus contemplation of the common characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) of factors and contemplation of the particular characteristics of factors. There also is a path of seven applications (*yoga*), *qi fangbian* (七方便), namely, the just mentioned three plus the four wholesome roots (*kuśalamūla*).⁷⁰

By way of conclusion I can say that Guṇabhadra’s work introduced the basic ideas of Chan to South China. His Buddhism was Sautrāntika, as practiced in northern India. *Ālayavijñāna*, storehouse-consciousness, is a northern Sarvāstivāda development. *Tathāgatagarbha* may have started in traditional Jibin, especially in Bactria, quickly becoming *ekayāna*. Guṇabhadra combined both in his text of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*. Bodhidharma, a man of Persian or of Bactrian origin, also left southern India for southern China, but he was active in northern Henan. His teaching definitely shows Sautrāntika influence. The East Mountain Teaching was traditionally known as the Laṅkā school. Shenhui later shifted the focus away from Sautrāntika practice to Mahāsāṅghika Prajñāpāramitā. The Sthavira versus Mahāsāṅghika split was still influential in Chinese developments in the eighth century.

NOTES

1. *Za apitan xin lun* (雜阿毘曇心論, T. 28.1552). This text is the work of a Gandhāran Dharmatrāta in the early fourth century. The Chinese version is by Saṅghavarman, Baoyun, and Huiguan, working in 434–435 CE (Charles Willemen, *The Essence of Scholasticism* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006], 10–12). The title has been erroneously reconstructed as *Samyukta*. Yaśomitra mentions a *miśrakakāra*, most likely Dharmatrāta; see Charles Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse about Abhidharmic Literature,” *Journal of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies* 國際佛教學大學院大學研究紀要 12 (2008): 48 (145).

2. In *The Essence of Scholasticism*, Willemen studies and translates the text, *Apitan xin lun* (阿毘曇心論, T. 28.1550), as translated to Chinese by Saṅghadeva (Sengqie Tipo, 僧伽提婆) in 391 CE on Mt. Lu (廬山). Tanmo Shili (曇摩尸梨),

a phonetic rendering of the name of the composer, Fasheng (法勝), renders Dharmaśreṣṭhin (not Dharmaśrī), made to look like a real Chinese name. The title is, without any doubt, *Hṛdaya*, not *Sāra*.

3. Karl-Heinz Golzio, “Zur Datierung des Kuṣāṇa-Königs Kaniṣka I,” in *Buddhasāhityastabakāvalī: Essays and Studies on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature Dedicated to Claus Vogel by Colleagues, Students, and Friends*, ed. Dragomir Dimitrov, Michael Hahn, and Roland Steiner, *Indica et Tibetica* 36 (Marburg: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 2008), 89. The date of 127 CE for the beginning of the reign of Kaniṣka is no longer valid.

4. Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 43–47 (150–146).

5. For Jibin, see Charles Willemen, “Mahīśāsaka: Some New Ideas,” in *Dharmapracicaya. Aspects of Buddhist Studies. Essays in Honour of N.H. Samtani*, ed. Lalji Shrivak and Charles Willemen (Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2012), 483.

6. Charles Willemen, *A Collection of Important Odes of the Law: The Chinese Udānavarga* (Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies and BDK America, 2013), 10.

7. Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 45 (148).

8. Saṅghabhadra’s *Biposha (Vibhāṣā) lun* (髣婆沙論, T. 28.1547) of 383 CE, and Buddhavarman’s *Apitan (Abhidharma) piposha (vibhāṣā) lun* (阿毘曇毘婆沙論, T. 28.1546) of 439 CE, are *vibhāṣā*s on the Gandhāran *Aṣṭagranthaśāstra (Ba jiandu lun, 八犍度論, T. 26.1543)*. *Apidamo da piposha lun* (阿毘達摩大毘婆沙論, T. 27.1545), the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, of Xuanzang’s team in 659 CE is a *vibhāṣā* on the “orthodox” *Jñānaprasthānaśāstra (Fa zhi lun, 發智論, T. 26.1544)*, in Kaśmīra.

9. Willemen, *Essence of Scholasticism*, 1, 8–12.

10. Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 50 (143).

11. The term is a Sanskritization of Theravāda, i.e., non-Mahāsāṅghika.

12. Willemen, “Mahīśāsaka: Some New Ideas,” 487–490.

13. Rongxi Li, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 84.

14. Golzio, “Zur Datierung des Kuṣāṇa-Königs Kaniṣka I,” 89.

15. See Charles Willemen, “The Sanskrit Title of Harivarman’s *Chengshi Lun* 成實論 (T. 1646),” *Journal of Buddhist Studies* 4 (2006): 244–249, for the Sanskrit title of the *Chengshi lun* (成實論, T. 32.1646): (*Jñānakāya*)*prodbhūtopadeśa*.

16. John P. Keenan, *The Scripture on the Explication of Underlying Meaning* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2000), 1. A Tibetan translation exists, studied by Étienne Lamotte (*Samdhinirmocana sūtra: l’explication des mystères* [Louvain, Belgium: Bureaux du Recueil, and Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1935]) and by John Powers (*Wisdom of the*

Buddha: The Saṃdhinirmocana Mahāyāna Sūtra [Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1995]). One may presume that if a Tibetan version of an abhidharmic text exists, the text may be of Sautrāntika/Mūlasarvāstivāda origin.

17. Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 48 (145).

18. Willemen, “Mahīśāsaka: Some New Ideas,” 489–490.

19. The term *foxing*, buddha-nature, appears a bit later than *tathāgatagarbha* in East Asia (William H. Grosnick, “The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra,” in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez [New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1995], 92). Sallie King offers a study of the *Treatise about Buddha-Nature* (*Foxing lun*, 佛性論, T. 31.1610), probably attributed to Vasubandhu by the author, the brahmin Paramārtha (499–569 CE), ca. 558 CE (Sallie B. King, *Buddha Nature* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991], 23–24). Paramārtha also explained the *Wushang yi jing* (*Anuttarāśraya-sūtra*(?), 無上依經, T. 15.669), based on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* [Hirakata: Kansai University of Foreign Studies, 1980], 230n15, referring to J. Takasaki, *Bukkyō shishō ronshū* [Essays on the History of Buddhist Thought], *Presented to Professor Reimon Yūki on His Retirement from the Institute of Oriental Culture* [Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan-sha, 1964], 241–264). Paramārtha may also be responsible for the text of the *Qi xin lun* (起信論, T. 32.1666) of 553 CE, attributed by him to Aśvagoṣa (Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 64 [129]). In this text, ignorance (*avidyā*) is the source of all existence, a quite Sarvāstivāda idea. Paramārtha is also said to be the translator of a text about the four noble truths, *Sidi lun* (四諦論, T. 32.1647), a text attributed to Vasuvarman. Was it brought from Funan or from southeastern India, because of the “varman? (See Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 71–72 [122–121].)

20. Grosnick, “The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra,” 92.

21. Michael Zimmermann, “The Tathāgatagarbhasūtra: Its Basic Structure and Relation to the Lotus Sūtra,” in *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 1998*, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 1999), 145–146. Grosnick (“The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra,” 94–106) translates the text. About Buddhahadra, see Marilyn Martin Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China & Central Asia*, Vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 264–268; and Jiyou Ren 任繼愈, comp., *Zhongguo Fojiao Shi* 中國佛教史 (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe 中國社會科學出版社, 1988), 140–142.

22. This text proclaims the reality of the true self (buddha-nature). The so-called northern version of Dharmarddhi (385–433 CE) in 421 CE in Guzang, *Da banniepan jing* (大般涅槃經, T. 12.374, forty fascicles), has a first part, which agrees with the six fascicles of Faxian’s (法顯) text, *Da banniepan jing* (大般涅槃經, T. 12.376), translated in 416–418 CE by Baoyun and Buddhahadra in

the Daochang Si in Jiankang, and a last part for which no Sanskrit fragment yet exists. It is in this part that one is informed about the buddha-nature in all living beings (Ren, *Zhongguo Fojiao Shi*, 138, 142–144). For Tanwu Chen (曇無讖, Dharmarddhin), see Charles Willemen, *The Chinese Buddhacarita: Complete Chinese-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2009), 10. Michael Radich (*How Ajātaśatru Was Reformed: The Domestication of “Ajase” and Stories in Buddhist History* [Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, 2011], 170) mentions the close links between this last part of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* and “Mūlasarvāstivāda” Vinaya, i.e., non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivāda material. I would say that this (part of the) text probably has a Bactrian Sarvāstivāda origin. The northern version was reworked in southern China, Jiankang, in 453 CE, during the Liu Song by Huiyan, Huiguan, and Xie Lingyun (謝靈運): *Da banniepan jing* (大般涅槃經, T. 12.375, thirty-six fascicles). There are more Chinese texts of this sūtra. Jan Nattier (*A Guide to the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Translations: Texts from the Eastern Han 東漢 and Three Kingdoms 三國 Periods* [Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2008], 126–127, 126n39) says that *Banniepan jing* (般涅槃經, T. 1.6) is a non-Mahāyāna text by Zhi Qian (支謙). *Fo banniepan jing* (佛般涅槃經, T. 1.5) is very closely related with T. 1.6.

23. From the mid-third to the mid-fifth centuries Shanshan (Piqan) controlled the southern route to Hotan. It ruled over Qiemo (Qarqan, 且末) and Jingjue (Niya, 精絕 or Minfeng, 民豐). The Northern Wei (北魏, 368–534 CE) annexed Shanshan ca. 445 CE. Songyun went to Central Asia during that time, early sixth century.

24. Li-kouang Lin (*Introduction au compendium de la loi: L'Aide-mémoire de la vraie loi* [Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1949], 178–179) mentions that based on Vassilief's research in Tibetan material, the names of Sarvāstivādins often ended in °bhadra, °mati, °śrī, °kīrti, etc., and names of Mahāsāṅghikas often ended in °mitra, °jñāna, °gupta, etc. The names of some Sthaviras ended in °deva, °ākara, °varman, etc.

25. The westernmost part of the Western Regions, Xiyu, was at the same time the westernmost part of Jibin, namely Bactria (Willemen, “Mahīśāsaka: Some New Ideas,” 483–484). At the end of the fourth century Bactria was quite violent, when the Kidarites were establishing themselves. The Sasanians destroyed Termez in 360–370 CE. The Kidarites annexed Gandhāra ca. 400 CE. The Sasanians attacked Bactria from 442 till 467 CE, when they took all of Bactria. Kidarites were still in Gandhāra till the end of the fifth century. Kidarites, who were called Yuezhi (月支) in Chinese sources, saw themselves as the successors of the Kuṣāṇas. The situation in Bactria may certainly explain why Bactrians left, probably to China, but also to southern India. Monks usually followed trade routes and traders. See Ahmad Hasan Dani and

Boris Anatol'evich Litvinsky, "The Kushano-Sasanian Kingdom," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. III, ed. B. A. Litvinsky, Zhang Guang-da, and R. Shabani Samghabadi (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 104; and Evgenii Vladislavovich Zeimal, "The Kidarite Kingdom in Central Asia," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. III, ed. B. A. Litvinsky, Zhang Guang-da, and R. Shabani Samghabadi (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 121–127.

26. *Ekayāna* is translated as "unique vehicle" (*weiyi sheng*, 惟一乘). See Charles Willemen, *Outlining the Way to Reflect* 思惟略要法 (T. XV 617) (Mumbai: Somaiya Publications, 2012), 46.

27. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

28. See note 19, above. Paramārtha most likely was a non-Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivāda brahmin. He apparently believed in storehouse-consciousness and in *tathāgatagarbha*. *Tathāgatagarbha* assimilated by Mahāsāṅghikas is called *ekayāna*.

29. The Śātavāhana empire had extensive links with the Kuṣāṇa empire. Elizabeth Rosen Stone (*The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994], 94–97) says that in the third century ivories went from Bagram to Andhra. Art and artists travelled from Bactria via Gandhāra to Mathurā and then further south, most likely from India's western coast along the rivers Godāvarī and Kṛṣṇā to Andhra, and then further south from there. It must be remembered that a road leads in two opposite directions.

30. For an English translation see Diana Y. Paul, *The Sutra of Queen Śrīmālā of the Lion's Roar* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2004). Alex Wayman ("The Mahāsāṅghika and the Tathāgatagarbha," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 1 [1978]: 36) says that the text as represented in the Chinese is of Mahāsāṅghika affiliation. He dates the text to the third century in Andhra, a predominantly Mahāsāṅghika area. I am convinced that the *tathāgatagarbha* idea arose in Bactria, quickly becoming *ekayāna*, and spreading south.

31. Willemen, *Outlining the Way to Reflect*, 12.

32. Ren, *Zhongguo Fo jiao Shi*, 143.

33. Andrew Glass ("Guṇabhadra, Baoyun, and the Saṃyuktāgama," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 31 [2008–2010]: 194–195) does not disagree. Faxian obtained an abstract (*chao*, 抄) of the *Sapoduo lü* (薩婆多律, *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya*) in Pāṭaliputra; see Sengyou, T. 55.2145:112a20. Being an abstract of this *Vinaya* in Madhyadeśa, the traditional, long *Vinaya* from Mathurā, not the Vaibhāṣika *Daśabhāṇavāra*, is meant. The rules of the Vaibhāṣika *Vinaya in Ten Recitations* were no different from the rules of the traditional, long Sautrāntika/Dārṣṭāntika *Vinaya*.

34. The eastern paradise(s) being Mahāsāṅghika (Charles Willemen, "Early

Yogācāra and Visualization [*Bhāvanā*],” in *Wading into the Stream of Wisdom: Essays Honoring Leslie Kawamura*, ed. Sarah Haynes and Michelle Sorensen [Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies and BDK America, 2013], 219–221).

35. Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 68–69 (125–124). The name has erroneously been said to be Saṅghapāla.

36. Grosnick (“The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra,” 92–93) elaborates on the meanings of the word *garbha*, mainly *womb* and *embryo*. The Chinese at the time seems to avoid the word *tai* (胎, womb). The word *zang* (藏) links *ālaya* to *garbha*.

37. Willemen, *The Chinese Buddhacarita*, 9–10.

38. Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, 231. Guṇabhadra probably had left from Tāmraliptī to Śrī Laṅkā, just as Saṅghamittā had done, carrying a branch of Gayā’s bodhi tree. She was the sister of Mahinda, who had reached the island somewhat earlier. He was on the island during the reign of Devānampiyatissa (ca. 250–210 BCE). Both, brother and sister, passed away during the reign of Uttiya (ca. 210–200 BCE); see Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, trans. S. Boin-Webb (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1988), 266–271. Sarvāstivādins, a Sthaviravāda school, were on the island where Guṇavarman obtained their *Samyuktāgama*.

39. Jingjue’s (淨覺, 683–ca. 750 CE) *Lengqie shizi ji* (楞伽師資記, *Record of Masters and Disciples of the Laṅkā [School]*, T. 85.2837; ca. 713–716 CE), a text which promotes the Laṅkāvatāra school of so-called Northern Chan, sees Guṇabhadra as the one who introduced Chan to China. Bodhidharma came later. Jingjue, follower of Shenxiu (神秀, 606?–706 CE) and Xuanze (玄蹟), was from Luoyang, northern Henan, the area where Bodhidharma had been active (John McRea, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, *Studies in East Asian Buddhism* 3, Kuroda Institute [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986], 88–91; and Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Vol. I: India and China*, trans. James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008], 109–110). It may be remembered that Chan is an ancient “sound” translation for a Gāndhārī word. One may think of *jhāṇa* or *jhāna*. Chan is not an abbreviation of *channa* (禪那). The “na” is a later addition.

40. See note 16, above.

41. Willemen, “Early Yogācāra and Visualization (*Bhāvanā*),” 214–216, 221.

42. Willemen, *A Collection of Important Odes of the Law*, 12.

43. Āgama literature is expected from a Sautrāntika.

44. Li An 李安, “Qiuna Batuluo (394–468)” 求那跋陀羅, in *Zhongguo Fojiao* 中國佛教, comp. by Zhongguo Fojiao Xiehui 中國佛教協會 (Beijing: Zhishi Chubanshe 知識出版社, 1982), s.v. 60.

45. Rhie (*Early Buddhist Art of China & Central Asia*, 264–268) translates the

biography of Buddhābhaddra.

46. Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 56–57.

47. Daoxuan’s (道宣, 596–667 CE) *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (續高僧傳, *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*, T. 50.2060:551b27), completed in 645 CE; Jingjue’s (淨覺, 683–ca. 750 CE) *Lengqie shizi ji* (楞伽師資記, *Record of Masters and Disciples of the Laṅkā [School]*, T. 85.2837:1284c26–27, ca. 720 CE); and Du Fei’s *Chuan fa bao ji* (杜朏 傳法寶紀, T. 80.2838:1291c6).

48. Daoyuan’s *Jingde chuan deng lu* (景德傳燈錄), completed in 1004: T. 51.2076:217a10.

49. T. 51.2076:217a9. Willemen, *A Collection of Important Odes of the Law*, 7.

50. McRea, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, 23.

51. Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism*, 89.

52. Zeimal, “The Kidarite Kingdom in Central Asia,” 125–127.

53. Boris Anatol’evich Litvinsky, “The Hephthalite Empire,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. III, ed. B. A. Litvinsky, Zhang Guang-da, and R. Shabani Samghabadi (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 135.

54. Yang Xuanzhi’s *Luoyang qielan ji* (洛陽伽藍記, T. 51.2092:1000b19–20; ca. 547 CE). This text often mentions *huren* (胡人), westerners, from the Western Regions, Xiyu. Even Uḍḍiyāna is seen as part of Xiyu (T. 51.2092:1015a13). The culture of Uḍḍiyāna and of Hotan was closely linked. An Indian was called *huren* (T. 51.2092:1017b11). Also a Persian was called *huren* (T. 51.2092:1012b21–22).

55. See note 29, above.

56. T. 50.2060:551b29; Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism*, 87.

57. McRea, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, 17. This magnificent temple was built in 516 and damaged by wind in 526 CE (John McRea, *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003], 276n8).

58. Regarding “wall contemplation,” see McRea, *Seeing through Zen*, 31. He says that the term, as used in Zhiyi’s *Mohe zhiguan* (摩訶止觀), and as explained by Zhanran (湛然, 711–782 CE), may mean: “...fixed in *śamatha* or concentration meditation, without allowing the eight winds of good and bad fortune to influence one at all.”

59. Ren, *Zhongguo Fojiao Shi*, 118–121. Songyun travelled from Luoyang to Shanshan, Hotan, Congling (Pamir), Bactria, Gandhāra, and back.

60. McRea, *Seeing through Zen*, 25.

61. McRea, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, 23.

62. *Ibid.*, 23–24.

63. Ibid., 240.

64. About *banre/panre* (般若) I can say that Loujia Chen (婁迦讖, Lokakṣema or Laukāṣina, as suggested by Lokesh Chandra, “Closure of the Library Cave 17 of Tun-Huang,” *Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 3 [2002]: 59) in 179 CE translated the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (*Daoxing bore jing*, 道行般若經, T. 8.224) from Gāndhārī. His phonetic rendering was based on Prākṛit. The pronunciation *bore* is based on Sanskrit *pra(jñā)*, even written *bore* (波若), and certainly used in South China in the fifth century. During that time many Mahāsāṅghikas arrived on the shores of South China, coming from Funan and South India. Their emptiness-*prajñā* was always phonetically rendered, never translated with a “meaning” translation, *zhahui* (智慧). Sthaviravāda *prajñā*, *dharma**pravacaya* (investigation of factors), is always translated with a “meaning” translation. See Willemen, “Kumārajīva’s Explanatory Discourse,” 42 (151); and Willemen, *Outlining the Way to Reflect*, 13, 33. Kumārajīva gives *pāramī*, not *pāramitā*, just as Loujia Chen and Dharmarakṣa’s *Lotus Sūtra* do. Much later Xuanzang changes this to *boluomiduo* (波羅蜜多) in T. 5.220 of 663 CE.

65. Translated by McRea, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, 103–105, 29. For Chinese, see Daoxuan’s *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (續高僧傳, T. 50.2060:551c8–23).

66. McRea, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch’an Buddhism*, 28, 101.

67. Ibid., 31. This author noticed the relation between this text and traditional *śamatha* (tranquillity, *zhi*, 止) and *vipaśyanā* (insight, *guan*, 觀), or *samādhi* and *prajñā*.

68. Willemen, *Outlining the Way to Reflect*, 4–8 gives an overview of these meditation manuals.

69. Established by Li-kouang Lin, *Introduction au compendium de la loi*, 341–351.

70. A quick check of the relevant entries in NAKAMURA Hajime 中村元, *Bukkyōgo Daijiten* 佛教語大辭典 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Shoseki 東京書籍, 2000), 376, s.v. *gomonzen* (五門禪); 461, s.v. *sangen* (三賢); and 587, s.v. *shichi hōben* (七方便), will offer some literary sources. The path of preparatory application, including the term *ting xin* (停心), is explained in the oldest Sautrāntika *abhidharma*, namely the *Abhidharmahrdaya*. See Willemen, *Essence of Scholasticism*, 119–123.

Zen's Debt to Confucianism

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What follows is a paper presented long ago, at the American Academy of Religion, Upper Midwest Region, 1993. Naturally, as I read it today, there are many thoughts that I could add. But on the whole, it seems to present a thought that is still sound and worth considering.

I should note that this was not an article composed for a scholarly journal: rather, it was an oral address for an audience of scholars and teachers of religious studies, none of whom were specialists in Chan or Zen studies, or even in Buddhism. This paper was composed with that audience in mind. Were this to have been a scholarly presentation to specialists, it would certainly have been framed quite differently.

Also, there are now quite a few good scholarly overviews of Zen's origins, and new critical essays on how we today (perhaps Westerners especially) should think about Zen's origins. Among those, a few warrant mention here. Several are studies on which I published book notes in *Religious Studies Review*:

Dale Wright, *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Jeffrey Broughton, *The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records of Zen* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

Albert Welter, *Monks, Rulers, and Literati: The Political Ascendancy of Chan Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

More challenging to read, but rewarding for those with the patience to do so, is Alan Cole, *Fathering Your Father: The Zen of Fabrication in Tang Buddhism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

And essential for distinguishing common misunderstandings from the facts of Zen's origins enlightening introduction to the study of Zen's origins is John McRae, *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation,*

and *Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

The heuristic metaphor of Chan/Zen's maternal and paternal cultural ancestry was based on a more detailed interpretive analysis of the origins of Pure Land Buddhism in China, presented at the International Association for Shin Buddhist Studies (Berkeley, 1991). A revised version of that analysis was published in this journal: "Pure Land's Multi-Lineal Ancestry: A New Metaphor for Understanding the Evolution of 'Living' Religions," *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, 3rd series, no. 2 (2000): 177–189.

Finally, I will note that the passage cited here from Herbert Fingarette's book on Confucius should not be construed as indicating that I judge it the best interpretation of what Confucius taught. I make certain to alert students to the fact that Fingarette was a philosophy professor who could not read Chinese, and that he based his views entirely on translations and studies in English by mid-twentieth century scholars (despite its later publication date). It is also clear that Fingarette was quite mistaken in his assertion that some of Confucius' primary teachings—such as that his society had once followed *li* (禮, "ritual activity"; morally and socially extended as: "doing what is proper") but later lost it—was no more than pious fiction. Research on bronze inscription texts has shown that, at least at times, some of the rulers of feudal statelets in the centuries before Confucius did follow a shared set of moral principles, just as our world's leaders today follow "international laws" and "diplomatic protocols"—at least at times.

In sum, what appears here is not what I would have written today, if I were to approach the matter fresh. But I believe that it remains a worthwhile presentation for general audiences, and that it still provokes thought about how religions evolve within distinct historical and cultural settings.

The tradition that we know as Zen Buddhism originated in China around the sixth century of the Common Era. Zen, of course, says otherwise: it claims that the tradition originated a thousand years earlier, in India. A story that has become very well-known in the West is the story of Zen's Indian beginnings during the days of the Buddha himself. According to that story, Zen originated in an event now known as "the Flower Sermon." One day, instead of preaching to his disciples, the Buddha merely held up a flower and said nothing. All the disciples

were puzzled, save for one, who, the story goes, intuitively grasped the Buddha's message. He then supposedly transmitted that wordless message to one of his own disciples, and it was handed down from master to disciple until it was finally carried to China by a monk named Bodhidharma.

Though this colorful story is oft-repeated, it is important to realize that as history goes, it is pure fiction. Though Zen does have certain connections to Indian Buddhism, they are of a much different nature than our usual picture would have us believe. Zen's Indian roots were not personal, in the sense that Indian Buddhists carried Zen teachings to East Asia. Rather, Zen's Indian heritage was of a completely textual nature. That is, as Buddhism evolved and grew in early medieval China, certain Buddhists gravitated toward certain Mahāyāna texts, particularly the wisdom literature known as the Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*). Certain of the ideas presented in the *Prajñāpāramitā* writings and other Mahāyāna texts made sense to those Chinese Buddhists, who defined their vision of Buddhism in those terms. They eventually established their own monastic order, and taught and practiced Buddhism in a style that had no real historical precedent in Indian Buddhism. After a number of generations, however, they felt a need to legitimize their order in new terms: rather than merely present teachings grounded in concepts found in ancient Mahāyāna texts, they concocted the pious but totally fictitious story of the direct historical lineage going back to the Buddha's "Flower Sermon."¹

Since Zen originated in China rather than India, it is important for us to understand that Zen was indelibly imprinted with Chinese concepts and values. Zen was really a blend of ideas from distinct Asian civilizations, a merging of Mahāyāna Buddhism with the indigenous value-systems of East Asia. Just as Zen in Japan was affected by certain elements of the indigenous Japanese tradition known as Shintō, Zen's earlier history in China was deeply and permanently influenced by the ancient Chinese value-systems of Confucianism and Taoism.

The idea that Zen was influenced by the Chinese tradition of Taoism is not a new one. Zen practitioners have long cherished stories from the Taoist classic Chuang-tzu, and Zen life has long been influenced by its style: an impish humor, an irreverence toward convention and "common sense," a distrust of intellectualization, and an extraordinary teaching method. That method foregoes any form of discourse in favor of a radical and unexpected jolting of the student's thinking

process, an attempt to de-rail his ordinary state of mind to open the way for a completely different experience of reality. Zen's Taoist heritage is well known, both within the tradition and among Asian and Western scholars.² In fact, I have sometimes even suggested to my students that Zen in early medieval China can be understood as an effort to find Buddhist answers to Taoist questions.

Be that as it may, I feel that it is important not to oversimplify Zen's historical identity. Zen's origins are really fairly complex, and it is vital that our attempts to understand them are informed by a careful assessment of how Zen evolved within an East Asian cultural context. The idea that Zen was simply a form of Indian Buddhism transplanted to China actually makes little sense when one contrasts Zen thought and practice with many of the earlier forms of Buddhism. For instance, Zen seems to have little in common with the so-called "original" teachings of Buddhism—the four noble truths, the eightfold path, the concepts of impermanence (*anicca*) and "no-self" (*anatta*). The earliest form of Buddhism supposedly taught the reality of suffering and a method for ending that suffering, but all these concerns are generally unknown in the Zen literature of China and Japan. While Zen does continue to employ the idea that the goal of Buddhist practice is "enlightenment," it no longer explains the goal as nirvana, and no longer describes it as a state in which one is liberated from the cycle of life and death (*samsara*). To that extent, one could argue that Zen disregarded the entirety of Indian Buddhist soteriology. Such an argument would have its merit.

In part, the absence of ideas like nirvana in Zen can be explained very simply in terms of the fundamental worldview of the culture in which it evolved. Back in ancient India, virtually everyone—Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, etc.—had assumed that life is a cyclical process of eternal rebirths, and had assumed that life is inherently unsatisfying. The Chinese and Japanese, on the other hand, had never entertained such views at all, and were in fact generally quite loath to accept them: to the Chinese and Japanese, life is, in general terms, good, and the world in which we live is our natural and proper home, not a place of suffering—the "first noble truth" of what modern minds take to be "the Buddha's original teachings." Given these facts, it would hardly be expected that East Asian Buddhism would maintain the same conceptual framework that had characterized Indian Buddhism.

In addition, it is necessary to remember that Buddhism in India had already undergone a profound transformation by the time that it was transported to China along the Silk Road of Central Asia. The soteriological framework that we generally think of when we think of Indian Buddhism had long since been overlaid and in part superseded by new versions of the Buddhist path, which are generally known by the name Mahāyāna. Though Mahāyāna Buddhism took many forms, what most of them shared was a rejection of the earlier Buddhist soteriological scheme, in which the goal had been liberation from rebirth. Mahāyāna texts from India, in fact, often argue that once one gains experiential awareness of the ultimate truth, one realizes that all such categories as nirvana and samsara are meaningless. And in fact, it was precisely such Mahāyāna concepts that caught on in China and Japan, not only because these concepts lacked the earlier insistence upon seeing life as suffering, but also because certain indigenous Chinese philosophies presented life in somewhat similar terms.

To this point what I have said about Zen holds equally true for most forms of East Asian Buddhism. But while there are certainly many characteristics that Zen shares with its cognate branches of Buddhism in China and Japan, there are also ways in which Zen is nearly unique. And it is upon those unique characteristics of Zen that I wish to concentrate here today. In particular, I wish to focus upon Zen's peculiar soteriology, a soteriology which is often expressed as a non-soteriology. Most forms of Buddhism explain the spiritual life as the treading of a path (*mārga*)—either the “eightfold path” of early Buddhism, or the “bodhisattva path” of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is upon this issue that Zen seems to depart most radically from most of the earlier Buddhist tradition: Zen frequently argues that there is actually no reason to try to tread a path, for the goal is not something off in the distance, but rather something that is already inherent within one's own present reality. “Enlightenment,” says Zen, is not really the attainment of a new personal reality, but merely the re-attainment of one's own original reality. And while Zen traditionally justified such ideas in terms of certain elements of Indian Mahāyāna thought, the somewhat radical thesis that I shall present here today is that those Zen ideas may well have owed something to the indigenous Chinese tradition of Confucianism.

One of the best-known modern presentations of the thought of Confucius is a little book entitled *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, by the

philosopher Herbert Fingarette.³ In attempting to convey Confucius' concept of the ultimate human ideal, Fingarette writes as follows:

The imagery of Confucius does not lead us to dwell upon the person arriving at a destined or ideal place.... Instead, the spiritually noble man arrives at a condition..., the condition of following the Way without effort and properly. He arrives at that tranquil state that comes from appreciating that it is the following of the Way itself that is of ultimate and absolute value. Thus in this respect it does not take time to "reach" the goal since one does not have to arrive at any particular point on the map: to reach the goal is simply to set oneself to treading the Path now—properly, with correct appreciation of its intrinsic and ultimate significance.⁴

While Fingarette wrote those words to try to express the Confucian way of life, they hold a certain resonance for those who study Zen Buddhism. In both its Chinese and its Japanese forms, Zen frequently insists that one must forego the concept of a spiritual goal that one must learn somehow to reach. Instead, one must simply give oneself over to the practice of Zen. The best expression of these ideas is found in the thought of the famous thirteenth-century Zen master Dōgen. Dōgen deeply affected the way in which Zen was later taught and explained by arguing that the practice of Zen is not intended to lead one toward the achievement of a goal. There is, he insisted, really no "goal" to be achieved, so what is important is merely the practice itself. To be specific, the practice of Zen in Dōgen's tradition consists of nothing more than "sitting." One is not sitting in an effort to undergo some sort of profound transformation—one is just sitting. The soteriological act consists of no more than an everyday activity, but an activity that we now learn to engage in without thought or effort.

It is at this point that I wish to suggest a meaningful continuity between the ideals and practices of classical Confucianism and those of Zen Buddhism. Neither tradition has any use for theoretical abstractions. Each begins and ends in the individual's everyday life. In Confucius' teachings, the extent of the soteriological enterprise is merely to live one's life. That is, one should not, of course, merely live one's life carelessly or thoughtlessly. Rather, one re-focusses one's attention on the authenticity of one's being as it inheres in one's everyday life. One focusses on one's natural social and familial roles, and on the forms whereby one enacts those roles. It was to such roles and forms of personal interaction that Confucius referred when he exhorted his students to give themselves over to *li*. *Li*, which originally

referred specifically to religious ritual, was transformed by Confucius into the focus of the individual's spiritual life. Confucians loved ritual, even simple and everyday ritual, because the willingness to invest oneself in the ritual demonstrated one's integrity and one's commitment to the moral and spiritual life. It can be argued that the Zen master Dōgen was doing precisely the same. In his tradition, the practice of sitting is not conceived as a practice that will eventually transform one into a buddha. Rather, like earlier Zen theorists, Dōgen assumed that everyone already possesses within oneself the essence of ultimate reality—the buddha-nature. Hence, in a sense, one is already a buddha, but must simply learn once again how to act like a buddha. Similarly, in Confucian terms, one does not have to leave behind one's everyday life in order to practice *li* and thus to become a father or a ruler: the roles of father or ruler are already inherent in one's everyday life. But it is only by committing ourselves to acting like a father or a ruler that one's fatherhood or rulerhood comes to actual fruition. One must adopt proper attitudes, and must personify those attitudes by proper social and ritual action.

The Confucian ideal of consciously correct performance of ritual might even be seen as the origin of the famous Japanese practice of the "Tea Ceremony" (*cha-no-yu*): the simple ceremony of sharing tea first took shape within the setting of the Zen monastery, then took on a life of its own in Japanese society. In the ceremony, one is not sharing tea in order to accomplish some distant goal: one is simply sharing tea, in accordance with the proper ritual forms. It seems to me no coincidence that the texts of classical Confucianism had much earlier articulated an idealized "community drinking ceremony," wherein moral training is submerged in the "harmonious pleasure" of ritualized interaction.⁵

My point here is simply that when Zen practice is expressed in terms of performing an everyday human activity properly and effortlessly, it is employing terms that were inherent within the Confucian cultural tradition. The goal in both Confucianism and Zen is not to escape our ordinary life, or even to transform it, but merely to rededicate ourselves to living our everyday life in a proper manner, thereby recovering our own authentic reality.

We see here another sense in which Zen shares with Confucianism a fundamental ideal that sets it apart from many other forms of Buddhism. In most of the Buddhist tradition, the fundamental *problematik* of human life concerned the individual's sense of self. "Early

Buddhism” frequently suggested that the assumption that one possesses a real, abiding self is a delusion. Most of Buddhist practice—such as abandoning secular life in favor of a monastic existence—was designed to subvert personal attachments and a sense of individual selfhood. Zen, by contrast, sometimes seems to say things that the early Indian Buddhists might dismiss as misguided heresy. For example, the best-known of all Zen writings, the eighth-century Chinese text known as *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*, describes the goal of religious life as merely recovering our own “original nature,” which is understood as inherently pure. Such ideas would seem to contradict the early Buddhist concept that there is, in reality, no abiding self. Zen theorists managed to find passages in a number of Mahāyāna scriptures that seemed to them to justify the concept of an inherently pure ground of personal reality. But we must also remember that the Zen theorists of medieval China had been educated in a culture that gave implicit primacy to Confucian ideals. And one Confucian ideal that would have been well-known to all educated people in medieval China was the idea of the original purity of human nature, as formulated by the classical Confucian thinker Mencius. As we later see in the thought of Neo-Confucians like Wang Yang-ming, one could easily make sense of the entire Confucian approach to life by expressing it as a return to the purity of one’s “original mind.”⁶

My point here is not that Zen Buddhists must have derived their understanding of the religious life directly and exclusively from Confucians like Mencius, rather than from Indian Buddhist sources. Rather, what I wish to suggest is merely that the way in which Chinese Buddhists understood and practiced the religious life may well have been subconsciously shaped by ideals and values that were endemic to their own social and cultural milieu. That is to say, they were indeed devoted Buddhists, and could justify their ideas and practices in terms of Indian Buddhist scriptures.⁷ But it seems reasonable to suggest that they tended to see value in those specific Buddhist texts that expressed the spiritual life in terms that made the most sense to them.

Clearly, the Buddhists who gave us the Zen tradition embraced certain elements of their Buddhist heritage while rejecting other elements, with which they were not so comfortable. I merely wish to suggest that it was partly the common Confucian intellectual and spiritual heritage that helped render certain Buddhist concepts and values

more comfortable to those medieval Chinese than other Buddhist concepts and values.

With these facts in mind, I present the following elements of Zen tradition as elements that are shared with the indigenous Confucian tradition of China:

1. The focus is upon "real life," upon the individual living person, rather than upon theoretical abstractions.
2. We recover our original pure nature.
3. The human being is perfectible: no one is inherently incapable of achieving the ideal. Yet in reality, few people will actually attain that ideal, and our teachings are really for that special few.
4. No external powers are involved: we attain the ideal through our own individual efforts. (Ironically, this idea makes more sense in terms of "early Buddhism" than in terms of Mahāyāna traditions that emerged in China, like Pure Land.)
5. We re-achieve what the great exemplars of old achieved (the Confucian "sage-kings" / the Buddha).

The idea that I wish to raise for consideration today is the idea that any real human being—in any age or culture—ultimately cherishes a given religious belief for one implicit reason: because it makes sense to her or him in terms of that person's life experience. The Buddhists of early medieval China encountered a wide variety of religious concepts in the literature that they had inherited. But some of those concepts made more sense to them than others, and became more central features of their teachings as well as of their lives. Some Chinese Buddhists—that is, the Buddhists among whom the Pure Land tradition evolved—saw the scriptural doctrine of *mappō* as being true and important because it harmonized with their own conceptions of history and their own perceptions of contemporary reality. Others—the Buddhists among whom the Zen tradition evolved—focussed instead upon such scriptural concepts as that of the buddha-nature, because it harmonized with certain traditional Confucian ideals. I believe that it is here that we may gain a heightened sensitivity to the fact that religious people sometimes find themselves at a subtle juncture, at which ideals and practices inherited from their professed religious tradition coincide with conscious or unconscious ideals inherited from a distinct cultural tradition. The

result in such cases will be concepts and practices that center around that confluence.

In conclusion, I wish to offer a metaphor. The Zen tradition, like all human individuals, had two parents. But like most human individuals, it carries only one surname. Zen goes by the surname of Buddhism, because it is a product of earlier Buddhism, and wishes to understand itself in terms of that heritage. But in certain very meaningful senses, Zen is equally the product of indigenous Chinese cultural traditions, including both Taoism and Confucianism. Thus, Zen can be said to have had two parents—Buddhism and Chinese tradition. But, like people in most cultures, it identifies itself explicitly as the offspring of only one of those parents. In China and Japan, as in our own society, no one carries the surnames of both parents. But it would be naive and unfair to ignore the contributions of the parent whose surname the child does not carry. The Zen Buddhists of medieval China wanted to be Buddhists: they expressed their ideas and practices as Buddhism, and traced their lineage quite literally to Indian Buddhist sources. But it must not be forgotten that Zen was conceived, born, and raised within the matrix of Chinese culture, and carries the unmistakable imprint of that culture.

It often seems as if Zen wishes to be seen as a timeless truth, sprung miraculously out of the depths of reality itself, like Athena, who sprung directly from the mind of Zeus. Zen does present itself as Buddhism, but often does not publicly acknowledge its roots in *Prajñāpāramitā* Buddhist concepts. It claims to be a “direct transmission outside the scriptures,” passing itself off as a sort of Gypsy. By the same token, Zen seldom acknowledges what we might call its maternal heritage—the rich complex of Chinese attitudes, ideals, and values that constantly shaped and leavened the Zen religious life. We might even extend the metaphor, and refer to Confucianism and Taoism as Zen’s maternal grandparents. The debt of Zen to the ancient Taoist tradition is not a great secret (though few have even considered exploring Zen’s affinities with the medieval Taoist religious tradition). But no one to my knowledge has recognized that Zen seems to owe a debt to its other maternal grandparent, Confucianism. A sensitivity to the elements that Zen shares with Confucianism would seem to be important for appreciating Zen’s real place in the history of Asian religion and culture.

NOTES

1. It is important for us not to misunderstand the nature of this story that is so well known to so many of us: it is not objective history, **nor** is it even sacred history. Unlike traditions like Christianity—which, by self-definition, stand or fall on the historicity of certain events in which the tradition is theoretically grounded—Zen has never pegged the validity of its practice upon the accuracy of its legendary origins. In fact, the story of the Buddha's "Flower Sermon" is a fiction with which centuries of Zen Buddhists were never even acquainted: far from being an ancient historical account, it was actually quite unknown in Indian Buddhism, and indeed to the founders of Zen in sixth-century China. In reality, the story first appears in a Chinese text of the eleventh century, long after most of the events had occurred that constitute the central history of Chinese Zen.
2. The readiest reference is Heinrich Dumoulin's summation of Zen, *Zen Enlightenment: Origins and Meaning* (New York: Weatherhill, 1979), 25–34.
3. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.
4. Fingarette, *Confucius*, 20–21.
5. See the translation of Hsün-tzu, chap. 20, in Burton Watson, trans., *The Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 118–120.
6. A useful reference for these matters is Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).
7. The Chinese *Platform Sūtra* demonstrates clearly that Hui-neng (or at least the text's author) based his concepts of Buddhism directly on the *Diamond Sūtra*, a *Prajñāpāramitā* text. The research of Yanagida Seizan and other scholars has shown that early Zen writers drew heavily upon such Mahāyāna scriptures as the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, the *Śūraṅgama-sūtra*, and even the *Lotus Sūtra*.

The Absence of the Private: The *Jion-e* and Public Ritual in Pre-Modern Japan¹

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Kōfukuji (興福寺), one of pre-modern Japan's main monastic complexes and center of the *Hossō* school (法相) located in present-day Nara, was home to a wide variety of rituals, the most famous ones being undoubtedly the Vimalakīrti Assembly or *Yuima-e* (維摩会) and the *Jion-e* (慈恩会). For centuries these rituals had an enormous religious, political, and social impact on society, showing that Nara and Heian period Buddhism was *not* confined to the internal sphere of the temple. While the monastic elite and representatives of the court were present at the ritual, the temple and its surroundings attracted crowds of monks and commoners during the days of the ritual.

Documents and visual representations show us that these rituals took place in a specific delineated space (in case of the *Yuima-e* the lecture hall), included a selected audience, were held during a specific timeframe, featured specific ritual positions, included restricted forms of communication, and featured a preparation period demanding rigorous doctrinal study.² In addition, these rituals' official audience consisted of the most powerful, witnesses of "the symbolic connection between acts of ritual and ruling."³

Fujiwara no Munetada's (藤原宗忠, 1062–1141) diary *Chūyūki* (中右記) and the *Yuima-e*'s importance for promotion to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs (*Sōgō*, 僧綱) clearly illustrate the significance this ritual held for over a millennium. While the once prestigious *Yuima-e* was discontinued in the late Edo period, the *Jion-e* is still held to this day, alternating between Kōfukuji and Yakushiji (薬師寺). Although its scale and format have been adapted significantly over the centuries, today's *Jion-e* is still one of the main events of the remaining Nara temples. However, these two rituals were once part of a complex web of internal (*dera no uchi*, 寺の内) and external national rituals (*kokkateki hōe*,

国家的法会) and were of great importance to advance institutionally, both inside and outside the temple. Within practitioners' ritual space, their doctrinal preparation, and the institutional framework they were part of, Buddhism and state met.⁴

For this reason, these rituals are ideal examples to understand the pre-modern Japanese state and analyze the complex position of the temples occupied within it. Indeed, an analysis of Buddhism and state often seems to imply a certain division between the two and assumes the existence of two opposing spheres. Based on an examination of the several levels of rituals and their relation to certain governmental offices, I would argue that such a distinction cannot easily be made and that ritual performance and institutional progress at both the temple and the court were thoroughly intertwined. This article discusses two sets of ritual interconnectedness that are of importance to understand how the temple's internal and external spheres were thoroughly connected.

First, I will analyze the relationship between the *Yuima-e* and the temple's main internal ritual, the *Jion-e*. I will draw a comparison between these two events and analyze the sequence of ritual appointments alternating between both rituals. Second, I will briefly discuss the position of the *Yuima-e* within the Three Southern Assemblies (*nankyō san'e*, 南京三会) and explain how the *Yuima-e* functioned as a connection between Kōfukuji's internal institutional and ritual organization on the one hand and the state on the other.

These two issues are in fact intrinsically connected with the question regarding the negotiation of power through ritual. Catherine Bell noted the importance of several possible approaches to analyze the ways in which forms of domination and power are constructed by ritual strategies. It seems the analysis of the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* within the framework of the state is especially relevant to the following two perspectives mentioned by Bell.⁵ First, monks who aspired to participate in these rituals were from the outset of their monastic training completely dominated by study and preparation relevant to ritual advancement. This aspect is illustrated by Hayashi Fumiko's research on Kamakura period ritual performance and doctrinal participation or Hiraoka Jōkai's work on the monk Sōshō (宗性, 1202–1278) of Tōdaiji (東大寺).⁶ As will be made clear below, especially the position of the candidate at these rituals illustrates this point well. Second, while the participant is dominated by the ritual's detailed format, language, and

prescriptions, the monk's "negotiated participation" empowers him and allows for considerable influence over others through religious and institutional advancement. The analysis of the *Yuima-e* and *Jion-e* candidate or lecturer then becomes a case-study of the participant's *social body*, a micro-network of constantly shifting power relations.⁷ Prior to my analysis I have to note that in my approach neither the ritual nor the participants' *social body* are interpreted as mere reflections of society. Rather, I would argue that the ritual site and its participants are the "changing soil" of constant changes and tensions that constitute the formation of power relations.⁸ The debates between participants of these rituals, the relation between the candidate and the lecturer, are then contacts between social bodies out of which the conditions arise for a specific kind of power. As will become clear at the end of my analysis, this power will consist of shared sovereignty, a whole of constantly shifting power relations between the temples and the court. Morally and legally sanctioned in the ritual sphere, this power was legitimized and authority was created.

THE YUIMA-E AND THE JION-E

Several eighth and ninth century sources such as the Fujiwara history *Tōshi kaden* (藤氏家伝) commissioned by Fujiwara no Nakamaro (藤原仲麻呂, 706–764) or the slightly later *Origin Chronicle of Kōfukuji* (*Kōfukuji engi*, 興福寺縁起) written by Fujiwara no Yoshiyo (藤原良世, 823–900) mention that the *Yuima-e* was founded by Fujiwara no Kamatari (藤原鎌足, 614–669), the patriarch of the Fujiwara clan and one of the main figures of the Taika reforms of 645. These sources mention how this ritual supposedly goes back to the recitation of the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* (*Yuimakyō*, 維摩經) by a nun from Silla following an illness of Kamatari in 669, the year he passed away. Even if this event took place, it means that the ritual consisted of a recitation and not a debate (*rongi*, 論議), and thus it was essentially different from the *Yuima-e* as it was held from the Nara period (710–794) onwards. After Kamatari's death, the ritual was first discontinued and later revived by his son Fujiwara no Fuhito (藤原不比等, 659–720). Fuhito has been described as the one who moved Kōfukuji's alleged predecessor Umayasaka-dera (厩坂寺) to its location in the capital Heijōkyō (平城京) where it was renamed "Kōfukuji."⁹ However, it remains unclear whether the construction of the temple started prior to or was completed in 710. In addition, much doubt remains about the temple's size and the sequence

of its construction through the early Nara period.¹⁰ Several temple histories such as the *Kōfukuji ryūki* (興福寺流記) or the *Hōjiki* (宝字記) indicate how the temple was expanded throughout the eighth century, which might explain why the *Yuima-e* was only fixed at Kōfukuji after the Nara period when the temple had grown into a larger complex.¹¹

After Fuhito's death, the *Yuima-e* was not held again until it was sponsored by Imperial Consort Kōmyō (光明皇太后, 701–760) in 733, when the ritual seems to have already had a seven-day format.¹² This unstable period ended in 757 after Nakamaro issued an edict that provided tax land as the permanent financial basis for the *Yuima-e* to remember the “meritorious deeds” of his great-grandfather Kamatari.¹³ Interestingly Kōfukuji received its first abbot, Jikun (慈訓, ?–777), in the same year, supported once again by Nakamaro.¹⁴ It seems two points are of interest here.

First, the development of the *Yuima-e* and its identification with Kōfukuji appears to coincide with the growing internal institutionalization of the temple as exemplified by the creation of the position of abbot in 757. This is further supported by the expansion of the temple during the same period. For example, the central part of Kōfukuji and the five-storied pagoda appear to have been built or completed after Fuhito's death (720) and not during his lifetime as often assumed. Many other buildings such as the Southern Octagonal Hall (*nan'en dō*, 南円堂) were completed even later, by the beginning of the ninth century.¹⁵

Second, it seems that it was mainly Nakamaro, and not Kamatari or Fuhito, who developed the temple and its main ritual. The aforementioned *Tōshi kaden* and the 757 edict, both issued by Nakamaro, established Kamatari as a virtuous patriarch and Buddhist saint, thus providing the ritual with solid legitimacy.¹⁶ The reason why Nakamaro saw it necessary to do so might be found in his conflict with Tachibana no Moroe (橘諸兄, 684–757) and his son Naramaro (橘奈良麻呂, 721–757) that reached its boiling point in 755. Initially, Nakamaro was the most important statesman through the support of his aunt, Imperial Consort Kōmyō, but eventually he was executed in 764 after his failed uprising against Empress Kōken (孝謙天皇). The details of the conflict cannot be discussed here, but important to us is that Nakamaro's involvement in the appointment of the first Kōfukuji abbot, the allocations of tax land to the *Yuima-e*, and the creation of Kamatari as a Buddhist saint were of pivotal importance to strengthen his position within this factional strife at court. In addition, the connection

between his person and the promotion of the *Yuima-e* also reinforces the view that the development of the ritual did indeed parallel larger political developments.

Thus, from the outset the *Yuima-e* was of interest to the main figures involved in the formulation of the *Ritsuryō* (律令) state and the construction of *Heijōkyō* (710). A clear indicator of the importance of the ritual vis-à-vis the expansion of the monastic complex and the larger socio-political developments might be the increase of the official audience present at the *Yuima-e*. In the latter half of the ninth century the number of audience members gradually increased, for example from nine to fourteen in 876, until it reached forty in the tenth century.¹⁷ These forty monks included members of the Ministry of Monastic Affairs and were seated in four rows of ten in the western side of the ritual space, facing the central image of worship and the debates that took place in front of it. Paul Groner interpreted the audience's increase as an indicator of the *Yuima-e*'s growing public character.¹⁸ Basically, this refers to Kōfukuji's original status of "clan temple" (*ujidera*, 氏寺) of the Fujiwara and how it gradually became an official temple. However, while I do agree that the larger audience, and in fact also the number of the candidates included in it, indicates the temple's increasing importance, I would suggest that from its outset both Kōfukuji and the *Yuima-e* already had a thoroughly public character and were closely intertwined with the court. I believe that the following two factors exemplify well my approach. First, I would question the evolution from the "private" Umayasaka-dera to an increasingly "public" Kōfukuji, as the very existence of Kōfukuji's predecessors is in fact hard to prove. The sources that describe the move to Heijōkyō are from the following century and it seems that Fujiwara no Nakamaro might be responsible for "recreating" the temple's early history. The references to Kōfukuji as "Yamashina-dera" (山階寺) found in eighth and ninth century documents were in fact meant to provide the temple with a long history and legitimacy. This process is in fact comparable to Gangōji's (元興寺) high status as descendant of the illustrious Asuka-dera (飛鳥寺). I would argue that Kōfukuji's true origins are found in its construction as one whole with the new capital, Heijōkyō, and therefore held a public significance just like its patrons the Fujiwara. Second, from the outset the ritual and the temple's internal organization were clearly connected with the court, showing that the temple could not possibly be seen as separated from the court, and certainly

not as displaying a high degree of independence. The creation of the abbot mentioned above illustrates this well. On the one hand one could argue that an abbot provided the temple with its own central sphere of authority, but this view loses sight of the fact that the abbot was in fact appointed by the Head of the Fujiwara (*chōja*, 長者) and not through an internal process at the temple. At first, the involvement of the Head of the Fujiwara might reinforce the view of Kōfukuji as a “private” *ujidera*, but one should realize that the significance and importance of the Fujiwara at court defined polity on a macro-level, rendering the temple and its main ritual central to the state, and not a private entity.

While the origins of the *Yuima-e* go back to the early phase of the Japanese state and in fact predate Kōfukuji, the *Jion-e* is of a later date. According to the documents assembled by the monk Jisson (尋尊, 1430–1508) in the fifteenth century, the *Daijōin jisssha zōjiki* (大乘院寺社雑事記), the *Jion-e* was started in 951 under the abbotsip of Kūshō (空晴) and held on the third day of the eleventh month, the commemorative day of the Hossō patriarch Kuji (632–682).¹⁹ The *Jisson goki* (尋尊御記), a source describing the rituals and institutional organization of Kōfukuji likewise compiled in the Muromachi period (1336–1573), mentions that the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e* were part of a whole of twelve rituals (*jū ni hōe*, 十二法会).²⁰ It is important to realize that these twelve events were not organized in separation from each other but that participation in these rituals was organized in such a manner that all these twelve rituals were closely connected. It is exactly this interconnectedness that will become apparent in our analysis of the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e*.

As noted above, the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* are ideal examples of rituals based on doctrinal introspection, clearly distinguishable from events based on sūtra recitations. Uejima Susumu and Horiike Shunpō have pointed out that the creation of debate rituals, the emergence of certain ritual positions and the development of training curricula at major temples such as Kōfukuji in the latter half of the eighth century might be the consequence of the changing involvement of the court in the temples’ matters.²¹ Based on research by Sonoda Kōyū, Uejima describes how the training of monks and the nature of doctrinal introspection fundamentally changed from the beginning to the end of the eighth century, resulting in a more firm and independent notion of “school” (*shū*) in the first half of the ninth century.²² This shift is illustrated by the evolution from rituals based on sūtra recitation to rituals

based on debate. Another example is the name change from the position of National Master, *kokushi* (国師), to National Lecturer, *kokū kōji* (国講師), two positions connected with the Ministry of Monastic Affairs discussed below. This internal doctrinal and ritual development led to the formation of more distinct schools and rising doctrinal identity. This increasing focus on one's own school and the development of internal training curricula might then be connected with the later privatization process that would occur during the eleventh century, the start of Kuroda Toshio's *kenmon taisei* (権門体制) and *kenmitsu taisei* (顕密体制) system. Kuroda described a form of shared rule between three "privatized" blocs or "gates of power" (*kenmon*): the court nobles, the warrior aristocracy, and the temples and shrines. The doctrinal foundation of what he considered "Japan's medieval ideology" consisted of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism (*kenmitsu*), a synthesis allegedly found in the interpretation of rituals and the formulation of certain lineages in which monks occupied high positions at both exoteric and esoteric temples.²³ While Kuroda's model has been widely used, certain aspects of it have also been much debated. Perhaps the most relevant problem regarding exoteric-esoteric Buddhism avoided by Kuroda is the very notion of these two categories. As raised by Lucia Dolce, the extent to which the opposition between exoteric and esoteric teachings was an absolute given during ritual is a crucial one to understand the process of "esoterization," and medieval thinkers themselves produced "an ambiguous discourse of compatibility and differentiation."²⁴ The *Yuima-e*, for example, focuses on an exoteric scripture but also involves the usage of esoteric ritual implements. It remains unclear exactly what constituted the relation between both categories and whether or not we can identify a "synthesis" of both, rather than an exchange between two categories of equal status. While Kuroda identifies exoteric-esoteric Buddhism as some kind of ideological foundation, he does avoid its analysis and definition.

The development of a specific ritual format based on debate and the emphasis on certain doctrinal matters thus paralleled important institutional changes symptomatic of the shifting relationship between the temples and the court. It seems that the site where Kuroda's *kenmon* and *kenmitsu taisei* met was exactly the ritual sphere. Prior analysis of the formation of exoteric-esoteric lineage, ritual appointments, and doctrinal preparation has shown that from the mid-Heian period the lecturer or the candidate institutionally belonged to both exoteric and

esoteric institutions while doctrinally being prepared in both exoteric and esoteric teachings. In this sense, the social body of the ritual's main participants is illustrative of Kuroda's *kenmon* and *kenmitsu* model.

The main participants in the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* consisted of the lecturer (*kōji*, 講師), the candidate (*rissha*, 豎者), the judge (*tandai*, 探題), and the members of the official audience (*chōshu*, 聴宗). The emperor was represented by an imperial emissary (*chokushi*, 勅使) who was present during the entire ritual. The actual format of both rituals was quite similar and involved several debate sessions. The *Yuima-e* theoretically started on the tenth day of the tenth month and lasted seven days, while the *Jion-e* was held on the commemorative day of the Hossō patriarch, the third day of the eleventh month. The basic schedule of the *Yuima-e* consisted of morning and evening sessions involving lecture-debate sessions (*kōmon rongi*, 講問論議) from the first to the sixth day, while the candidate-debates took place from the first till the fifth evening. From the latter half of the Heian period, additional alternating debates were held afterward at the imperial emissary's residence (*chokushi bō*, 勅使房番論議) for the first six days as well.²⁵

While the lecturer and the candidate were the main positions, many monks of high and low ranks moved in between the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e*, showing a specific dynamic and hierarchy among Kōfukuji's rituals. Interestingly, this hierarchy transcended the temple itself and connected internal temple positions with external participation in state rituals and progression to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs. We will now look at some selected examples of the lecturer, the candidate and the position of the Head of the Five Masters (*bechi-e goshi*, 別会五師) in the audience to demonstrate the entanglement between the internal and the external sphere of the temple and conclude that internal ritual positions such as the *Jion-e*'s were indeed thoroughly connected with external state rituals as exemplified by the *Yuima-e*.²⁶

THE LECTURER

The lecturer was the central figure of the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* and in case of the former one of the most desired ritual positions of the pre-modern period. The earliest mentions of a *Yuima-e* lecturer in fact precede the construction of Kōfukuji and Heijōkyō and refer to the Sanron monk Fukuryō (福亮, ?-?) from Silla and Chihō (知寶, ?-?), who took up the role in 658 and 706, respectively.²⁷ However, it is not clear to what Fukuryō's lectureship exactly refers. To start with, the early

date suggests that he lectured right after the *Yuima-e*'s "mythical" start in which the nun Kōmyō recited the *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* and cured Kamatari. If this did indeed take place then it happened at Yamashinadera. Kōfukuji's alleged precursor of which we have in fact no proof it ever existed. In addition, the gap between Fukuryō and Chihō is considerable, the latter performing the role at the moment the construction of Kōfukuji and Heijōkyō had been decided. While no final conclusion regarding the actual start of the *Yuima-e* lectureship can be reached here, I would suggest that it is more likely that Chihō's case represents the actual origins of the *Yuima-e* lecturer.

However, even in Chihō's time the *Yuima-e* was not yet carried out on a regular basis and Kōfukuji wouldn't become the permanent site for the *Yuima-e* through imperial decree until 801.²⁸ It is not clear how many times the *Yuima-e* was performed in its early history, but no more than seven mentions of Nara-period lecturers remain. Therefore, it is likely that the ritual was performed irregularly and that the position of lecturer had not yet fully matured or was at least significantly different from the mid-Heian understanding of the position.

The appointment of *Yuima-e* lecturer was a highly desired one and the profile of the monks fulfilling this role underwent several changes throughout the ritual's history. The eighth to eleventh century entries of the *San'e jō ichi ki* (三会定一記), undoubtedly the main source to analyze the position of the lecturer, reveal two large developments. First, we can notice a sharp decline in the average age of the lecturer. As several other positions such as the *Yuima-e* candidateship were prerequisites to become lecturer we can assume that the same age change also occurred in case of the *Yuima-e* candidate and in extension also the *Jion-e* positions. This internal ritual change seems to have coincided with the aristocratization of the Kōfukuji clergy. Perhaps the biggest indicator of this rise of the aristocracy within the temple's walls is the establishment of the *monzeki* (門跡) or "noble cloisters" within the temple hierarchy, separate entities within Kōfukuji where monks of high nobility lived. These developed into powerful groups that led to increasing competition within the temple and in a sense transferred factional strife from the court to the temple. Ichijōin (一乗院), the first Kōfukuji *monzeki*, was established in 978 by Jōshō (定昭, 906–983), son of Fujiwara no Moromasa (藤原師尹, 920–969). This cloister became increasingly powerful and would later, with the *monzeki* Daijōin, effectively turn the head temple into a tripartite organization.²⁹ The

increasing presence of these noble monks affected the rituals, as they moved up far more quickly than commoners, resulting in younger (and more inexperienced) lecturers and candidates. This process was not limited to Kōfukuji, as exemplified by Shōren'in's (青蓮院) foundation around 1130 at Enryakuji (延暦寺), the center of the Tendai school.

Second, while monks' affiliations were rather diverse in the eighth century, this changed quickly to just two, Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji. Originally, the positions of the lecturer and the candidate were theoretically accessible to all learned monks (*gakuzō*, 学僧) of the Six Nara Schools.³⁰ In 802, the court issued an edict saying that monks of the Six Schools had to be equally invited to the *Misai-e* and the *Yuima-e*, but from the latter half of the tenth century lectureship in these rituals was de facto limited to Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji, or Hossō and Sanron.³¹

The importance and prestige of the lecturer increased dramatically in 834, when lectureship in the *Yuima-e* now enabled a monk to be appointed lecturer of the *Misai-e* (御齋会) and the *Saishō-e* (最勝会), respectively. These "three lectureships" then became the prerequisite to advance to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, showing how these high ritual positions were directly related to institutional advancement. However, as the significance of the *Yuima-e* as state ritual clearly transcended Kōfukuji to start with, this does not seem surprising. Therefore, we have to analyze the link between the *Yuima-e* and the *Jion-e* to trace the interconnectedness between the temple's internal sphere and the state. In order to do so we have to reconsider the position of the candidate, and I would argue that in order to understand the dynamic between internal and external rituals on the one hand and the relation between the several temple complexes on the other, the candidate is of greater use than the position of the lecturer.

THE CANDIDATE

The creation of the position of candidate (*ryūgi* or *rissha*) in debate rituals shows how the format of rituals was influenced by the changing socio-political context. While the position of lecturer was present from the beginning, the role of candidates at the *Yuima-e* and other *hōe* was a gradual development starting from the latter half of the eighth century until the widespread organization of these positions from 876 at all major temples and their rituals.³² The position was first organized at Kōfukuji and was open to monks of all the Six Schools, but from the latter half of the eleventh century only Kōfukuji and Tōdaiji

monks held this position. Not just the affiliation but also the number of candidates at the *Yuima-e* changed over time. In 876 nine monks were chosen to be candidate, a number that went up to ten by 885.³³

The candidates had to go through specific examinations during the ritual, and their pass (*toku*, 得) or fail (*bi*, 未) was announced by an examiner (*seigisha*, 正義者) during the ritual.³⁴ Important to understand its role in the dynamic process that took place between rituals is that the candidates appeared in a large number of rituals and the requirement to be admitted to the position of candidate in a “higher” ranked ritual depended on one’s performance as candidate in a “lower” ritual.

Appointed by the Head of the Fujiwara (*chōja*, 長者) and the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, the *Jion-e* or *Yuima-e* candidate basically was a younger monk who went through a period of rigorous study and had fulfilled the role of candidate satisfactorily at another lower-ranked internal *Kōfukuji* ritual. As mentioned above, this illustrates well the specific preparation period relevant to ritual progression noted by Catherine Bell. To become a candidate at the *Yuima-e*, a monk had to have completed three stages of candidateship referred to as *sangai gyō manzoku* (三階業満足): examination at the *Hōkō-e* (方広会), the *Hokke-e* (法華会), and finally the *Jion-e*. This rule is mentioned in Fujiwara no Munetada’s *Chūyūki*.³⁵ Monks who had finished these three candidateships would be indicated as those who “fulfilled the three requirements” (*san toku gyō*, 三得業), which allowed them to become a *Yuima-e* candidate. However, between having fulfilled these three “internal” requirements and progression to the *Yuima-e*, participation in several other rituals was required. Interestingly, monks who had completed their rituals track were first promoted to be *dai ku mokudai* (大供目代), a high bureaucratic position that was part of the Five Masters discussed below, and then progressed to be a candidate at the *Yuima-e*. In other words, on the one hand internal ritual participation and bureaucratic promotion were closely connected, and on the other this progression led to participation in the external *Yuima-e* and promotion to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs.

THE HEAD OF THE FIVE MASTERS

The title *bechi-e goshi* refers to the highest of five monks, one of them being the *dai ku mokudai* mentioned above, who functioned in between the abbot and the three highest positions of the temple or *sango* (三綱). These five masters were appointed by the abbot and took

care of the temple's internal management and the organization of rituals. However, their position allowed them to proceed to participation in the earlier mentioned candidate-debates, connecting their involvement in Kōfukuji's internal rituals and management with participation in the higher ranked, external *Yuima-e*. Through an analysis of his movements from his seating position in the *Jion-e*'s audience and participation in the actual ritual till his lower participation in the *Yuima-e*, it is clear that their position represents an ideal example to unravel the connection between the temple's internal hierarchy and ritual participation.

First, let's take a look the seating within the *Jion-e* audience. The first difference between the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e* audience is that the number of participants was larger and not fixed in case of the former, while the *Yuima-e* audience was fixed at forty during the Heian period. When referring to the "seating position" of the monks, I have to point out that in fact I am referring to the position and order of monks' names mentioned on attendance confirmation documents called *kaishō* (廻請). Prior to the rituals, these documents were circulated and signed by the monks to confirm their participation and place within the debates and/or the audience.

It suffices to provide a few examples to demonstrate how hierarchy functioned on a basic level. The twelfth-century monk Keini (慶仁) participated six times in the *Jion-e* audience. The first time, in 1189, he received the fifteenth place, and moved up through seniority every year till he reached the third place in 1199. The same can be said for Benkan (弁寛), who held the nineteenth place in 1189 and moved up every year till he reached the eleventh place in 1196.³⁶ What confirms the importance of the ranking in the audience is that their ranking also determines their place as candidate if a member appeared in both groups. This is exemplified by the example of the monks Ryōshun (良俊) and Jōko (乗弘), who participated in the *Jion-e* of 1261. Ryōshun was ranked fifteenth in the audience and second place of the candidates. Jōko was ranked lower in the audience, nineteenth, and was therefore placed below Ryōshun in the sixth position. The fulfilment of the position of candidate in the *Jion-e* theoretically allowed a monk to proceed to the candidate-debates of the *Yuima-e*, showing the link between the *bechi-e goshi*, candidacy in the *Jion-e*, and the possibility of participation in the *Yuima-e*. This framework shows a specific internal process on the

one hand, but a thorough connection with the “external” state ritual and institutional advancement on the other.

While duties of the five masters concerned all sorts of internal matters related to preparation for rituals, they eventually could be selected for participation in the *Yuima-e* debates (*kengaku ryūgi*, 研学豎義) as *kengaku rissha* (研学豎者). In other words, the position of head of the five masters can therefore be interpreted as a step towards participation in the *Yuima-e*. In order for the head to be selected to participate in the *Yuima-e* in this manner, he also had to have acted as candidate in three “internal” *Kōfukuji* rituals, being the *Hōkō-e*, the *Hokke-e*, and finally the *Jion-e*.³⁷ This requirement was called the “completion of the task of the three stages” or *sangai gyō manzoku*, a rule that remained unchanged till the Muromachi period.³⁸ After having completed the position of *rissha* at the *Yuima-e*, the monk could once again attain the position of examiner or *seigisha* at the *Jion-e* (see fig. 1). The ritual track of Zengei (善芸) illustrates well this internal process. First, let’s take a look at his position in the audience. He was a member of the five masters from 1266 and his hierarchic progression is shown by his seating in the *Hokke-e*: he moved up from thirty-six to twelve between 1265 and 1278. Roughly during the same period, his seating in the *Jion-e* moved up from forty-seven in 1268 to three in 1289, showing that the progress made in the subordinate *Hokke-e* paralleled his rise in the *Jion-e*. While the link between the *Hokke-e* and the *Jion-e* shows “internal” advancement, the connection between the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e* shows on its turn the simultaneous “external” progress. After having been in the *Hokke-e* and *Jion-e* audience and having acted at the candidate-debates at both the *Hokke-e* and the *Jion-e*, Zengei proceeded to participation in the *Yuima-e* candidate-debates in 1273.³⁹ After this date, he was able to move up to the higher position of examiner in both the *Hokke-e* and the *Jion-e* in 1275 to 1276, showing the entanglement between these internal and external positions. Unfortunately, Zengei was not of noble descent, which by this time had become necessary to proceed to *Yuima-e* and membership in the Ministry of Monastic Affairs.⁴⁰ However, the following case shows a noble monk, exemplifying how a monk proceeded all the way to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs.

Jisshin (実信, 1198–1256) was of noble descent and entered *Kōfukuji* at age eleven.⁴¹ First, let’s take a look at his positions of candidate. In 1209 he acted as candidate of the *Hōkō-e* and moved on to the *Hokke-e* in 1211 to finally act as *Jion-e* candidate in 1214. By this time he had

fulfilled the “completion of the task of the three stages.” This enabled him to proceed to the *Yuima-e kengaku ryūgi* in 1215 and finally the ritual’s highest position of lecturer in 1219, followed by the *Misai-e* and finally the *Saishō-e* in 1220. Having fulfilled all requirements, he entered the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, where he attained the highest rank of *dai sōjō* (大僧正) (*Dai nihon shiryō*, Kōgen 1 [1256].10.17).

THE YUIMA-E AND THE THREE SOUTHERN ASSEMBLIES

The *Yuima-e*, the *Misai-e*, and the *Saishō-e* were referred to as the Three Southern Assemblies. From the middle of the Heian period they stood in contrast to the so-called Three Northern Rituals (*hokkyō san’e*, 北京三会), consisting of the Great Mahāyāna Assembly (*daijō-e*, 大乘会) at Hosshōji, the Lotus Assembly (*hokke-e*, 法華会), and the Golden Light Assembly (*saishō-e*, 最勝会). Both provided a route to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, with the Three Southern Rituals for Nara monks and the Three Northern Rituals for monks of the Tendai school. Here, we will focus on the Southern Assemblies of which the *Yuima-e* was of pivotal importance.

Standing at the center of the *ritsuryō* state, the Ministry of Monastic Affairs was an office overseeing the Buddhist temples and their communities. It was founded in 624 under Empress Suiko (推古天皇, 554–628) and de facto functioned as the link between the state and the temples. This ministry consisted of high ranking monks who were selected by the Buddhist community and thus functioned as both government officials and members of the Buddhist community. The creation of this ministry does not coincide with the foundation of any of the Three Rituals, and the formation of the connection between the ministry and these rituals has to be seen as a gradual process that took place in the ninth century.

In 834, an imperial decree stipulated that the lecturer of the *Yuima-e* would lecture “in the palace,” referring to the *Missai-e*, and the *Saishō-e*. Thus, the order of the Three Rituals or *san’e* was theoretically established.⁴² By 855 we see the emergence of two categories called the Three Stages (*sangai*) and the Five Stages (*gokai*), two sets of requirements that explain well the interconnectedness between several levels of internal and external rituals.⁴³ The Three Stages referred to two forms of examination and the *Yuima-e* candidateship, and in case of the Five Stages two extra lecturing positions were added. All five requirements involved some kind of examination and lectureship,

symptomatic of the growing emphasis on doctrinal introspection occurring from the second half of the eighth century.

Monks who had fulfilled the Three Stages could become National Reader (*sho koku dokushi*, 諸国読師) while those who had finished the Five Stages could advance to National Lecturer (*sho koku kōji*, 諸国講師).⁴⁴ The earliest mention of a lecturer (*kōji*) dates from 702, though it was referred to as *koku shi* (国師) till 795. Both positions were subordinate to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, and monks who went further than the Five Stages and became lecturers at the Three Assemblies were then eligible to be promoted to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs. Among the Five Stages we should make a distinction between the two examinations and two lectureships a monk could complete at all Fifteen Great Temples and the Official Temples (*jōgaku ji*, 定額寺) on the one hand and the candidateship at the *Yuima-e* on the other. The latter could only be performed at select temples and rituals such as the Lotus Sūtra Assembly (Hokke-kyō-e) at Daianji (大安寺) or Kōfukuji's *Yuima-e*.⁴⁵ In other words, four requirements could be fulfilled at a broad range of temples, narrowing down to a few on the level on the candidate and eventually the lectureship at only three main rituals resulting in promotion to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs. From high to low and connecting internal with external positions, the temple and its rituals were thus part of one large ritual and institutional network where all ritual positions were connected with one another.

All these requirements referred to specific functions within rituals, and having fulfilled one function enabled a monk to proceed to another, thus creating an entire ritual "route" that connected internal temple functions with external institutional advancement.⁴⁶

The main positions within the Ministry of Monastic Affairs were the *sōjō* (僧正) and the *daisōzu*. Of importance to us is the position of master of decorum (*igi shi*, 威儀師) who assisted the ministry's highest post and also performed an important role at state rituals such as the *Yuima-e*.⁴⁷ The importance of this member of the ministry is well illustrated by his position between the abbot and the Imperial Emissary at the *Yuima-e* as described in the *Proceedings of the Yuima-e* (*Yuima-shidai*, 維摩会次第).

As noted above, the importance and prestige of the lecturer increased dramatically in 834, when lectureship in the *Yuima-e* would enable a monk to be appointed lecturer of the *Misai-e* and the *Saishō-e*, respectively. These "three lectureships" then became the prerequisite

to advance to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs, showing how these high ritual positions were directly related to institutional advancement. The examples of Kōfukuji monks Zōri (増利) and Kyōga (経賀) illustrate well this process. Zōri was appointed *Yuima-e* candidate in 891 and lecturer at the same ritual in the tenth month of 903. He then functioned as lecturer in the *Misai-e* about two months later and the *Saishō-e* in the first month of 904. This enabled him to enter the Ministry of Monastic Affairs in 906.⁴⁸ He moved up steadily within the ministry and finally attained the highest rank of *Dai sōzu* in 925.⁴⁹ Kyōga followed the same track. He became *Yuima-e* candidate in 904 and lecturer in 920, followed by the lectureships of the *Misai-e* and the *Saishō-e*. He entered the ministry in 931 and attained the high rank of *Shō sōzu* (小僧都) in 931.⁵⁰

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE JION-E AND THE YUIMA-E

The analysis of Kōfukuji's two main rituals reveals how the temple's internal organization functioned and how monks moved up within and between certain rituals. However, the apparent inseparability of these rituals implicitly addresses a far larger subject. I would argue that the relation between internal and external rituals can be of great importance to better understand the relation between the private and the public spheres in pre-modern Japan, a question I believe to be of pivotal importance to define "the state" in the period under consideration.

The Japanese historian Ihara Kesao discussed Toshio Kuroda's *kenmon* theory from the point of view of the concepts *kokusei* (国政) and *kasei* (家政), defining *kokusei* as the polity on a macro level that developed out of the *ritsuryō* state and *kasei* as the polity on a micro level that operates within particular *kenmon*.⁵¹ Both *kokusei* and *kasei* are then analyzed to determine what in fact constituted "public power."⁵² Ihara mentions two characteristics of the pre-modern private and public spheres that are important to our comparison between the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e*. First, he considers the pre-modern private and public as two spheres lacking an antithetical separation, coexisting in each other. Second, while arguing that *kasei* is that which internally regulates a *kenmon*, he states that it is impossible to separate *kasei* from the larger (*kokusei*) framework. In other words, Ihara maintains that the pre-modern private and public are distinct categories, but at the

same time it is implied that one cannot separate the private from the overarching public.

This inseparability of *kokusei* and *kasei* as understood by Ihara seems to be supported by Uejima's analysis of the relation between Buddhism and the state. While Uejima does not make use of an elaborate theoretical framework and in fact seems to use two opposing blocs of Buddhism vs. state throughout his analysis, he does in the end stress the undeniable connection between the internal and external rituals and institutional developments, thus indirectly supporting Ihara. In regards to national rituals (*kokkateki hōe*) during the eleventh century, Uejima states that the position of the candidate in internal rituals was intrinsically connected with advancement towards the Three Southern Assemblies and promotion to the Ministry of Monastic Affairs. He adds that similar constructs existed at the large temples such as Yakushiji and Onjōji and that one should not regard the *kenmon* as separate from the state.⁵³ A similar position has been taken in Western scholarship by Mikael Adolphson. He does not make use of Ihara's discussion on the relation between *kokusei* and *kasei* but argues for a form of "shared sovereignty" that seems to be similar to what Ihara addresses on a more theoretical level. Shared sovereignty means that instead of separated blocs, we are dealing with a group of several actors who together constituted, as Adolphson frames it, the "*kenmon* state."⁵⁴ My analysis of the interconnection between an internal and an external ritual seems to confirm this. On the one hand, a monk's education and participation in an internal ritual reinforced the temple's specific doctrinal identity. However, on the other hand, the institutional connection between the position of the candidate and the lecturer in case of the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e* confirms the inseparability of the *Jion-e* and the *Yuima-e*. The *Jion-e* can then be reinterpreted as part of the private sphere of the temple (*kasei*) with its distinct characteristics, but inseparable from the public sphere of the *Yuima-e*, the *Misai-e*, and the *Saishō-e* (*kokusei*).

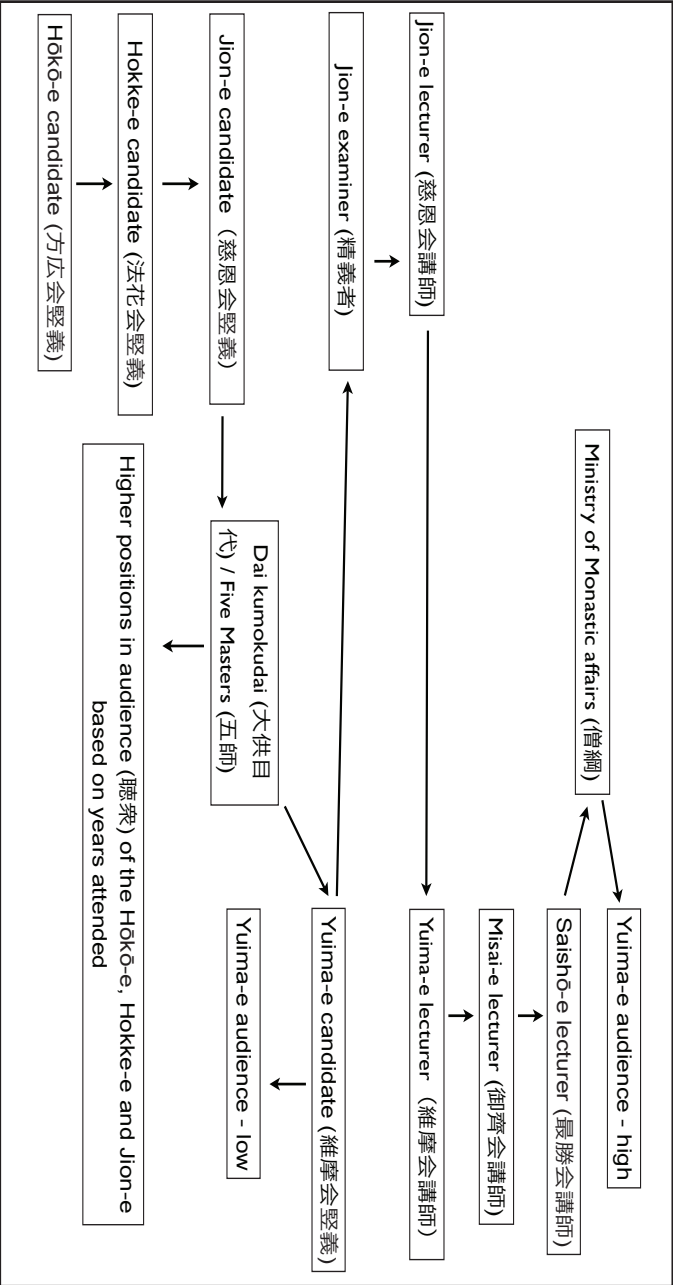


Figure 1. The Jion-e and the Yuima-e's interdependent relationship illustrated by institutional advancement.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank the University of Leeds and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation for their financial support, as well as Tatsuo Saile from UC Berkeley for introducing me to the present Kōfukuji community.
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5. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 211.
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Freedom in Submission: Kiyozawa Manshi's Organic Critique of the *Bunmei Kaika* Movement in Meiji Japan¹

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This paper focuses on the understanding of freedom in the thought of the True Pure Land (Shin) Buddhist philosopher, reformer, and cleric KIYOZAWA Manshi (1863–1903). Its starting point is located in contradictory statements which Kiyozawa makes in regard to the issue of individual freedom. On the one hand, Kiyozawa writes, “As the story of Śākyamuni Buddha teaches, anyone who seriously wishes to enter into the religious world must abandon parents, wife, and children, wealth and nation. Further, one must abandon one’s self. In other words, one must abandon worldly beliefs such as filial piety and patriotism.”² From writings such as this, scholars have presented his thought as promoting a radical form of individual autonomy in response to the Meiji state’s indoctrination program of national morality (*kokumin dōtoku*).³ As encapsulated in the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (1890), national morality insisted that the duties of loyalty and filial piety toward the emperor were the foundation of Japanese national identity. Through the public education system and civic rituals, Japanese were inculcated in these values to produce loyal and obedient subjects who would be willing to sacrifice themselves to the state in “times of crisis.”⁴ In contrast, Kiyozawa’s injunction to abandon “wealth and nation” and “filial piety and patriotism” seemed to reject soundly the tenets of national morality. Further, his insistence upon personal conscience as the ultimate locus for responsibility as well as religious belief appeared to negate the absolutist claims of state and society and to create a space for autonomous and independent human agency and identity.

On closer inspection, however, this characterization is hard to uphold. For example, Kiyozawa closes the very same article in which the above quote appears by writing, “Take the law of the king as the

foundation and put its ethical code first. Follow the common ways of the world, and deepen your faith (*anjin*) within your heart.”⁵ Here he seems to subordinate the needs of the individual to this very same national morality, arguing for subservience to the “law of the king” (*ōhō*), a Buddhist formulation that had become equated with the state’s ethical program. To this could be added numerous other passages where Kiyozawa calls for hierarchy in society and obedience to those in power. For example, in his talks on self-cultivation he writes that one must “obey one’s lot in life.... Forgetting your lot and thoughtlessly yelling about equality and recklessly crying about freedom, this is to mistake one’s direction and to completely fail to distinguish the way.”⁶ In other places, he speaks of the naturalness of social classes and the duty of the poor to obey the rich.⁷

Given this, what are we to make of Kiyozawa’s insistence that his signature reform movement of spiritual activism (*seishinshugi*) represented a stance of “complete freedom” (*zettai jiyūshugi*)? Was this simply a sham? Further, what was the meaning of his claim that “freedom and submission” went hand in hand?⁸ In order to answer these questions, this paper will attempt something rather unusual. It will examine Kiyozawa apart from his usual role as a Buddhist modernizer or Shin sectarian reformer and recast his thought as a reaction to a particular historical form of freedom, that of classical liberalism.⁹ In Meiji Japan this was most clearly represented by FUKUZAWA Yukichi and the movement for civilization and enlightenment (*bunmei kaika*) in the 1870s. This paper will argue that while Kiyozawa did ultimately embrace the illiberal ideas of inequality and obedience to authority, he did not share national morality’s goal of bolstering state power. Rather, Kiyozawa’s thought represented an attempt to replace the heteronomy of the atomistic and self-interested individual of classical liberalism with the autonomy of a divine whole. As Kiyozawa saw the present social order as in fact an expression of the divine will, submission to its dictates became one with the realization of personal autonomy.¹⁰

This paper will consist of three sections. The first will look at the form of freedom associated with the civilization and enlightenment movement and Kiyozawa’s critique of it. The following sections will examine Kiyozawa’s own attempt to provide for both individual freedom and social harmony through an analysis of a central term of his thought, “all things as one body” (*banbutsu ittai*).

CIVILIZATION'S DISCONTENTS

Kiyozawa's own understanding of freedom must be seen against problems he saw in the classical liberal conception of freedom put forth by the movement for civilization and enlightenment. As such, a brief outline of this position is in order. According to the leader of the movement, FUKUZAWA Yukichi, the Japanese people still suffered from the pernicious effects of what he termed the attitude of "moral subordination" which resulted from the Confucian informed status system (*mibunsei*) of the previous Tokugawa era. While the Meiji government had done away with legal strictures regarding hereditary occupations, Fukuzawa was concerned with the system's lingering effects within the spiritual makeup of the Japanese people.

The rule of status meant that during the Tokugawa era individuals were bound to each other through complex networks of immediate, personal ethical relationships of obligation and responsibility between superior and inferior. As Fukuzawa writes, "The samurai's status, the honor of his house, and his lord were the great Way according to which the samurai lived and the basic bonds binding his conduct throughout his life. In Western terminology, they were moral ties."¹¹ While these concrete "moral ties" had served to preserve social harmony and were conducive to a certain level of civilization, Fukuzawa laments, "The millions of Japanese at the time were closed up inside millions of individual boxes.... The four level class structure of samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants froze human relationships along prescribed lines."¹² The net result was the suppression of individual talent, economic stagnation, and ultimately Japan's semi-colonial status to the Western powers.

In order to end "moral subordination" and promote Japanese national independence, Fukuzawa appealed to the classical liberal value of "equality" based in innate "natural rights" (*tenpu jiken*). Using equality as a standard, Fukuzawa railed against such basic underpinnings of the Confucian social order as the subordination of women and filial piety. Rather than an intricate web of reciprocal social obligations and responsibilities, society is re-imagined as an association of free individuals. Identity was no longer tied to birth or occupational status but in particular to one's economic activity.¹³ Fukuzawa writes, "heaven does not give riches and dignity to man himself, but to his labors.... It is only the person who has studied diligently...who becomes noble and rich, while his opposite becomes base and poor."¹⁴

Against Confucian strictures on acquisitiveness and desire, Fukuzawa condones the “love of money” as a “part of human nature.”¹⁵ Freed from status restrictions on economic activity, with an understanding of their basic equality and armed with certain rights, individuals were free to pursue their material interests.¹⁶ This in turn would lead to the prosperity and independence of Japan and the progress of universal civilization. Here freedom is specifically identified with freedom *from* socially enforced moral bonds and the freedom *to* pursue one’s own material desires.

The outcome of such a policy, however, was not social cohesion and a harmony of interests as the enlightenment modernizers had hoped. Rather, the results were the so-called “social problems” (*shakai mondai*) which became major concerns especially with the increased industrialization that followed in the wake of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95). The social problems were several—a widening gap between rich and poor, labor unrest, and environmental degradation. Social critics such as UCHIMURA Kanzō, ABE Isō, KINOSHITA Naoe, and others brought public attention to these issues through a new type of muckraking journalism.¹⁷ Kinoshita took aim at theories of progress such as that of Herbert Spencer, wondering if the current “golden age” was the result of such progress. “Well the golden age is here. But it is not as the English philosopher predicted.... Instead of the golden age of peace and freedom, we have an age of almighty gold.... Who said that the peaceful wars of industry and trade would replace the wars of aggression characteristic of the barbaric age? The wars of industry and trade are, after all, not peaceful wars....”¹⁸ Writing in his diary, the politician and environmental activist TANAKA Shōzō opined that “the progress of material, artificial civilization casts society into darkness. Electricity is discovered and the world is darkened.”¹⁹ Kiyozawa himself wrote, “Isn’t what is now called ‘civilization and enlightenment’ nothing other than the external adornment of a nefarious world of the survival of the fittest where the strong prey upon the weak?”²⁰ As is clear from Kiyozawa’s words, for these critics, the social problems were merely the “branches” whose “roots” were found in the social program of civilization and enlightenment and its embrace of the imported Western theories of individualism, materialism, and utilitarian self-interest.

Kiyozawa’s response is to examine in particular the roots of the classical liberal theory of freedom. He begins with a general inquiry into the two basic conditions that must be recognized in order for

social life to be possible. The first concerns the “freedom and rights of the individual” which are connected with the full exercise of each person’s “individual and independent capacities.” The second recognizes that “the capacities of the self are inter-related with the capacities of others” and thus seeks to restrict the freedom of the individual to provide for the rights of others.²¹ Thus, at the basis of any conception of human freedom Kiyozawa notes a fundamental tension, or what he terms in other places a “fundamental contradiction” (*konpon dōchaku*) between the demands of self and the competing demands of others.

The classical liberal theory of freedom essentially joined these two sides of the contradiction into the so-called law of equal freedoms.²² Citing Francis Wayland’s *Elements of Moral Science*, Fukuzawa provided one typical formulation of this law as “a man can conduct himself in freedom so long as he does not infringe upon the rights of others.”²³ Underlying this theory is the assumption that humans exist as fundamentally unrelated and atomistic individuals. With no common connection, the pursuit of self-interest becomes the only shared pursuit. However, while each person wishes to pursue his or her individual freedom to the greatest extent possible, the individual is confronted by the equal demands of others. In order to prevent a war of all against all, restrictions must be placed upon the rights of the individual, usually in the form of political or legal structures. Now the individual must submit to forces external to the will and demands of the self. Kiyozawa expands on this understanding as follows: “These two [individual freedom and its restriction] are in mutual contradiction and are completely incompatible. That is, if you make the freedom and rights of the individual perfect and complete, you cannot allow the slightest restriction. [On the other hand] if you make these restrictions firm and definite, the rights and freedom of the individual cannot be supplied. Consequently, in the theories of law and politics when these two conditions are raised together, extreme confusion arises.”²⁴ Thus, for Kiyozawa, freedom appears as the highest human value. By its very definition it cannot be limited or restricted, or something fundamental to human existence is lost. Yet, in classical liberal theory, individual freedom can only be preserved through its curtailment. The task then becomes one of finding a form of social existence in which there are no external determinations of one’s actions, yet a harmony can arise between the needs of self and other. It is this task, I argue, which drives Kiyozawa’s intellectual and practical projects.

BANBUTSU ITTAI AND THE LOGIC OF SUBSTANCE METAPHYSICS

Kiyozawa's solution to the fundamental contradiction in the liberal conception of freedom is found in the several meanings of the term *banbutsu ittai* (万物一体). This phrase is typically translated as "the unity of all things" or the "oneness of the universe." It occurs most prominently as the title of an essay which Kiyozawa wrote for the *Spiritual World* (*Seishinkai*) in which he argues for a universal ethics of responsibility for all sentient beings.²⁵ However, the Japanese term *ittai* (一体) can also mean "substance" or, more literally, "one body." It is these more philosophical understandings that I wish to address here. The common portrayal of Kiyozawa as primarily a Shin sectarian reformer has had the tendency to elide or at least to downplay his training in philosophy. In fact, his academic training in Western philosophy (*seiyō tetsugaku*) was crucial in his reformulation of Shin doctrine and for his solution to the problem of freedom. This section will examine the role of "substance" in Kiyozawa's thought while the next will look at the role of "body."

The key influence on Kiyozawa's understanding of substance was the philosophy of Spinoza.²⁶ Before looking at Kiyozawa's own position, it is necessary to provide some background in the tradition of substance metaphysics and the thought of Spinoza. In the tradition of philosophy stemming from Aristotle, a substance performed two functions. It referred both to that which possesses truly independent existence and to the substrate in which a change of state occurs. In the early modern period, Descartes inherited this idea of substance and attempted to reconcile it with the Christian notion of God. While Aristotle argued for a plurality of substances in the world, for Descartes there could really be only one fully independent existent, God. For Descartes, God was the only true substance as God's own existence was not due to another entity but arose from his own power.²⁷ Further, God possessed a radical freedom to do as he willed, most apparent in his creation of the world *ex nihilo*. Material beings were "secondary substances" as they depended for their existence upon the constant creative activity of God.

Spinoza inherits and further develops the notion of substance but radically alters Descartes' interpretation. Spinoza argues that things in the world have only a relative or finite existence because each is opposed by other beings which serve to determine or limit its ability to act.²⁸ For this reason, the things of the world cannot properly be

termed substances. Spinoza agreed with Descartes that God was the only true substance, but he radically altered the conception of God's freedom. For Spinoza, to posit "secondary substances" outside of God entailed that God was somehow involved with and thus causally dependent upon these substances, and, to that extent, God was restricted and lacking in freedom. In order to overcome this logical inconsistency and to provide for God's complete freedom Spinoza equated God with the universe as a whole and referred to God as the "absolutely infinite."²⁹ In doing so, Spinoza recasts God's freedom not in opposition to necessity but rather as one with it. Unlike Descartes, God's freedom is not the ability to create arbitrarily, as for Spinoza all activities require a necessary cause and are thus determined. Rather, as the entire cosmos itself, God is free as all things arise necessarily within and through God's own nature. In other words, Spinoza replaces Descartes' notion of freedom with that of self-determination or autonomy. Individual freedom, to the extent that it exists, arises through an "intellectual intuition" of one's place within the infinite and necessitated series of causal relations.

The influence of Spinoza and his conception of substance on Kiyozawa's thought, which he encapsulates as "two entities, same substance" (*niko dōtai*), is pervasive. In his major monograph, *The Skeleton of the Philosophy of Religion* (1892), Kiyozawa begins his investigation into the nature of religion with an examination of the types of things that exist. His analysis relies on a principle taken from Spinoza, "omnis determinatio est negatio" which Kiyozawa renders as, "Every thing is what it is by being distinguished from other things."³⁰ He then writes, "distinction or negation is or implies limitation. Hence all things of the universe are finite."³¹ As finites, they are "relative," "imperfect," "dependent," and a "part of something else."³² This last attribute is of central importance because from it Kiyozawa, again following Spinoza, concludes that it is only the infinite collection of finites that is truly a substance and so possesses true independence. Like Spinoza, he terms this the Absolute Infinite (*zettai mugen*) as there is no determining force which exists outside of it to restrict or limit it. Religion then becomes the unity of an individual finite with the Infinite.³³

Kiyozawa's understanding of freedom also shows a direct inheritance from Spinoza. He argues that all actions are necessitated by certain causes (*in*) and conditions (*en*). The belief that we act from a free will is simply due to a lack of awareness of the causes.³⁴ All individuals,

then, are determined by necessary causes and freedom appears to be an illusion. However, in an essay entitled "Freedom of the Will and the Necessity of Cause and Effect," he argues further,

Freedom and necessity are not direct antitheses. The direct antithesis of freedom is un-freedom (*fujiyū*).... That is, an action which is limited and restricted and which cannot go outside of a particular sphere is finite and un-free. Activity which is unlimited, unrestricted, and can expand wherever it will is infinite and free. Therefore, the pairing of freedom and un-freedom is the pairing of infinite and finite.³⁵

Like Spinoza, Kiyozawa reframes the issue of freedom and necessity in terms of the locus of necessity. Here he identifies the Absolute Infinite with freedom because all causal necessity arises not from some external source but rather from within its own nature. In other words, while its internal structure functions under the guise of necessity, as a cause of itself (*causa sui*) the Absolutely Infinite whole acts autonomously. Recast in religious terms, when the individual develops the mind of faith and realizes an identity with the Infinite Amida Buddha, there is a personal participation in Amida's infinite freedom. In this manner, Kiyozawa's religious philosophy is able to fulfill the individual demand for the experience of unrestricted freedom. Kiyozawa now must try to provide a harmony of interests between self and other.

BANBUTSU ITTAI AND THE ORGANIC BODY OF THE INFINITE

We have seen that the philosophical notion of substance had two functions. It referred both to a fully independent entity and to the substrate of change. Here we will examine Kiyozawa's use of this second meaning of substance to argue for the Infinite as an organic body in which finites exist as its inter-coordinated parts. In this manner, he will provide for a harmony of interests between self and other. Here, Kiyozawa will utilize the thought of the German post-Idealist philosopher Hermann Lotze (1817–1881) which he first encountered as a philosophy student at Tokyo Imperial University.

Kiyozawa first uses an argument based upon the notion of substance as a kind of substrate in relation to the issue of karmic causality. He concludes, "The principle of causation is established only on the principle of persistent identity of a substance (*ittai*) through cause and effect; for, if there be no such identity of substance, there will be no connection between cause and effect, and hence no ground for the effect's necessarily coming from the cause."³⁶ Thus, he argues that some

kind of a soul (*reikon*) is logically necessary as the substrate, or recipient, of karmic causes and effects within individual consciousness.³⁷

Kiyozawa makes use of this same logic when considering causal relations within the external world. He notes that our normal understanding of causality is problematic. He writes,

What kind of relation exists between A and B? To say “this is purely A” and “this is purely B” means that A and B are independent and separate substances (*betsuritsu bettai*). A toward B is a separate thing, and B toward A is a separate thing. So, to say that cause A produces effect B is the same as to say that cause and effect are from different sources (*tain taka*). We cannot say that this is the proper [understanding of] cause and effect. We are unable to explain why the separate and independent entities A and B have a relationship. That is, we say that B exists because A exists, but we are unable to explain the reason.³⁸

In other words, Kiyozawa is arguing that for the relationship of cause and effect to make sense, there must be something between them which brings about their relationship. Without this, cause and effect would merely be accidental and there would be no persistent associations between causes and effects. Rather than “cause and effect from different sources,” Kiyozawa argues for both arising from the “same source” (*jiin jika*). He writes, “Things are relative and finite. Moreover, due to relations of cause and effect they are all interdependent. The reason which lies at the root of this condition is that all are [part of] the same substance (*dō ittai*) existing within these relations [of cause and effect]. They do not possess independent and separate essences.”³⁹ While the soul serves as the unifying source of identity for the subjective world of consciousness, it is the Infinite itself as a universal substance that provides the coordination for all causal interactions in the objective world.

Kiyozawa is here making an advance on the position he took in the *Skeleton of the Philosophy of Religion*. As we have seen, there he followed Spinoza in arguing for the Infinite as the totality of finites. However, unlike Spinoza, who had argued that finites are simply phenomenal attributes of the Infinite, Kiyozawa took the relation between the two to be more akin to a mathematical set. The Infinite is a set of which the finites are members, or as he writes, “Only the substance of infinite number of the finite can be identical with the substance of the Infinite.”⁴⁰ He is now claiming that the Infinite is more than simply a set or container for all existence. The Infinite has real existence itself

as a substrate or coordinator of change. In order to further articulate the relationship, he will utilize the organic metaphor. A proper understanding of this is key to an understanding of how the notion of substance will come to mean in fact a real physical and spiritual body.

The use of the organic metaphor to describe society was commonplace in the late nineteenth century but was most closely associated with the work of Herbert Spencer. Kiyozawa's teacher of philosophy, Ernest Fenollosa, was a devotee of Spencer and had attempted to create a grand philosophical synthesis by uniting the thought of Hegel and Spencer.⁴¹ Kiyozawa does mention Spencer frequently in his writings and his library contained many of Spencer's works.⁴² Spencer used the organic metaphor to argue for increasing mutual interdependency between individuals and their activities due to the division of labor. He writes, "These activities are not simply different, but their differences are so related as to make one another possible. The reciprocal aid thus given causes a mutual dependence of the parts and the mutually dependent parts, living by and for one another, from an aggregate constituted on the same general principle as an individual organism."⁴³ The appearance of an organic society was important for Spencer because it signified a more harmonious and peaceful form of civilization.

Kiyozawa appears to use the metaphor in a similar fashion to articulate the relationship among finites in the world. He writes, "The mode or structure in which numberless finites form one body (*ittai*) of the Infinite is organic constitution (*yūki soshiki*)." He continues, "Numberless units are none of them independent of, and indifferent to each other, but are dependent on, and inseparably connected with, one another. Not only so, but by this very dependence and connection, every unit obtains its real existence and significance."⁴⁴

On the surface this seems to be a restatement of Spencer's position. However, in Spencer's account inter-dependence come about through each individual performing a specific function within the larger society. In this account, other than one's function, there is nothing within or between individuals which unites them in any deeper fashion. Though the depiction of the organic as present in the *Skeleton of the Philosophy of Religion* does seem to embrace such a functional understanding, when this is read in the context of Kiyozawa's other writings, it becomes clear that this represents only a rather superficial description of reality. In contrast to Spencer, who argues that society *functions like a body*, Kiyozawa will submit that the Absolute Infinite *is a body*. As

parts of this body, finite beings have an essential relationship as all actions are coordinated by the will of the Infinite. Kiyozawa's source for this novel understanding is not Spencer but Hermann Lotze.

As part of his graduate study, Kiyozawa studied Lotze's *Metaphysics* and *Philosophy of Religion* under Fenollosa's successor, Ludwig Busse, a former student of Lotze. In 1887 Kiyozawa gave a lecture course entitled "Pure Philosophy" (*junsei tetsugaku*) in which he provided a summary of Lotze's *Metaphysics*.⁴⁵ As Kiyozawa explicates, Lotze begins his *Metaphysics* with a discussion of what he terms the "natural conception of the universe" which is "that conception which finds the course of the world only intelligible as of a multiplicity of persistent things, of variable relations between them, and of events arising out of these changes of mutual relations."⁴⁶ This "natural conception" or "natural ontology" is the world of common sense. It assumes a world of independently existing entities that interact through physical contact in space.

Lotze's *Metaphysics* will attack this ontology and argue that in fact the existence of completely unrelated and independent entities is illusory. Like Kiyozawa, Lotze argues that such an ontology cannot explain the regular and necessary occurrence of causal relationships which provide the basis for the laws of empirical science. He writes that for completely independent entities there would be no necessary reason for them to regularly enter into some relations and not others. Rather than assuming the existence of spatially separate and discrete entities which then somehow interact, Lotze argues that "things can only exist as part of a single Being, relative to our apprehension, but not actually independent."⁴⁷ Rather than being independent, entities exist as the "immediate internal reciprocal actions" of the Being in which they exist.⁴⁸

In order to explain how these actions are coordinated, Lotze uses the organic metaphor but in a way very different from that of Spencer. Lotze's organic metaphor is in fact not so much a metaphor any longer but an actual depiction of reality. Finite entities are "manifold elements of which the existence and content is throughout conditioned by the nature and reality of the one existence of which they are organic members."⁴⁹ For Lotze, and unlike Spencer, the various things which we experience in fact share the same nature, like the cells of our body all share the same DNA. The coordination that exists between entities and actions, such as in relations of cause and effect, is not due to an

external phenomenon like the division of labor but is rather due to the existence of a mechanism internal to and shared by all things. To explain this mechanism, Lotze appeals to scientific laws, but he also uses language which could imply some sort of spiritual entity or universal will as when he writes, "One thing, finally, operates on another, not by means of any force of its own, but in virtue of the One present in it...."⁵⁰

In explicating Lotze's philosophy, Kiyozawa gives the example of the pans on a balance or the separate fingers on a hand.⁵¹ If we did not know the pans were connected by a balance or that the palm connected the fingers, we would assume that these coordinated movements were due to the relations of cause and effect between spatially independent entities. However, for Lotze the world does not consist of entities which then fall into relations "among" themselves. Rather, entities are always already in reciprocal relations that maintain a continuous equilibrium so that a change in one part leads to a corresponding change in the whole.

Lotze's understanding of reality as a universal Being in which all things exist as its coordinated actions had a decisive influence on Kiyozawa. He uses Lotze to reformulate the Infinite as not simply a substance but as "one body" (*ittai*) in which finites are its constituent parts. He writes, "The true body (*shintai*) of the finite and the source of its appearance is not a purely finite individual. We must absolutely recognize that its true body and nature is the Infinite. As its body and nature is the Infinite, it is natural to see a reflection of the Infinite in its activity. That is, though at first sight, the finite existence of 'this' and 'that,' 'self' and 'other' appear to be independent, the reality is the same body (*dō ittai*) of the Infinite."⁵²

Finally, following Lotze, Kiyozawa recognizes a single will which coordinates and makes possible individual actions. Echoing his analogy of pans on a balance to describe Lotze's thought, Kiyozawa uses the analogy of the hand to explain the actions of the Infinite. "Various individual actions respond to the essence and body of the one Infinite. The five fingers on each hand and their coordinated and unified movement is nothing other than this. They respond to the directives of only one mind. It is nothing but the transmission and response between this and that, this finger and that finger."⁵³ Here, human activity is in fact subject to the will, the "one mind" of the Absolute Infinite.

Part of the reason why Kiyozawa is able to adopt Lotze's thought in this manner is because of its resonances with traditional Mahāyāna

and Shin Buddhist doctrine. There is of course the well-known doctrine of the three “bodies” of the Buddha (Skt. *trikāya*, Jpn. *sanjin*). According to this theory, Amida Buddha, the principle object of Shin faith and practice, is in fact the “reward body” (Skt. *saṃbhogakāya*, Jpn. *hōjin*) who results from the merit generated by the religious practice of Dhamākara Bodhisattva (Jpn. Hōzō Bosatsu). There is also the Shin doctrine of *kihō ittai*, “the union of believer and Buddha as one substance” which the great medieval Shin patriarch Rennyo (1415–1499) popularized.⁵⁴ In explicating its significance he writes,

What it means for faith to be established is for one to understand completely the significance of the six characters *Namu Amida Butsu*. The two characters *Namu* stand for sentient beings of limited capacity (*ki*) who have faith in Amida Buddha, and the four characters *Amida Butsu* signify that Amida Tathāgata of Absolute Truth (*hō*) saves sentient beings. Hence, the meaning is that in *Namu Amida Butsu* those of limited capacity and that of absolute truth are [united] as one substance (*kihō ittai*).⁵⁵

It is clear from the above that in Rennyo’s usage, *kihō ittai* is directly connected with the magical properties found in intoning the *nenbutsu*. Here *ittai* denotes a mystical spiritual union between the believer and the power of Amida Buddha as an embodiment of the Buddhist Law (*hō*).

Kiyozawa maintains this idea of a spiritual union between believer and Buddha as well as the understanding of Amida Buddha *qua* Infinite as a body. However, his reconfiguring of Shin doctrine through the lens of rational philosophy has the effect of making the doctrine more literal. As the Absolute Infinite, Amida loses any transcendent and magical character. For Kiyozawa, the spiritual union between sentient being and Buddha in the doctrine of *kihō ittai* becomes the actual embodiment of the individual within the cosmic body.

CONCLUSION

Kiyozawa’s understanding of the infinite as both a self-determining whole and as an integrated and immanent organic body provides the means to overcome the fundamental contradiction present in the classical liberal understanding of freedom espoused by FUKUZAWA Yukichi. Due to the fundamental identity between finite individual and infinite whole, restrictions upon individual activity are not imposed from without, but arise from out of one’s own nature. Further, like the fingers

on a hand, self and other do not ultimately act from self-interest but rather from the will of the “one mind” of the Infinite. Thus, a harmony of interests occurs.

Kiyozawa's theoretical response to Fukuzawa is only possible through his radical refiguration of the traditional Shin understanding of Amida. In Kiyozawa's hands, rather than a transcendent object of devotion and faith, Amida becomes an abstract and rational construct imminent in, and nothing other than, the world. The identification between the Infinite and the world had the unfortunate tendency to justify the status quo as the workings of the divine will. It is for this reason that Kiyozawa can at one and the same time claim to be providing for individual freedom while stating, “In times of crisis, shoulder your rifle and go off to war, practice filial piety and patriotism.”⁵⁶ In his thought, the real became the ideal. The Meiji social order as it was became identified with how it should be, and Kiyozawa's philosophy thus becomes a species of *amor fati*.⁵⁷

However, his position must still be differentiated from that of the state's national morality. For one, its goal was different. Kiyozawa's support for the existing order was not to bolster state power *per se* but arose from his own attempts to address the social crisis affecting late Meiji society. More importantly, Kiyozawa remained critical of any religious or ethical system imposed from without. The acceptance of and submission to the present order can only be an individual matter and is a result of the demands of faith which must arise autonomously from within the self itself. It is only after awakening to one's identity with the whole that the social order is sacralized and made secure.

NOTES

1. This paper draws from my dissertation, “Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903) and the Search for Autonomy in Modern Japan” (University of Chicago, 2012). A somewhat different version of this paper was presented at the Association of Asian Studies Southeastern Regional Meeting in Greenville, SC in January 2012. I am grateful to our panel moderator, Robert Stolz, for his insightful comments.

2. KIYOZAWA Manshi, “Shūkyōteki shinnen no hisshi jyōken,” in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002), 6:77.

3. For this viewpoint, see in particular TERAKAWA Shinshō, *Kiyozawa Manshi ron* (Kyoto: Bunseidō, 1973).

4. “The Imperial Rescript on Education,” in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, ed.

William Theodore deBary (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), vol. 2, pt. 2, 108–109.

5. Kiyozawa, “Shūkyōteki shinnen no hisshi jyōken,” 6:79.

6. Kiyozawa, *Shinrei no shūyō*, in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 7:243.

7. Kiyozawa, *Yūgen mugen roku*, in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 2:124, 2:127.

8. Kiyozawa, “Jiyū to fukujū to no sōun,” in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 6:32.

9. By classical liberalism I am referring in particular to a complex of ideas that were associated with eighteenth and nineteenth century thinkers such as John Locke, Adam Smith, and J.S. Mill. In politics it meant individual rights and freedom from state interference, in economics the rational pursuit of self-interest, and in ethics the utilitarian emphasis on collective happiness. These ideas entered Japan from the 1850s onward and became the basis for both the movement for civilization and enlightenment in the 1870s and later for the freedom and people’s rights movement (*jiyū minken undō*).

10. I borrow this conception from Andrew Sartori. See his “The Categorical Logic of a Colonial Nationalism: Swadeshi Bengal, 1904–1908,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23, nos. 1–2 (2003).

11. FUKUZAWA Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 226.

12. *Ibid.*, 207.

13. David Howell has noted this as a general process in the transition from Tokugawa to Meiji. Using revealing examples from various strata of society, Howell writes, “During the Tokugawa period, economic relations were given social expression through the status system.... Livelihood had no meaning as an economic activity divorced from status.” However, with the onset of modernity, “the locus of political meaning in everyday life shifted from the corporate status group to production and the individual’s (or household’s) relationship to it” (David Howell, “Territorial and Collective Identity in Tokugawa Japan,” *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 [Summer 1998]: 125–126).

14. FUKUZAWA Yukichi, *An Encouragement of Learning* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1969), 1.

15. *Ibid.*, 81.

16. In *An Encouragement of Learning*, Fukuzawa speaks of rights of association and speech. He also supported the freedom of religious belief.

17. This term appears in Alan Stone, “The Japanese Muckrakers,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1, no. 2 (April 1975): 385–407.

18. *Ibid.*, 405.

19. Ibid., 404.
20. Kiyozawa, "Ōgon seikai," in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 2:272.
21. Kiyozawa, "Shūkyō to dōtoku to no sōkan," in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 6:229.
22. The term "law of equal freedoms" is associated with Herbert Spencer. His version of the law is, "Every man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man" (Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics* [London: John Chapman, 1851], 103).
23. Ibid., 50.
24. Ibid.
25. Kiyozawa, "Banbutsu ittai," in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 6:11–14.
26. Kiyozawa wrote two English essays on Spinoza as an undergraduate philosophy major at Tokyo Imperial University, "Essay on Spinozism" and "The Ethics of Spinoza Compared with the Ethics of Plato," in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 4:322–334; 4:299–309. Kiyozawa writes of Spinoza that "His personal character was that of a typical Eastern sage," *Zenshū*, 4:329.
27. Descartes defines substance as "an existent thing which requires nothing but itself in order to exist" (Frederick Coppleston, *A History of Philosophy, Book Two* [New York: Doubleday, 1985], 117).
28. Benedictus de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 85.
29. Ibid.
30. Kiyozawa, *Skeleton of the Philosophy of Religion*, in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 1:140. In fact, Spinoza's original formulation is "*determinatio negatio est*." It was Hegel who coined "*omnis determinatio est negatio*" and made it a programmatic statement of his dialectic by creatively (mis)interpreting Spinoza and rendering the phrase as, "All determination is negation." For Hegel, this indicated the process by which the concept (*Begriff*) comes to greater conceptual clarity through self-determination, or in Hegel's terms, self-negation. However, Kiyozawa's translation reflects Spinoza's intent and not Hegel's. For a discussion of the differences between Hegel and Spinoza here see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, "'Omnis Determinatio Est Negatio': Determination, Negation, and Self-Negation in Spinoza, Kant and Hegel," in *Spinoza and German Idealism*, ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Eckart Förster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 175–176. Kiyozawa probably encountered the term during his studies of Western philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University (1883–1887) under his American philosophy professor, Ernest Fenollosa. A discussion of the phrase occurs in one of the main texts Fenollosa used for his survey course on modern philosophy. Interestingly, it occurs in the section on Hegel, not

Spinoza. See Francis Bowen, *Modern Philosophy, from Descartes to Schopenhauer and Hartmann* (New York: Scribner, 1892), 329.

31. Kiyozawa, *Skeleton of the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:14.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 1:142.

34. Kiyozawa, “Inka histuzen to ishi no jiyū to no sōkan,” in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 2:365.

35. Ibid., 2:366. Kiyozawa further writes that Buddhism teaches that “freedom is found within cause and effect.” Kiyozawa, *Shūkyō tetsugaku gaikotsu kōgi*, in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 1:97.

36. Kiyozawa, *The Skeleton of the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:130.

37. Though Kiyozawa defines the soul as apperception, he does not violate the Buddhist doctrine of no-self as apperception is the activity of synthesis of the contents of consciousness and is not a separate essence.

38. Kiyozawa “Inka no hitsuzen to ishi no jiyū,” in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 2:366–367.

39. Kiyozawa, “Haja kenshō dan,” in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 2:383.

40. Kiyozawa, *The Skeleton of the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:139.

41. INOUE Tetsujirō, *Kaikyūroku*, Inoue Tetsujirō shū, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Kuresu shuppan, 2003), 201–202.

42. The contents of his library can be found in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 9:337–367.

43. Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology, Volume One* (London: Williams and Northgate, 1882), 450.

44. Kiyozawa, *The Skeleton of the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:138–39.

45. Kiyozawa, *Junsei tetsugaku*, in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 3:3–51.

46. Hermann Lotze, *Lotze’s System of Philosophy, Part 2: Metaphysic*, trans. and ed. Bernard Bosanquet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), 29.

47. Ibid., 166.

48. Ibid., 192.

49. Ibid., 168.

50. Ibid., 198.

51. The reference to fingers on a hand occurs in *Tarikimon tetsugaku gaikotsu shikō*, in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 2:52. The metaphor of pans on a balance occurs in *Seiyō tetsugaku shi kōgi*, in *Kiyozawa Manshi Zenshū*, 5:408.

52. Kiyozawa, *Tarikimon tetsugaku gaikotsu*, 2:52.

53. Ibid.

54. *Kihō ittai* was not employed by Shinran but appeared in a later work, *Notes on the Firm Abode of Faith* (*Anshin ketsujōshō*). The text was elaborated on by Shōkū (1177–1247) of the Seizan branch of Jōdō Shin. See James Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 105–107.

55. Ibid., 146.

56. Kiyozawa, “Shūkyōteki shinnen no hisshi jyōken,” 6:79.

57. FUNAYAMA Shinichi makes this argument in regard to the tradition of Japanese Idealism (*nihon kannenronsha*) and the use of the Mahāyāna Buddhist logic of *soku* (即). He specifically targets INOUE Enryō and INOUE Tetsujirō, but Kiyozawa is vulnerable to this critique as well. FUNAYAMA Shinichi, *Nihon no kannenronsha* (Tokyo: Eihōsha, 1956), 310.

Appreciation and Appropriation: Christian “Borrowing” of Buddhist Practices

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INTRODUCTION

A word of introduction to begin this article. I come to Shin Buddhism with a background in comparative theology, a discipline which, from the Christian perspective (my tradition) can be defined as follows: “...the branch of systematic theology which seeks to interpret the Christian tradition conscientiously in conversation with the texts and symbols of non-Christian religions.”¹ So, as is evident in that definition, several things are critical for comparative theology to bear fruit: first, of course, is a deep understanding and commitment to one’s own tradition; second, and equally important, is a deep understanding and respect of another religious tradition; and third, the willingness to resist easy comparisons, reject any attempt at conversion, and evince a genuine openness to learning and transformation. Thus, my goal, as a Christian, is to engage in a substantive and meaningful way with the Shin Buddhist tradition, with the following goals: first, learning about the beliefs and practices of Shin Buddhism, and then second, asking critical questions of my own faith in light of that learning, which, ideally, leads to new insights and understanding of my own tradition.

CHRISTIAN/BUDDHIST “DOUBLE-BELONGING”

In the current American context, one could well argue that a Christian/Buddhist conversation is one of the easiest interreligious dialogues to begin, deceptively easy, in fact—at least from the Christian side. In my experience, of all the major world religions, Christians tend to be the most positive, the most receptive toward Buddhism. I am sure there are a variety of reasons for this, but certainly one of the most important is that predominantly, the way in which Buddhism is

understood and experienced in the West is as a kind of universally-applicable philosophy—a way of life, rather than a competing religious tradition. Practically, this means that practices of mindfulness, meditation, simplicity, and nonviolence often are easily and seamlessly incorporated into a Christian framework; and without a deity that demands worship, a single sacred text that demands fidelity, or a creed that requires adherence, it is no surprise that the phenomenon of “double-religious belonging”—when one person holds dual religious identities, claiming to be an adherent of two different religions simultaneously—seems to occur most often with Christianity and Buddhism (rather than, for example, Christianity and Islam), with Christians embracing this identity most exuberantly.

Perhaps the most well-known example of this phenomenon can be found in the writing of Paul Knitter. Knitter, a self-described “Buddhist Christian” rather than a “Christian Buddhist”—it makes a difference which word is the adjective and which is the noun—writes, “Buddhism has enabled me to make sense of my Christian faith so that I can maintain my intellectual integrity and affirm what I see as true and good in my culture; but at the same time, it has aided me to carry out my prophetic-religious responsibility and challenge what I see as false and harmful in my culture.”² He acknowledges that some may see this as “spiritual sleeping around,”³ but insists that his practice of Buddhism actually has deepened and strengthened his appreciation and understanding of the Christian faith—and, to his credit, Knitter has been a dedicated practitioner of Buddhism for decades.

While many Christians would not go as far as Knitter does in his practice of Buddhism, many individual Christians—and many Christian congregations as well—operate with the assumption that Buddhism can be easily mined for self-improvement techniques and attitudes that can be smoothly integrated into a Christian framework. Consequently, Christians attempt to appropriate aspects of Buddhism into their prayer practices and daily life, most notably a generalized understanding of mindfulness, an amalgam of meditation techniques, and even a distorted understanding of “mantra.” However, in most such situations, the practices themselves serve as little more than a “technology” as it were: as a way for Christians to enhance their own spiritual life with novel “tools” that are not seen as entailing any additional faith commitments that would conflict with Christian teachings.

The case legitimately can be made, however, that such practices are neither respectful to the specific Buddhist traditions and contexts from which they are taken, nor constructive for either Christian identity or Buddhist-Christian dialogue in the long run. In fact, this facile Christian appropriation of Buddhist practices and beliefs into a Christian framework creates a false sense of “double religious belonging” that does not actually do justice to Buddhism itself and the integrity that it has as its own religious tradition. In other words, the “double” in “double religious belonging” is, in many cases, in name only; in actuality, there is little understanding of what “belonging” to Buddhism might actually entail.

In my view, one of the main reasons why this attitude and practice by Christians can be so problematic is the fact that this sort of one-sided engagement is fueled, in many cases, by both implicit and explicit misconceptions about Buddhism. As I said previously, perhaps the most pervasive and overarching of these is the idea that Buddhism is more a humanistic philosophy than a religion—as that term is typically understood in a Western context; and consequently does not put forth any exclusive truth claims. (Incidentally, John Makransky—speaking from a Nyingma Tibetan tradition—emphasizes that while the Buddha did recognize a variety of spiritual practices and pathways, he also noted how many of them fell short of true liberation;⁴ and, in fact, the Buddha claimed that “superior spiritual paths lead to superior results, the path he taught being the one that leads to fullest liberation.”⁵) Unfortunately, these sorts of misconceptions are found not only in the public mindset, but in the language of well-meaning Christian academics, who, often with the best of intentions, seek to interpret Buddhism in familiar language, such that it can be better understood by Christians. This has had negative ramifications for Christians and Buddhists alike. Dennis Hirota notes that “similarities with Christian teachings have often led to fundamental difficulties in expressing and understanding Shin thought in the context of dialogue with other religions. Because Shin Buddhist statements about reality and human engagement with it have seemed so similar in certain respects to some Christian doctrines, it has been assumed that the conceptions of truth are the same, and therefore such problems as the nature of religious engagement or the ontological status of a supreme being are the same.”⁶

So, with all of that as background, then, in this article, I argue that Shin Buddhism in particular is vulnerable to such uncritical

appropriation, given several undeniable similarities that Christians have exploited, particularly the following: first, the description of Amida Buddha as God; second, the use of loaded Christian terms such as “grace” and “faith” to translate and interpret key Shin Buddhist concepts; and third, the depiction of human beings as “sinful.” I will briefly describe the way in which these misperceptions have been promulgated; and I also will suggest a counter interpretation for each, coming more directly from the Shin tradition itself, which not only protects against a facile Christian appropriation, but also suggests some constructive questions with which Christians might wrestle, and which have the potential to facilitate more constructive dialogue and engagement between the two religious traditions.

WHO IS AMIDA BUDDHA?

Let me begin, then, with the casting of Amida in the mold of the Christian God. The “Amida/God” comparison (indeed, the “Buddha/God” comparison) is well known, and has been promulgated by Buddhists and Christians alike—with, I would argue, varying levels of specificity and detail. Both John Yokota and John Cobb make this comparison, specifically with a theistic understanding found in process theology,⁷ while Gordon Kaufman suggests that Buddhists and Christians alike share an “underlying issue of concern,” which he frames this way: “Do not (almost) all of us need some sort of mythic/anthropomorphic conception of a God/Amida who loves/has compassion on us, and who draws us into a higher realm of life in which we too are enabled to live with compassion and care for all other creatures?”⁸

However, in recent history, surely the most prominent Christian to have commented on Shin Buddhism is Karl Barth, the preeminent theologian of the twentieth century. In the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth takes up the case of Shin Buddhism in his larger discussion of the revelation of God, in the chapter on “True Religion.” There he writes: “...as far as I can see, the most adequate and comprehensive and illuminating heathen parallel to Christianity [is]...the two related Buddhist developments in 12th and 13th century Japan.... the Yodo-Shin...and the Yodo-Shin-Shu.”⁹ (“Jōdo” is, for some reason, spelled with a “Y.”) In that short excursus, Barth not only calls Amida Buddha “god,” but also calls him “the Creator and Lord of Paradise.”¹⁰ Even more, Barth’s use of language intentionally mimics the way Christians—particularly mainline Protestant Christians—describe the

saving work of Jesus. In describing his understanding of Hōnen's teaching, Barth writes, "We have to fulfill the one condition which [Amida] has attached to the attainment of salvation. We have to believe in Him, who has compassion on all, even sinners. We have to call on his name, and as we do so all his good works and meritorious acts stream into our mouths and become our own possession, so that our merit is Amida's merit, and there is no difference between us and him."¹¹

Several aspects of this description are problematic: for example, the use of the word "Creator" to describe Amida, which immediately suggests to undiscerning Christian ears a divine being who created the world—which leads to a further misconception of Amida's Pure Land as "heaven." Further, Barth's language also suggests the Christian concept called the "happy exchange," whereby Jesus Christ takes onto himself all human sin, wickedness, and impurity and bestows upon humans his own righteousness, faith, and sinlessness. And, finally, Barth's overarching characterization of Shin Buddhism as "the Japanese Protestantism" hardly helps things.¹²

More constructive here is a better understanding of the specific, particular claims about who Amida Buddha is, and what the "salvation" is to which the *nenbutsu* is oriented. First, of course, is the recognition that Amida Buddha was originally Dharmākara—a king who became a monk and made a vow to "become a Buddha...to save living beings from birth and death, and to lead them all to liberation."¹³ And, taking instruction from the Buddha Lokeśvararāja, he attained buddhahood, and created an incomparable land of light and bliss. This fact reminds Christians that a "Buddha/God" comparison does not work well on many levels; and one must take seriously not only the discrete existence of Amida Buddha, but also the concept of the "buddha-nature," which is the true nature of all sentient beings and is both manifest and attained in all times and places. A description of Amida and his particular work of liberation clarifies the distinctions here. Kaneko Daiei writes, "Under the pressure of existential suffering, we cry, so to speak, for salvation while calling the Name of Amida. But there is no hope of this need being satisfied from without by, say some savior god. The need is not the kind of need which can be satisfied in such a way."¹⁴ Instead, "we who have been calling Amida's Name for salvation now turn out to be the ones who, all the while, have been called by Amida to awake and take refuge in him."¹⁵

This leads to the second point of clarification here, which is the particular form that “salvation” takes in Buddhism. This understanding is important, first, because it is a reminder that Buddhism in general—and Shin Buddhism in particular—is not simply a humanistic philosophy, but rather a religion oriented toward the rescue of sentient beings. Daiei writes, “It goes without saying that, for all its profound philosophical systems, Buddhism is essentially a doctrine of liberation.”¹⁶ And, even further, in Shin Buddhism, that liberation has a very specific, very precise goal: simply put, “If we believe in the Original Vow of Amida, and say the Nembutsu, we shall become Buddha.”¹⁷ The point of the recitation of Amida’s name and the complex visual contemplation practices of Amida in the Pure Land are not simply for human edification and an improvement in one’s quality of life. Nor is it possible to just adopt the “idea” of such practices, substituting in some other “content”—like the name or image of Jesus, for example—and achieve the same result. Instead, “The Pure Land path leads to the attainment of birth in Amida Buddha’s Pure Land through the nembutsu,” period. Thus, “The Pure land may be characterized as a teleological goal, then, for it is that to which one turns ultimately with aspiration and will, and that which is seen as holding the authentic fulfillment of one’s existence—one’s desires for wholeness and happiness—and indeed, that of all beings.”¹⁸

GRACE, FAITH, & “OTHER POWER”

When we turn to the description of human beings and their agency, it is clear that there are some complex tensions and nuances in the thought of Shinran around the relationship between the individual and Amida Buddha, and also the role specific practices play in that relationship. However, I would argue that when Christian theologians in particular—and maybe Buddhist thinkers, too?—use language of “faith” or “grace,” which are so deeply embedded in Christian thought, it creates more problems than insights, and suggests facile parallels that belie the different contexts in which these concepts are used. (Even the concept of “other power,” which, is not a specific term used in Christianity, suggests a divine power over and against a human power, more specifically, an omnipotent God.) Let me mention here just two of the problem cases: first, the idea of an opposition between “faith” and “works”; and second, the translation of *shinjin* as “faith.”

FAITH & WORKS

I have noted already in the writing of Karl Barth how Shin Buddhism has been interpreted by Christians as a kind of “Japanese Protestantism.” In particular, one of the most persistent comparisons in this vein is that made between Shinran and Martin Luther. In his article, “The Concept of Grace in Paul, Shinran and Luther,” Swiss theologian Fritz Buri calls both Shinran and Luther “reformers” of their respective religious traditions, and writes that “for each salvation is understood as being unattainable through striving but won only through trust in a divine power.”¹⁹ Key here is the emphasis on what Buri calls “grace as opposed to works.” Teasing out the parallels Buri sees in these two concepts, he writes, “Shinran’s radicalization of Amida Buddhism precisely corresponds to Luther’s assertion of *sola gratia, sola fide*....”²⁰ In my view, it is the “precisely” that is so problematic. For Protestant Christians, particularly Lutherans, this opposition between “grace” and “works” is code for a whole host of concepts around God, humanity, and the saving activity of Jesus Christ. Those words are so context-bound for Christians, it is almost impossible to hear them in a fresh way; and their use in this particular dialogue creates more impediments to understanding than pathways.

Another problem here is the emphasis in Christianity on “faith” being something outside oneself, foreign to one’s own being, while “works” are considered what one does oneself. (The concept of “alien righteousness” comes to mind, which is a specific term used to denote the “righteousness” that Christ bestows on a Christian in the sacrament of baptism. It is “alien,” because it is something that is not inherently a characteristic of the Christian herself; it comes to her from outside and is dichotomic with her own being.) The point is that “faith” in an outside power is needed, because what one can do on one’s own—“works”—are ineffective. So, for example, in the course of his argument, Buri makes much of the well-known saying “Even a virtuous man can attain Rebirth in the Pure Land, how much more easily a wicked man!”²¹ Buri concludes, “Good works are not necessary for blessedness, not even in the form of cultic practices, such as the recitation of the Nembutsu, for example. The recitation of the Nembutsu can, at best, serve for training in faith.”²² Implied here, of course, is that Shin Buddhism expresses the same mutual exclusion between faith and works found in Christianity—again, particularly in Lutheranism—such that a person must despair of her own ability to approach God

or participate in her own salvation in even the smallest degree before she is able to fully receive and appreciate the grace that comes from outside her as sheer gift.

Yet, it seems that this “external”/“internal” distinction is not so clear in Shin Buddhism, where an affirmation of one’s own inherent buddha-nature has been stated clearly by Shinran and others. For example, Gregory Gibbs writes, “The nembutsu is neither a means to attain enlightenment nor an expression of gratitude for the person of Shinjin. Viewed externally, it may have that significance, but for the person of Shinjin, nembutsu is the presence of the depths of Wisdom-Compassion in his or her life.”²³ Further, James Dobbins writes that “[Faith] is none other than the mind of Amida implanted in the believer.”²⁴ Even if it is necessary for Amida to facilitate this realization in the mind of the individual, the fact remains that what one realizes is not the true nature of a “being” outside oneself, apart from oneself, but rather the true nature of all reality, oneself included; and thus as one engages in the practices of Shin Buddhism—recitation and visualization—one comes to a deeper realization of one’s true existence, and the non-duality between oneself and Amida. As John Cobb notes, this is quite different from Christianity, where the “need to maintain the distinction between self and God to the end, even in the fullest and final attainment of oneness” predominates.²⁵

SHINJIN

The concept of *shinjin* is particularly important in this context, especially as it is so often translated as “faith,” which, as I already noted, has very strong, specific connotations in Christianity. Shigeki Sugiyama, however, notes that a more literal translation of *shinjin* would be a person’s “true, real and sincere heart and mind”; and, used as a verb, it suggests “to entrust oneself to the Buddha”—an act made possible by Amida’s own work.²⁶ Sugiyama notes the dialectic here between one’s own heart and mind and the heart and mind of Amida Buddha, having both a dichotomous identity and a non-dichotomous relationship.²⁷ In light of what was said previously, it would be profitable for Christians to explore this dialectic more thoroughly.

For this reason, the decision made in the Hongwanji Shin Buddhism translation series seems wise, where “...the use of ‘faith’ [to translate *shinjin*] has been discouraged because the term, ‘so strongly and

variously colored by its usage in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, would only blur the precision [*sic*] of the meaning of the original.”²⁸

“SIN” AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

The last point I want to raise—only briefly—is the negative state of the human being as described in Shin Buddhism, and particular in the writings of Shinran. Shinran, of course, recognized the profoundly hindered state of human beings in this declining, dark age (*mappō*). They require an easy path to enlightenment because they are simply incapable of mustering the effort on their own needed to follow a disciplined path of practice. Over and over, Shinran emphasizes that humans are “ignorant” of true faith, fully of depravity and evil, and mired down in this defiled world. Completely unable to extricate themselves from this situation, they require the power of Amida’s primal vow to bring them out of the darkness in to the light of Amida’s radiance and truth.

Often Christians, when hearing this description, immediately infer that what Shinran is describing is “sin.” “Sin,” of course, is another heavily loaded term in Christianity that carries with it two very specific meanings. First is the concept of “original” sin, which points to the belief that Christians are born sinners, and carry the weight of that sin regardless of anything they do or say: it is impossible to escape for even the wisest, most devout, most faithful person. Second is the concept of sinful actions, which Christians believe they cannot fully control on their own without the Spirit of God working in them. Sin, therefore, describes an ontological condition that requires divine action to transform. While, again, there may be parallels here between the teachings of Shin Buddhism and Christianity, the problem is that the use of “sin” casts Amida into the “Jesus” role of “savior,” and also presumes the same cosmological and anthropological framework for Buddhism as a whole, which it clearly does not share with Christianity. This, then, supports the (false) assumption that the same practices that are used in Shin Buddhism are easily transferred over to Christianity, where they can be put to use in the relationship a Christian has with Jesus, for example.

CONCLUSION

Certainly, I do not wish to deny that there are interesting points of intersection and similarity between Christianity and Buddhism, especially Shin Buddhism. However, the danger here is that Christians

all-too-quickly seize on these similarities, and use them to impose a Christian framework onto Shin Buddhism, and also justify an uncritical appropriation of Buddhist practices into their own Christian faith. This prevents a genuine understanding of Shin on its own terms, and also inhibits the possibility of Christians learning something new from Shin Buddhism, and allowing themselves to be transformed in the process.

In his article on Shin Buddhism, James Fredericks writes that “The point of dialogue is not to discover the truth of one’s own tradition in the tradition of another. This would be to domesticate the religious truth by finding in the other simply ‘more of the same’ (to use David Tracy’s phrase). Rather, the great promise of interreligious dialogue today is to discover a religious truth in the other that is not like the truth of one’s own tradition and to be enriched by this truth.”²⁹ Correcting the over-eager way Christians engage and appropriate Buddhist concepts and practices is one way to better facilitate this enrichment.

NOTES

1. James Fredericks, “A Universal Religious Experience? Comparative Theology as an Alternative to a Theology of Religions,” *Horizons* 22, no. 1 (1995): 68.
2. Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), xii.
3. *Ibid.*, 213.
4. John Makransky, “Buddhist Inclusivism: Reflections toward a Contemporary Buddhist Theology of Religions,” in *Buddhist Attitudes to Other Religions*, ed. Perry Schmidt-Leukel (St. Ottilien: EOS, 2008), 47.
5. Makransky, “Buddhist Inclusivism,” 52–53.
6. Dennis Hirota, “Images of Reality,” in *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism*, ed. Dennis Hirota (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), 34.
7. John Cobb, “A Christian Critique of Pure Land Buddhism,” and John Yokota, “Understanding Amida Buddha and the Pure Land,” in *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism*, ed. Dennis Hirota (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), 147ff, and 73ff.
8. Gordon Kaufman, “Pure Land Buddhism Today,” in *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism*, ed. Dennis Hirota (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), 141.
9. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, The Revelation*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. A.T. Thompson and Harold Knight, Vol. I.2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), 340.
10. *Ibid.*

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 342.
13. "The Larger Sutra on Amitayus," in *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, trans. Inagaki Hisao (Berkeley, CA: The Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995), 11.
14. "The Meaning of Salvation," 70.
15. Kaneko Daiei, "The Meaning of Salvation in the Doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism," in *Listening to Shin Buddhism: Starting Points of Modern Dialogue*, ed. Michael Pye (Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2012), 70.
16. Ibid., 61.
17. Kaneko Daiei, "Shin Religion as I Believe It," in *Listening to Shin Buddhism: Starting Points of Modern Dialogue*, ed. Michael Pye (Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2012), 47.
18. Hirota, "Images of Reality," 42–43.
19. Fritz Buri, "The Concept of Grace in Paul, Shinran and Luther," in *Listening to Shin Buddhism: Starting Points of Modern Dialogue*, ed. Michael Pye (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2012), 88.
20. Buri, "The Concept of Grace in Paul, Shinran and Luther," 95.
21. Yuien, *Tannishō: Passage Deploring Deviations of Faith*, trans. Bando Shojun (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), 5.
22. Buri, "The Concept of Grace in Paul, Shinran and Luther," 94.
23. Gregory G. Gibbs, "Existentializing and Radicalizing Shinran's Vision," in *Engaged Pure Land Buddhism: The Challenges of Jōdo-Shinshū in the Contemporary World*, ed. Kenneth Tanaka and Eisho Nasu (Berkeley, CA: WisdomOcean Publications, 1998), 269.
24. James Dobbins, *Jodo Shinshu: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 35.
25. Cobb, "A Christian Critique of Pure Land Buddhism," 152.
26. Shigeki Sugiyama, "The Essence of Shinran's Teaching," in *Engaged Pure Land Buddhism: The Challenges of Jōdo-Shinshū in the Contemporary World*, ed. Kenneth Tanaka and Eisho Nasu (Berkeley, CA: WisdomOcean Publications, 1998), 300.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 301.
29. James Fredericks, "Jodo Shinshu's Mission to History: A Christian Challenge to Shin Buddhist Social Ethics," in *Engaged Pure Land Buddhism: The Challenges of Jōdo-Shinshū in the Contemporary World*, ed. Kenneth Tanaka and Eisho Nasu (Berkeley, CA: WisdomOcean Publications, 1998), 48.

Introduction to the Special Section

Scott A. Mitchell

Institute of Buddhist Studies

In the spring of 2011, the Institute of Buddhist Studies hosted its first annual graduate student symposium. The intention of this symposium was to provide a space in which current students, either at the master's level at the IBS or the doctoral level at the Graduate Theological Union, could showcase their work. The first symposium included four such students whose work covered a wide spectrum from the appropriation and adaptation of Buddhism in Western contexts to Buddhist architecture in China.

Encouraged by the well-received work of our students, in the following year we expanded the symposium to a wider audience with an open call for papers. Working with the theme of globalization, tourism, and modernity, the 2012 symposium included work on mindfulness practices in the marketplace, Chinese religious tourism, and modern Buddhist arts and media.

With the generous support of the Numata Foundation and the Asia Project at the Graduate Theological Union, we expanded the symposium in 2013 to include, in addition to graduate student work, a keynote address by Justin McDaniel of the University of Pennsylvania. McDaniel has written extensively on Buddhist culture in Southeast Asia, including *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk: Practicing Buddhism in Modern Thailand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), winner of the 2013 Kahin Prize for Best Book in Southeast Asian Studies. His work inspired us to explore questions about the relationship between culture, ritual, and Buddhist praxis, both historically and in the contemporary world. Student work reflected these themes, and this section of the *Pacific World* brings together work from the first three symposia.

Chenxing Han, a graduate of the IBS's chaplaincy program with honors, focuses her critical eye on the mindfulness industry. In her essay "What's Buddhism Got to Do with It?: Popular and Scientific

Perspectives on Mindful Eating,” Han examines a plethora of popular “mindful eating” books and the ways they reference (or don’t) Buddhist literature. Courtney Bruntz, a doctoral candidate at the Graduate Theological Union, provides a thorough analysis of China’s “gray market,” a space in which both pilgrims and tourists converge in a government-sponsored religious marketplace. Aaron Proffitt of the University of Michigan analyzes the work of twelfth century Japanese monk Dōhan, a figure who challenges our assumptions of sectarian affiliation in pre-modern Japan with his esoteric *nenbutsu* practice. Matthew Milligan from the University of Texas at Austin discusses epigraphs engraved in stone at Indian donation sites. His work provides insight into how these epigraphs reflect the historical development of donation rituals in early Indian Buddhism.

Collectively, these four essays are concerned with the transformation of Buddhist thought and praxis across time and culture. While it is always true that Buddhist thought and practice is altered as it enters new cultural contexts, good scholarship is attentive to both the specifics and the mechanisms of these changes. In the contemporary US and China, one cannot discount the effects of the marketplace and capitalist incentives that motivate both private and government interests in perpetuating idealized notions of health or spiritual practice. Historically, economic forces have also altered Buddhist practice, but we would be remiss in assuming that early historical period Indian economies are easily comparable to contemporary temple reconstruction projects in twenty-first century China. Scholars must be careful not to anachronistically read history through current frameworks, such as the assumption that contemporary sectarian divisions were at all relevant in pre-modern Buddhist societies. This collection of essays has a disparate set of topics, times, and locations; by bringing them into conversation, we hope to highlight both the commonalities and distinctiveness of these Buddhist cultures.

The editors wish to thank the hard work of the contributors to this volume as well and the contributors and presenters at the first three symposia, including Ryan Anningson, Ying Chien Chen, Jared Gardner, Justin McDaniel, Dianne Muller, Victoria Pinto, Trent Thornley, Sarah Whylly, Xiao Yang, and Tsun Nyen Yong. We would also like to thank the Numata Foundation and the Asia Project at the Graduate Theological Union for their generous support of the Third Annual Symposium and keynote address.

What's Buddhism Got to Do With It? Popular and Scientific Perspectives on Mindful Eating

Chenxing Han

Institute of Buddhist Studies

In 2010, American talk show host Oprah Winfrey interviewed the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh about *Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Living*, a book he co-authored with nutritionist Lilian Cheung. Oprah asked the Vietnamese Zen master for “his take on the root of our weight problems” and advice on “how to change [our] own eating habits forever.”¹ *Savor* joined a rapidly expanding repertoire of popular books touting the benefits of mindful eating.² The book promised to “end our struggles with weight loss once and for all” while distinguishing itself from the diet fads of the \$50-billion-a-year weight loss industry.³ Complementing the popular literature on mindful eating, an increasing number of scientific studies offer empirical, qualitative, and clinical perspectives on the efficacy of mindfulness interventions for obesity and eating disorders.⁴

A 2011 article characterizes mindful eating as “a growing trend designed to address both the rising rates of obesity and the well-documented fact that most diets don’t work.”⁵ Unlike *Savor*, the article does not contain a single mention of Buddhism. An examination of more than two dozen articles in the scientific literature on mindfulness-based interventions for obesity and eating disorders yields a similar dearth of references to Buddhism. Popular books on mindful eating mention Buddhism more frequently, but often in superficial or imprecise ways that romanticize and essentialize more than they edify. What, then, does mindful eating have to do with Buddhism? The first two sections of this paper examine the ways that Buddhist ideas are referenced in popular books and scientific articles on the connection between mindfulness and eating. The final section presents some Buddhist perspectives that challenge the optimistic claims of mindful eating advocates.

RAISIN AWARENESS AND WHAT BUDDHA SAYS:
POPULAR BOOKS ON MINDFUL EATING

A quick search on Amazon.com in December 2011 yielded more than two dozen books, eBooks, audio CDs, and even a spiral-bound “Raisin Awareness Mindful Eating Journal” on the topic of mindful eating, the majority published within the last five years.⁶ The authors represented hail from an eclectic range of backgrounds, as the veritable alphabet soup of acronyms that follow their names demonstrate: BA, BS, BSN, BSW, CMT, CYI, DSc, MA, MEd, LCSW, LPC, MBSR, MD, PhD, PsyD, RD, RYT, and more.⁷ Like their professional backgrounds, the authors’ stated familiarity with meditation also varies widely. Some describe decades of personal “mindfulness” or “meditation” practice, though few connect this practice to a Buddhist teacher, community, or lineage. Others do not mention a personal mindfulness practice at all, situating their experience and interest in the realm of dieting and health instead.

In 1998, Ronna Kabatznick, a social psychologist and long-time meditator, published *The Zen of Eating: Ancient Answers to Modern Weight Problems*.⁸ The following year, Donald Altman, a psychotherapist and former Buddhist monk, published *Art of the Inner Meal: Eating as a Spiritual Path*.⁹ Though these books do not have “mindful eating” in their titles, they can be said to have anticipated the recent explosion of popular books on the topic. These two books, along with *Savor*, are unique for their relatively strong emphasis on Buddhist teachings. *Art of the Inner Meal* discusses Buddhist texts and monastic life; *The Zen of Eating* is structured around the four noble truths and eightfold noble path; *Savor* includes these foundational doctrines along with explanations of the four foundations of mindfulness, the five mindfulness trainings, the five remembrances, and the five contemplations.

A smattering of Buddhist teachings can be found throughout the popular literature on mindful eating. References to the four noble truths, the Middle Way, compassion, and loving-kindness are common, but are rarely accompanied by in-depth explanations. As a result, they often serve as mere buzzwords/phrases. Citations from Buddhist texts are scarce, though allusions to what the Buddha said are not, as evidenced by numerous quotes attributed to “Buddha.” However, these “quotes” are more akin to catchy recapitulations of purportedly-Buddhist concepts than translations from identifiable Buddhist texts.¹⁰

Even a strong personal Buddhist practice does not guarantee a strong focus on Buddhism in popular books on mindful eating. For example, *Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food* contains relatively few citations of Buddhist teachings, though it is published by a Buddhist press and written by Jan Chozen Bays, a Zen master in the White Plum lineage of the late Taizan Maezumi Roshi. In the preface, Bays details the high costs of eating problems in the U.S. from her perspective as a physician. In the foreword to Bays' book, Jon Kabat-Zinn, widely regarded as a pioneer of bringing mindfulness into mainstream medicine, describes mindfulness as "the awareness and freedom that emerge from that present-moment gesture of profound relationality and consciousness."¹¹ Kabat-Zinn does not connect mindfulness with Buddhism, the context in which he himself first encountered mindfulness meditation.

Books on mindful eating convey a confusing array of understandings about the relationship between Buddhism and mindfulness. Some regard the two as inseparable, as if mindfulness can serve as synecdoche for all of Buddhism.¹² Others acknowledge no link between the two. Susan Albers, a psychotherapist who has published several books and a case study on mindful eating,¹³ provides the confusing explanation that "the term 'mindfulness' came into use in the sixth century during the Buddha's lifetime."¹⁴ This definition offers only a tenuous association between Buddhism and mindfulness, not to mention the unfortunate omission of "BCE" after "sixth century."¹⁵

Rather than discuss the connection between the Pāli term *sati* and the English term mindfulness, the popular literature tends to allude to mindfulness' ancient origins in contemplative traditions. One book explains that mindfulness has roots in "Buddhist and other contemplative traditions that offer meditative methods of settling the usual busyness and chatter of our minds";¹⁶ the same book also notes that *metta*¹⁷ "comes out of the Asian meditation tradition."¹⁸ The blurred usage of the adjectives "Buddhist," "Asian," and "contemplative" both universalizes and secularizes mindfulness, effectively removing it from its Buddhist milieu. At times, mindfulness is even interpreted through a Christian lens: "In Christian terms, it's called communion... coming into union with everything happening at that moment."¹⁹ This conflation of Christian theology and Buddhist philosophy hardly clarifies the matter.²⁰

These examples demonstrate the wide semantic range in which the term “mindfulness” is applied in books on mindful eating. “Mindfulness” is therefore an easily secularized, or at the very least de-Buddhicized, term. Jane Goodall’s *Harvest for Hope: A Guide to Mindful Eating* aptly illustrates this definitional ambiguity: her book encourages activism that supports sustainability and food justice.²¹ The flexibility that characterizes interpretations of mindfulness is all the more evident in the eclectic practices that are combined with mindfulness in several of the books I surveyed: relaxation response, hypnosis, and self-guided imagery, to name a few.

Highlighting the ancient roots of mindfulness—the title of Kabatznick’s 1998 book is just one of many examples of this phenomenon—creates a dichotomy between ancient and modern that romanticizes the past while valorizing the present for our ability not only to retrieve “ancient wisdom” but also to prove its efficacy through the powerful tools of modern science. Rather than discussing the etymology of the term mindfulness or the historical development of the modern meditation movements in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand that so strongly influenced mindfulness in the West, books on mindful eating freeze mindfulness in a mythic past. To quote Albers again: “Ancient civilizations knew how important it was to have a clear and present mind. These classic mindfulness meditation techniques are still popular today and are gaining renewed respect in many scientific communities for their unique healing qualities.”²² This statement does not tell us about historical realities so much as it points to some of the characteristics of the intended audiences of these books: people looking to lose weight who are more likely to trust scientifically-proven methods of doing so.

In this light, mindful eating might be viewed as just another trend in the lucrative diet and weight-loss industry. However, many books about mindful eating explicitly emphasize their distance from, and distaste for, this industry. These books are marketed as purveyors of a brand new take on dieting. Some even emphatically oppose being categorized with diet books, despite promising similar results such as losing weight and keeping it off. An eBook with a brief foreword by Thich Nhat Hanh proclaims: “This book, then, is not a diet book.... Ultimately, it is about choosing a new way of life in which you decide what changes you wish to make. This book is about your personal choices.”²³ This rhetoric of personal choice and agency is another

unifying theme across books on mindful eating. In *Savor*, we find the assertion that “with mindfulness, we can choose *how* to live our lives now. We can seize any moment and begin anew.”²⁴ Similarly, Albers declares, “Every human being is the author of his or her health or disease.”²⁵ Such statements ignore the structural injustices that contribute to disparities in eating habits and health outcomes, but are likely to appeal to individualistically-focused dieters.

The distinction between diet books and mindful eating books is not always clear-cut. Bay's *Mindful Eating* explicitly states: “This book is not about diets or rules,”²⁶ yet the book ends with a two-page bulleted list of “Summary Tips” that could easily be interpreted as the very rules it eschews. Books on mindful eating that include time-bounded periods in their title—four weeks to eating awareness, twenty-one days of eating mindfully—also echo the quick-fix promises of diet books. Mindful eating paradoxically promises to be different than traditional diets while still employing much of the rhetoric used by diet books—not surprising given that they are largely competing for the same audiences. The Amazon.com description of the eBook *21 Days of Eating Mindfully: Your Guide to a Healthy Relationship with Yourself and Food* asks: “Why not start honoring yourself today by embracing true and lasting change that comes from self acceptance, compassion and purpose, not discipline or dieting!”²⁷ One wonders if mindful eating books, just like the diet books they criticize, might promise too much. It is hard to imagine undertaking mindfulness practice without a degree of discipline and focus.

Proponents of mindful eating counter that their promises are not unrealistic, invoking scientific evidence to support this claim. One article notes that “studies have shown the positive effects of mindfulness meditation on everything from substance abuse to psoriasis, and hundreds of hospitals have established mindfulness clinics.”²⁸ To the list of “everything” that mindfulness proves beneficial for, we can add eating disorders, a hot topic in recent scientific studies on mindfulness.

PROMISING RESULTS: SCIENTIFIC VIEWS ON MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS

In 2010, *Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention* published a special issue on mindfulness and eating disorders. In the introduction to the issue, the editor speaks glowingly of Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program for training

thousands of professionals and helping tens of thousands of people experience “marked improvement in both physical and psychological symptoms in addition to significant positive changes in health attitudes and behaviors.”²⁹ Buddhism is nowhere mentioned—this held true for all the articles throughout the special issue, as well as for the more than two dozen other articles I examined.

For scientists and clinicians interested in applying mindfulness to eating disorders, Jon Kabat-Zinn’s importance overshadows the Buddha’s influence.³⁰ His interpretations of mindfulness are commonly cited throughout the scientific literature. Albers quotes Kabat-Zinn’s definition of mindfulness as “intentionally drawing one’s awareness and attention to the present moment in a nonjudgmental and accepting way.”³¹ Ruth Baer, a professor of psychology, also cites Kabat-Zinn in a case study on mindfulness for binge eating: “Mindfulness is a way of paying attention that is often taught through the practice of meditation exercises, in which participants learn to regulate their attention by focusing nonjudgmentally on particular stimuli.”³² Compared to popular books on mindful eating, “mindfulness” is more coherently defined in the scientific literature, as might be expected for a research community where standard definitions of key concepts is a necessary basis for knowledge-building.

The fifty-year-old woman discussed in Baer’s case study spoke of taking a “leap of faith” when continuing the mindfulness treatment program. Ironically, mindfulness in clinical settings is designed for the most part to be divorced from considerations of faith. As Baer notes in a conceptual and empirical review of mindfulness training as a clinical intervention:

Until recently, mindfulness has been a relatively unfamiliar concept in much of our culture (Kabat-Zinn, 1982), perhaps because of its origins in Buddhism. Kabat-Zinn (2000) suggests that mindfulness practice may be beneficial to many people in Western society who might be unwilling to adopt Buddhist traditions or vocabulary. Thus, Western researchers and clinicians who have introduced mindfulness practice into mental health treatment programs usually teach these skills independently of the religious and cultural traditions of their origins.³³

This passage suggests a deliberate turning away from mindfulness’ Buddhist roots with the assumption that this will make the practice more palatable to a general audience—an audience that is presumably

not Buddhist and wanting nothing to do with Buddhism. This may explain why the secularization and de-Buddhicization of mindfulness is more pronounced in the scientific literature on mindful eating than in the popular literature. The erasure of mindfulness' Buddhist roots is accomplished by referencing Kabat-Zinn and fellow scientists' definitions of the term or by gesturing towards the vague category of "traditional" practices. An article on Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) states that "the concepts of emergent 'wisdom' and self-acceptance, core aspects of traditional meditation practice, also are central to the MB-EAT program."³⁴ One suspects that these "concepts" may well be based on Buddhist teachings, but the lack of clear attribution makes it difficult to confirm these suspicions.³⁵

Even when specific Buddhist principles are openly credited in the scientific literature, there is still a trend towards de-emphasizing their religious origins. A study on Spiritual Self-Schema (3-S) therapy for treating addiction and HIV risk behaviors notes, "Evidence that the Buddhist foundation of 3-S therapy acted as a foundation for strengthening clients' own beliefs was suggested by examining individual items on the MMRS. Practices such as bible reading, watching religious programming, and church attendance increased, as did personal experiences of God in daily life."³⁶ The therapeutic model integrated a cognitive model of self with a "non-sectarian Buddhist framework suitable for people of all faiths," which adapted the eightfold path and the ten *pāramīs* for a primarily-Christian audience.³⁷ A related paper described that the final session of the 3-S therapy's eight-week course "stems from the Buddhist custom of seeking refuge in the triple gem—the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha—which is translated for 3-S clients as seeking refuge in their own spiritual teacher, the teachings or scriptures of their spiritual teacher, and a community (or fellowship) of individuals who, like themselves, are also trying to live a life in accordance with these teachings [emphasis in original]."³⁸ Through these forms of reinterpretation, Buddhist teachings are rendered inoffensive, their religious origins made invisible. This erasure is an acceptable means to serve the celebrated ends—in this case, a reduction in drug use and other risky behaviors.

"Promising." I encountered this adjective again and again in the conclusion sections of the myriad articles I examined. The studies are united in their optimism over the use of mindfulness-based interventions for eating disorders. The limitation sections of these papers

typically focus on overarching concerns about study design such as the small sample sizes, absence of a control group, and short follow-up periods. The potential limitations to the actual methods of mindfulness employed are typically not discussed. As a recent study on mindful eating's effect on food liking astutely observed, "there is a lack of clarity as to whether the exposure techniques induced mindfulness or other attention states and whether the instructions adequately directed participants to process stimuli in a nonjudgmental and open-minded manner."³⁹ The question of how to standardize mindfulness training is a critical yet largely ignored consideration in the methodology of studies on mindful eating: how can we know that the "mindfulness" the various experimenters write about are one and the same method?

Furthermore, might it be the case that mindfulness is easy to prescribe but not so easy to teach or practice? Albers suggests that "mindful eating should be used thoughtfully and by those trained in the concepts,"⁴⁰ but exactly what this training should entail is unclear—nor is it clear what entails "thoughtful" use. It may not be realistic to expect clinicians to practice what they preach when it comes to mindfulness interventions. In an interview with the editor-in-chief of *Bariatric Nursing and Surgical Patient Care*, Dr. David Engstrom, a psychologist who recommended mindful eating for bariatric surgery patients with the express goal of having these patients lose as much weight as possible, admits to never having tried mindfulness all day long "because I don't think my life would lend itself to it."⁴¹ For Dr. Engstrom, mindfulness when in the presence of food is sufficient. Indeed, he predicts dire consequences for those who are mindful at all times: "You'd lose your job. You would probably lose everything in your life. You know, you'd get in a traffic accident.... Being mindful doesn't let you plan. And, you've got to plan!"⁴² This notion of mindfulness sounds more like a catatonic state than the moment-to-moment awareness that that Thich Nhat Hanh espouses.

Besides calling into question the definition of mindfulness, Dr. Engstrom's viewpoint also suggests a strong overlap between "mindful eating" and "intuitive eating." An article outlining the intuitive eating paradigm explains that it "suggests that one should be mindful while eating, with no distractions present such as television viewing. The purpose of mindful eating is to fully appreciate satisfaction of eating, and then identify when physical fullness has been reached."⁴³ The article's description of intuitive eating as an alternative to other

weight loss approaches echoes messages found in popular books on mindful eating: intuitive eating offers a focus on how and under what conditions an individual eats; it allows people to eat what they want, as long as they “learn to pay attention to body signals and eat appropriate amounts of food for their physiological needs.”⁴⁴ In concept if not in precise method, intuitive eating seems very similar to mindful eating. But the latter has clearly surpassed the former in influence.

The optimistic discourse on mindful eating in the scientific literature contains few dissenting voices.⁴⁵ An article in the special issue of *Eating Disorders* argues conceptually for the efficacy of mindfulness for treating anorexia nervosa.⁴⁶ Unlike chemical treatments, mindfulness is not noted to have negative side effects, which may explain its chameleon-like ability to blend in to a wide range of treatment options, for disorders of eating and beyond.

I found one exception to the mindful-eating success stories. In a case study of a multiracial, bisexual female in her early twenties, “post-treatment data did not indicate a reduction in binge eating, increased levels of mindfulness or an increase in general life satisfaction.”⁴⁷ Curiously, the author’s explanation puts the patient at fault for this null result:

It is likely that Ellen did not experience a clinically significant increase in mindfulness because she did not practice bringing attention and awareness to her reality and staying present with difficult experiences. Consequently, she was not able to reap the potential benefits of the program, which may have included a reduction in binge eating and an increase in subjective well-being. Ellen stated that she recognized the potential benefits of identifying and accepting bodily sensations towards the end of treatment, which may suggest that a longer duration of treatment is necessary to facilitate change.⁴⁸

Rather than suggesting that mindfulness interventions may not be appropriate for or embraced by all patients, this study seems to assume that mindfulness cannot fail. Indeed, the article concludes that “mindfulness continues to be a promising component of treatment for BED [binge eating disorder].”⁴⁹ In the secular scientific literature on mindful eating, it would be heretical to conclude otherwise.

MINDFUL EATING, MINDFUL EXCRETING: BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES

Expounding the Buddhist perspective on food and eating is beyond the scope of this paper. The multiplicity of Buddhist sects and diversity in the methods one could use to examine the topic further complicate the question posed in the introduction of this paper: what does Buddhism have to do with mindful eating, and vice versa? The vicissitudes of translation only deepen our conundrum. In this final section I draw on a handful of sources in order to consider some Buddhist perspectives that offer alternatives to the popular and scientific literature's views on mindful eating.

The Pāli word *āhāra*, translated as “nutriment” or “food,” refers to more than just material food.⁵⁰ In Buddhist philosophy, there are four nutriments, translated by Nyanaponika Thera as edible food, sense impression, volitional thought, and consciousness. The popular and scientific literature ignores these latter three categories when discussing mindful eating.⁵¹

Closely following *āhāra* in Ven. Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary* is the phrase *āhāre paṭikkūla-sañña*, “reflection on the loathsomeness of food,” described fully in chapter 11 of the *Visuddhimagga*. The chapter opens with a section on the “perception of repulsiveness in nutriment,”⁵² which details ten repulsive aspects of physical nutriment as a way to overcome “craving for flavours,” thereby destroying greed for sense desires and leading if not to liberation then at least to “a happy destiny.”⁵³ Ideally, one nourishes oneself “without vanity and only for the purpose of crossing over suffering, as one who seeks to cross over the desert eats his own dead child's flesh.”⁵⁴ Savor also references the *Sūtra on the Son's Flesh*, though Thich Nhat Hanh interprets this story as an enjoinder to eat mindfully lest we figuratively consume our children's flesh by destroying the health and well-being of “our body, our spirit, and our planet.”⁵⁵ The *Visuddhimagga* does not so readily resolve into a cheerful commentary on the planetary benefits of mindful eating, dwelling instead on more grotesque details, as this excerpt from the section about outflows illustrates:

[O]n being swallowed it is swallowed even in the company of large gatherings. But on flowing out, now converted into excrement, urine, etc., it is excreted only in solitude. On the first day one is delighted to eat it, elated and full of happiness and joy. On the second day one stops one's nose to void it, with a wry face, disgusted and dismayed.

And on the first day one swallows it lustfully, greedily, gluttonously, infatuatedly. But on the second day, after a single night has passed, one excretes it with distaste, ashamed, humiliated, and disgusted.⁵⁶

Literature on mindful eating is understandably devoid of such graphic descriptions of the inevitable aftermath of our eating escapades. When Don Gerrard asks us to carefully reflect on one bowl to aid in the practice of mindful eating, he is obviously not referring to the toilet bowl. In all seriousness, the literature on mindful eating tends to recommend the antithesis of contemplating the foul in nutriment. In the MB-EAT program, “the training purposefully cultivates drawing pleasure from eating,”⁵⁷ based on the theory that mindless eating is often hurried eating, and that people will slow down and eat less when they enjoy their food. A fitting example of this somewhat hedonist view expressed in the popular literature comes from the book *Pleasure Healing: Mindful Practices and Sacred Spa Rituals for Self-Nurturing*, which encourages people to enjoy aphrodisiac foods in its section on intuitive eating and mindful eating.⁵⁸

Given this morass of viewpoints on mindfulness, one can sympathize with Altman when he contends, “What is mindfulness? Well, it is one of those elusive concepts that is easily confused or misunderstood.”⁵⁹ Though Kabat-Zinn’s authority remains central in mindfulness studies related to eating, one clinical researcher comments that the “term mindfulness has accumulated a number of definitions in the research literature.”⁶⁰ This researcher provides a rare example of a perspective that considers the different meanings of “mindfulness” and mentions its derivation from the Pāli word *sati*. Still, we lack nuanced descriptions about the ways in which the concept and practice of mindfulness has developed out of—and, in most cases that we have seen, away from—the Buddhist context.

A look at Buddhist texts reveals the extent to which definitions of “mindfulness” in the scientific literature have diverged from scriptural understandings. A paper on mindfulness meditation and cognitive therapy practices in Sri Lanka notes,

The *Maha Satipatthana Sutta*, the Buddha’s main discourse on developing mindfulness, provides 14 ways to develop mindfulness, grouped into four categories (Analayo, 2003): body contemplation, feelings contemplation, mind contemplation, and contemplation of mind states. MBCT [Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy], which draws on Buddhist mindfulness practice, has incorporated some techniques

from the body contemplation category, specifically, awareness of breath and of daily activities.⁶¹

This article underscores that the “mindfulness” applied in clinical settings is a narrower, selective interpretation of mindfulness in Buddhist teachings. For example, the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* includes mindful eating on a section about mindfulness of various bodily activities: “when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting he acts clearly knowing; when defecating and urinating he acts clearly knowing; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent he acts clearly knowing.”⁶² Here, eating becomes part of a vast network of activities to be mindful of. By contrast, the literature on mindful eating tends to isolate food to a degree that might seem excessively attached from a Buddhist perspective. Of course, it is quite understandable that mindful eating proponents don’t also double as advocates of mindful excreting. Nevertheless, this passage raises interesting questions about the implications of focusing the practice of mindfulness exclusively on food and eating. Is it possible that a person who has spent a lifetime doggedly trying to lose weight might benefit from mindfulness of non-food-related activities in order to loosen his or her obsessive thinking about food? Might this person benefit from turning his or her attention elsewhere?

The secular-religious divide between mindful eating in clinical and Buddhist settings is largely due to differences in their end goals. The former is concerned with weight loss and maintaining healthy eating habits; the latter takes liberation as its final aim. In an article on Theravāda Buddhism and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Richard Gilpin comments on a paradox that Jon Kabat-Zinn perceives to be a key difference between mindfulness and other health interventions: “goals...are best achieved by abandoning pursuit of these very goals, so that participants cultivate the ability ‘simply to be where they are, with awareness.’”⁶³ The Zen-influenced ideal of “non-attachment to the outcome”⁶⁴ may seem quite at odds with the goals of those who see mindful eating as a means to a specific end, whether it be fitting into a smaller dress, reducing binge eating episodes, or developing a healthier relationship with food. This last goal may be less quantifiable than the first two, but by virtue of the mind conceiving of it as a new state to achieve, it too becomes an outcome. Gilpin’s observes that MBCT may subtly reinforce one’s sense of self, thereby hindering one’s path on the Buddhist path.⁶⁵ Mindfulness, it seems, can

serve either secular or religious aims. Kabat-Zinn's writings express some ambivalence about the very concept he has been so instrumental in spreading. Though he seems eager to de-Buddhicize the profile of mindfulness, he appears unwilling to de-spiritualize it altogether, insofar as the spirit of mindfulness as nonjudgmental awareness is defeated by grasping towards mindfulness' promised benefits—of which there are many, or so the popular and scientific literature would have us believe.

Kabat-Zinn consciously optimized his version of mindfulness to appeal to “regular people”⁶⁶—but just who are these people, exactly? Attention to class, race/ethnicity, and gender is lacking in both popular books and scientific articles about mindful eating. What are the ramifications of the fact that most of the popular mindful eating books I examined are authored by white females? Which groups of people are not represented in the clinical mindful eating studies? These questions remain unexamined by enthusiastic proponents of the one-size-fits-all magic bullet mindful eating.

While modern Buddhism is often described as having an emphasis on mindfulness meditation and a high regard for scientific rationalism, mindful eating has become secularized to the point that there is little that is obviously Buddhist about it. In the scientific literature, the prevailing attitude is that “mindfulness is secular in nature and open to those of any religious denomination or none[,] is more of a philosophy or science than a religion,”⁶⁷ arguments to the contrary—for example, about the potential pitfalls of divorcing mindfulness from Buddhist ethics—withstanding. In popular books on mindful eating, Buddhism and “Buddha” are often sprinkled in for flavor rather than constituting the main ingredient. What are the implications of taking Buddhist teachings out of their cultural and doctrinal contexts and reinterpreting them for commodifiable ends?⁶⁸ Considering this phenomenon through the lens of cultural and religious appropriation raises important ethical considerations around privilege and representation that are hidden by the success narrative promoted by the literature on mindful eating.⁶⁹

Popular books and scientific articles may seem to dominate the discourse on mindful eating, but we must not forget that they are not the only voices in the contested territory of mindful eating. It is a territory ripe for creative interpretations, if one knows where to look. Fifteen years before *Savor*, Thich Nhat Hanh offered another perspective on

mindful eating in *Living Buddha, Living Christ*.⁷⁰ He wrote of mindful eating as a practice of gratitude, of Holy Communion as a profound expression of mindfulness, ascribing deep interreligious meaning to the act of mindful eating. Popular books on mindful eating tout its merits, piggybacking on scientific literature that is quick to assert that the “application of mindfulness-based interventions to the treatment of eating disorders remains a promising approach worthy of further research,”⁷¹ and is just as certain not to advertise the fact that there “is a small body of evidence for the efficacy of Mindfulness in Eating Disorders, but trial quality has been very variable and sample sizes have been small.”⁷² Gilpin reminds us that clinical interventions tend “to slant mindfulness as a kind of unique panacea offering.”⁷³ To check this hubris, de Zoysa reminds us that “in Buddhist psychology, the mere absence of enlightenment makes anyone similar to a mentally ill person”⁷⁴—in which case we all need mindfulness, and around a whole lot more than just eating. Stepping outside the spheres of popular and scientific literature affords us many other possibilities for understanding mindful eating. Perhaps it is wisest to assume that no single agenda for mindful eating can fit everyone, everywhere.

NOTES

1. “A Conversation with Thich Nhat Hanh about *Savor*,” Oprah.com, accessed February 1, 2012, <http://www.oprah.com/spirit/A-Conversation-with-Thich-Nhat-Hanh-About-Savor>.
2. In this article, “popular” books/literature is not a commentary on the popularity level of these writings but an indication of the general audience to whom these books are marketed, in contrast to the narrower audience of the scientific literature.
3. “Neither the countless fad diets, nor the annual spending of \$50 billion on weight loss helps us feel better or lose weight.” See Thich Nhat Hanh and Lilian Cheung, *Savor: Mindful Eating, Mindful Life* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2010), book jacket.
4. One clinical psychologist has noted “an explosion of interest in Buddhist philosophy, psychology and practices among psychologists within the past few years” (G. Rita. Dudley-Grant, “Buddhism, Psychology, and Addiction Theory in Psychotherapy,” in *Psychology and Buddhism: From Individual to Global Community*, ed. Kathleen H. Dockett, G. Rita Dudley-Grant, and C. Peter Bankart [New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2002], 105).
5. Kelly McGonigal, “Learn: How Mindfulness Supports Weight Loss,” accessed

February 1, 2012, <http://kellymcgonigal.com/2011/10/21/how-mindfulness-supports-weight-loss>.

6. A casual search in August 2013 yielded a couple dozen more results published in 2012 and 2013.

7. I found this information in these authors' books as well as their personal websites.

8. Ronna Kabatnick, *The Zen of Eating: Ancient Answers to Modern Weight Problems* (New York: Pengee, 1998).

9. Donald Altman, *Art of the Inner Meal; Eating as a Spiritual Path* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1999). Both Altman and Kabatnick serve on the board of directors of The Center for Mindful Eating.

10. For example: "A noble person is mindful and thankful for the favors he receives from others" (Susan Albers, *Eating Mindfully: How to End Mindless Eating and Enjoy a Balanced Relationship with Food* [Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2003], xv).

11. Jan Chozen Bays, *Mindful Eating: A Guide to Rediscovering a Healthy and Joyful Relationship with Food* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2009), xiii.

12. Bays claims that "at the heart of Zen, and the Buddhist tradition, is the practice of mindfulness" (Bays, *Mindful Eating*, 1). The implication that there is a single "Buddhist tradition" is problematic given the vast diversity of Buddhist traditions. Furthermore, the claim that mindfulness is "the heart" of Buddhism is debatable: what about refuge in the triple gems, liberation, or ethics?

13. Susan Albers, "Using Mindful Eating to Treat Food Restriction: A Case Study," *Eating Disorders* 19, no. 1 (2010): 97–107.

14. Albers, *Eating Mindfully*, 18.

15. Scholars continue to debate the dates of the historical Buddha, with some placing his lifetime in the fifth century BCE.

16. Sasha T. Loring, *Eating with Fierce Kindness: A Mindful and Compassionate Guide to Losing Weight* (Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2010), 49.

17. I.e., *mettā*, a Pāli word cognate with the Sanskrit *maitrī*.

18. Loring, *Eating with Fierce Kindness*, 10.

19. Daniel Burke, "Buddhists Say You Aren't What You Eat, but How," Religious News Service, accessed February 1, 2012, http://www.religionnews.com/index.php?/rntext/buddhists_say_you_arent_what_you_eat_but_how1 (article no longer available).

20. To quote another example: Albers invokes Christian terminology in the chapter subheading title "Mindful Eating: Keep Body and Soul Together."

Traditionally, Buddhist philosophy does not support the notion of a soul or any form of a fixed, permanent self. See Susan Albers, *Eat, Drink, and Be Mindful: How to End Your Struggle with Mindless Eating* (Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2009), 84.

21. Jane Goodall, Gary McAvoy, and Gail Hudson, *Harvest for Hope: A Guide to Mindful Eating* (New York: Warner Books, 2005).

22. Susan Albers, *Mindful Eating 101: A Guide to Healthy Eating in College and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 10.

23. Jeanie Seward-Magee, *A Mindful Diet: Four Weeks to Eating Awareness* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2009).

24. Nhat Hanh and Cheung, *Savor*, 4.

25. Albers, *Eating Mindfully*, 19.

26. Bays, *Mindful Eating*, 5.

27. Lorrie Jones and Kelly Lenihan, *21 Days of Eating Mindfully: Your Guide to a Healthy Relationship with Yourself and Food* (Lakewood, WA: Simple Serenity LLC, 2011).

28. Burke, "Buddhists Say You Aren't What You Eat, but How."

29. Leah DeSole, "Introduction: Special Issue: Eating Disorders and Mindfulness," *Eating Disorders* 19, no. 1 (2010): 1.

30. As one article puts it: "Beside [sic] the Buddha, mindful eating also draws lessons and inspiration from Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program, which introduced the masses—and the medical establishment—to a secularized form of meditation in 1979" (Burke, "Buddhists Say You Aren't What You Eat, but How").

31. Albers, "Using Mindful Eating to Treat Food Restriction," 97.

32. Ruth A. Baer, Sarah Fischer, and Debra B. Huss, "Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy Applied to Binge Eating: A Case Study," *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice* 12 (2005): 351.

33. Ruth A. Baer, "Mindfulness Training as a Clinical Intervention: A Conceptual and Empirical Review," *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10, no. 2 (2003): 125.

34. Jean Kristeller and Ruth Q. Wolever, "Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training for Treating Binge Eating Disorder: The Conceptual Foundation," *Eating Disorders* 19, no. 1 (2010): 51.

35. To quote another example: a study that modified the standard MBSR format as an intervention for binge eating concluded, "a 'middle way' might be important for assessing the feasibility of using modified mindfulness interventions for addressing binge-type eating in overweight and obese

individuals,” yet makes no mention of the Buddhist doctrine of the Middle Way (Bruce W. Smith et al., “A Study on the Effects of a Modified Mindfulness Intervention on Binge Eating,” *Complementary Health Practice Review* 11, no. 3 [2006], 135).

36. S. Kelly Avants, Mark Beitel, and Arthur Margolin, “Making the Shift from ‘Addict Self’ to ‘Spiritual Self’: Results from a Stage I Study of Spiritual Self-Schema (3-S) Therapy for the Treatment of Addiction and HIV Risk Behavior,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 8, no. 3 (2005): 175–176.

37. *Ibid.*, 167.

38. Mark Beitel et al., “Reflections by Inner-City Drug Users on a Buddhist-Based Spirituality-Focused Therapy: A Qualitative Study,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 77, no. 1 (2007): 3.

39. Phan Y. Hong et al., “The Positive Impact of Mindful Eating on Expectations of Food Liking,” *Mindfulness* 2 (2011): 105.

40. Albers, “Using Mindful Eating to Treat Food Restriction,” 105.

41. “Mindful Eating: An Interview with Dr. David Engstrom,” *Bariatric Nursing and Surgical Patient Care* 2, no. 4 (2007): 242.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Julie A. Gast and Steven R. Hawks, “Examining Intuitive Eating as a Weight Loss Program,” *Healthy Weight Journal* (May/June 2000): 42.

44. *Ibid.*

45. I found one tentative suggestion that mindfulness training might not be appropriate for underweight patients with severe eating disorders for whom “attending fully to present moment experience can potentially be emotionally aversive and overwhelming” (Adhip Rawal et al., “A Mindful Approach to Eating Disorders,” *Healthcare Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal* 9, no. 4 [2009]).

46. Rhonda M. Merwin et al., “Psychological Inflexibility and Symptom Expression in Anorexia Nervosa,” *Eating Disorders* 19, no. 1 (2010): 62–82.

47. Staci Wade, “Consumed by Consumption: A Mindfulness-Based Intervention for Binge Eating Disorder,” *School of Professional Psychology*, Paper 64 (2009): abstract.

48. *Ibid.*, 26.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Ven. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: A Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (Chiang Mai: Silkwood Books, 2004), 7.

51. Savor offers a notable exception: the third chapter discusses the four

nutriments, asking us to evaluate not only the food in our diets but also the kinds of entertainment we consume, the desires that drive us, and the everyday thoughts, words, and actions that shape our consciousness.

52. Bhikku Ñāṇamoli, trans., *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification* (Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, 1991), 337.

53. *Ibid.*, 342.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Nhat Hanh and Cheung, *Savor*, 49–50.

56. Ñāṇamoli, *Visuddhimagga*, 341.

57. Kristeller and Wolever, “An Exploratory Study,” 59.

58. Mary Beth Janssen, *Pleasure Healing: Mindful Practices and Sacred Spa Rituals for Self-Nurturing* (Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, 2009).

59. Donald Altman, *Meal by Meal: 365 Daily Meditations for Finding Balance through Mindful Eating* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2004), 2.

60. Staci Wade, “Consumed by Consumption,” 8.

61. Piyanjali de Zoysa, “The Use of Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation in Psychotherapy: A Case Report from Sri Lanka,” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 48, no. 5 (2011): 680.

62. Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization* (Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 2003), 5.

63. Richard Gilpin, “The Use of Theravāda Buddhist Practices and Perspectives in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 9, no. 2 (2008): 235.

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Ibid.*, 243.

66. *Ibid.*, 238.

67. Sharon Hsu, Joel Grow, and G. Alan Marlatt, “Mindfulness and Addiction,” *Recent Developments in Alcoholism* 18, no. 2 (2008): 230.

68. Jeff Wilson defines Buddhist appropriators as “non-Buddhists who employ elements of Buddhism for their own purposes” (Jeff Wilson, “Mizuko kuyō in the Abortion Cultural Wars: The Rhetorical Appropriation of Japanese Buddhism by Non-Buddhist Americans,” *Religion* 39 (2009): 11–21.

69. The secularization and commodification of yoga in the West offers an intriguing parallel to the spread of mindfulness-based interventions. See, for example, Søren Askegaard and Giana M. Echkhart, “Glocal Yoga: Re-Appropriation in the Indian Consumptionscape,” *Marketing Theory* 12, no. 1 (2012): 45–60; and Allison Fish, “The Commodification and Exchange of

Knowledge in the Case of Transnational Commercial Yoga,” *International Journal of Cultural Property* 13 (2006): 189–206. Though outside the scope of this essay, the complex literature on the topic of appropriating Buddhism and other Eastern/Asian religions/spiritualities provides much worth ruminating over. For an eclectic collection of diverse viewpoints on this topic, see Franya Berkman, “Appropriating Universality: The Coltranes and 1960s Spirituality,” *American Studies* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 41–62; Baris Büyüktutan, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Appropriation: Buddhism, the Vietnam War, and the Field of U.S. Poetry,” *American Sociological Review* 76, no. 4 (2011): 620–639; La Seng Dingrin, “Is Buddhism Indispensable in the Cross-Cultural Appropriation of Christianity in Burma?” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 29 (2009): 3–22; Catherine Garrett, “Transcendental Meditation, Reiki and Yoga: Suffering, Ritual and Self-Transformation,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16, no. 3 (2001): 329–342; Pamela E. Klassen, “Ritual Appropriation and Appropriate Ritual: Christian Healing and Adaptations of Asian Religions,” *History and Anthropology* 16, no. 3 (2005): 377–391; and Michael York, “New Age Commodification and Appropriation of Spirituality,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16, no. 3 (2001): 361–372.

70. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995).

71. Rocío Guardiola Wanden-Berghe, Javier Sanz-Valero, and Carmina Wanden-Berghe, “The Application of Mindfulness to Eating Disorders Treatment: A Systematic Review,” *Eating Disorders* 19, no. 1 (2010): 34–35.

72. *Ibid.*, 47.

73. Gilpin, “The Use of Theravāda Buddhist Practices and Perspectives,” 240.

74. de Zoysa, “The Use of Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation in Psychotherapy,” 678.

Religious Tourism and Beijing's 2008 Olympics: (Re)Imagining the White Pagoda Temple and the Huoshen Daoist Temple

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INTRODUCTION

This work is an applied study of two contemporary Beijing religious sites and their developments. Using socio-economic theories, I will explore how temples in Beijing were reconstructed in preparation for the 2008 Olympics, and how these reconstructions gave the sites new meanings and purposes. Temples for consideration include the White Pagoda Temple and the Huoshen Daoist Temple, both of which were spaces renovated with the help of the Beijing municipal government. Before the Olympics, each site was promoted as a marker of China's cultural¹ relics, and through tourism efforts, each location was perpetuated as such. This kind of religious tourism will be explored for the purpose of investigating how religion is at present used as a means for generating an "imagined" narrative of contemporary China.

In this article, religious tourism is understood as any travel motivated by religion, where the site at one point was associated with a religion.² Religious tourism, however, also includes activities not associated with pilgrimage to a sacred site. These include sight-seeing, religious cultivation, and recreation.³ Activities related to cultural consumption that occur at religious sites also fall under the umbrella of religious tourism. As such, there is no such thing as a "tourist." Instead, there are many contexts in which people participate in tourism. As Oakes and Sutton contend, these socio-economic situations in China have as much to do with state attempts at modernization as they do with a growing wealthy population that is increasingly interested in traveling.⁴ Activities at a religious site do not therefore distinguish pilgrim from tourist. Instead, in contemporary China, these

two categories converge. Pilgrims are becoming more like tourists, and tourists like pilgrims.

In the following, I will argue that recent promotions of religious sites, through the government supported tourist industry, encourage consuming religious sites as cultural artifacts. This encourages a convergence between tourists and pilgrims. Such an amalgamation increasingly occurs in what sociologist Fenggang Yang calls the “gray” religious market. After detailing Yang’s theory of a gray market, I argue that convergences of tourists and pilgrims reduce the costs (i.e., social costs) people incur when participating in religious activities. Government supported temple reconstructions further reduce potential costs. To evidence such activity, I will compare temple reconstructions occurring at two different Beijing locations. This will highlight narratives within China’s gray market that associate religions with commodities related to “pastness,” authenticity, and ideals of historical and contemporary customs.

CHINA’S GRAY MARKET OF RELIGION

The two Beijing sites chosen for this study are both temples in the historical sense, where a temple refers “to a building dedicated to housing a representation of a supernatural spirit (a ‘god’) before which offerings and prayers were made.”⁵ But contemporary activities at each site have altered each location to meet the needs of those investing in it, as well as those consuming it. Many of the transformations are due to practitioner patronage, but revitalization activities also occur because of government intervention. Although the Chinese government holds an atheistic stance, government projects co-opt religious sites for economic gain. Mobilizing religion for the state’s means, however, is not unique to contemporary times. Even ancestor worship in ancient settings reflected connections between religion, family, and the state, helping to create political alignments, territorial partitions, and authoritative organizations.⁶ Contemporarily, though, government intervention is more complicated. Specific religious organizations, believers, and religious activities are permitted, while others are banned. But the divisions are not always clearly marked, especially when religion is transmitted through discourses of “culture.” Religious practice is heavily regulated, but a milieu between what is legal and illegal exists. And when the government economically supports temple construction because the site is part of the nation’s cultural heritage,

the milieu expands. In Yang's terms, between the legal and illegal distinctions is a "gray" market where the legality of a religious activity remains ambiguous.

Yang's theory of religion in China incorporates three distinct categories: a red market, a black market, and a gray market located between the former two. The red market "*comprises all legal (officially permitted) religious organizations, believers, and religious activities...this may be called the 'open market,' because the religious exchanges are carried out openly,*"⁷ i.e., religious exchanges occur publically. This is not to say that all religious organizations have access to the red market, for religion is heavily regulated in China. Only those groups sanctioned by the government fall under the red market: Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam. If Chinese people associate with these traditions, and do not pose a threat to national unity, they have freedom of practice. This still comes with regulation, however. Yang calls this a religion's "red stain."⁸ Red market religions are government sanctioned, but heavily regulated. Contemporarily, "all religious groups and movements must be formally registered with the Bureau of Religious Affairs...directly under the supervision of the CCP and certified to be 'patriotic' before they can operate legally."⁹

Opposite the red market is a black one that includes, "*all illegal (officially banned) religious organizations, believers, and religious activities.* The black market exchanges are conducted underground or in secrecy."¹⁰ Black market religious activities are not government sanctioned, and if they are to occur, they must do so in private. In between the red and black markets lies a third—the gray market—that includes all organizations (spiritual and religious), practitioners, and activities that have an ambiguous legal status. "These groups, individuals, and activities fall in a gray area of religious regulation, which can be perceived as both legal and illegal, or neither legal nor illegal."¹¹ The gray market is central to Yang's triple market model because not all religious activities are either legal or illegal. Illegal activities occur within legal religions, and religion is often promoted as culture or science.

Yang's triple market model of religion in China is useful for determining how government regulation influences religious exchange. He contends that religious exchange is limited by China's political situation. The gray market, however, is an ambiguous space where religion is disseminated as culture. This allows religious activities to appear innocuous to political regulation, and makes them difficult to regulate.

Interestingly, government supported tourism developments perpetuate China's gray market of religion, for they encourage amalgamations of pilgrimage and tourism. Temple rebuilding leading up to the 2008 Olympics exemplifies such development projects.

THE GRAY MARKET AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Temple reconstruction activities can be traced to the 1980s when the government made tourism a priority, for it was a means for economic growth. In recent years, China's economic developments have influenced state approaches to, and regulations of, religion with Beijing's tourism administration being responsible for tourism planning.¹² Most of China's travel agencies are still state owned, and tourism decisions trickle down from the top level of tourism administration. Once decisions are made, the tourism administration implements policies, and in the case of resistance, the government revises the decisions.¹³ The Chinese government is responsible for making, implementing, and monitoring tourism policies, and its decisions for how to develop tourism shape the consumption of religious sites.

Olsen contends, "To be competitive in a global tourism market, many national and regional governments use religious heritage to attract tourists. These sites, then, are treated as a key component of the cultural landscape...."¹⁴ Leading up to the Olympics, the Chinese government attempted to restrain religious tourism by marketing religious destinations as "cultural," as opposed to "religious." As a result, the value of heritage became embedded into religious tourism. When this occurs, religious sites are visited by as many curious tourists as spiritual pilgrims. Sites then become places where religious traditions and rituals are exchanged as cultural commodities, creating an ambiguous market. Government attempts to control tourist activities at religious sites encourage it to become a supplier of religion, resulting in tourist agencies mediating exchange relationships between temples and visitors. Temples themselves supply visitors with what theorists Stark and Finke term "supernatural, generalized compensators,"¹⁵ referring to other-worldly rewards that people seek. Religious specialists supply religious commodities, but experiencing supernatural compensators is broadly mediated through the tourism industry.

Within the gray market, religion manifests through culture in many different ways, with religious tourism expanding contemporary offerings. While the tourism industry does not supply religion in the

way a religious specialist does, it participates in supplying and promoting religious spaces as national cultural places. This promotion is based on the idea that people rationally seek out China's historical locations for their heritage value. Blackwell contends, based on a theory of motivation, "religious tourists may be motivated by the opportunity to gain recognition of their achievements, perhaps by a photograph of their participation in a religious ceremony that they can show to friends at home."¹⁶ The rationale for visiting a historical site includes both the experience and the subsequent documentation. Furthermore, Digance argues that all visitors are searching for a religious or mystical experience.¹⁷ Be they curious tourists or spiritual pilgrims, visitors want a moment out of the ordinary, an experience that transitions from the mundane to the special: sacred. China's religious spaces are increasingly marked as such experiences because they embody China's past. Because of this, they have a sense of permanency, and as artifacts, they are able to help people transcend into another time. Sites within this investigation will evidence this, and I will show that the context through which a site is promoted inherently influences a visitor's experience. The tourism industry, as a participant in such offerings, is thus a contemporary supplier of the experience of religion.

HISTORICAL BEIJING AND RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Because tourism affects how visitors come into contact with religious sites in China, the government, as a supporter of tourist agencies, does so as well. Government investment in religious sites is generally implicit, though allotments of funds for temple reconstruction are explicit. Such efforts have historical ties, especially to Beijing's Ming and Qing periods. During these times, when temple development occurred, temples were used and maintained as sites of community building and for the preservation of culture. In Ming Beijing, they were places of assembling and were anchored in society through governmental support and city resident patronage. "Not only were temples used in an organized fashion for festivals, charity, hostels, and politics, but they also served a diverse public as libraries, museums, and parks."¹⁸ Broadly speaking, their spaces housed deity representations, while they were also used in conjunction with cultural activities. Not unlike today, patronage was an important means for temple maintenance, but market related activity was also vital for economic stability. Ritual performances generated revenue, but temples, especially those

in scenic areas, largely benefitted from sightseers, “especially those that were...centrally located, or convenient to transportation routes in and out of Peking, [and] turned themselves into inns and rented rooms to short- and long-term visitors.”¹⁹ Ming Beijing temples accrued many expenses, so income from a variety of sources was necessary. The relationship between patrons and clerics, based on Buddhist piety, enabled temples to become locations for communal activities, group formations, and general public use. These various activities helped interweave temples into Beijing’s city life, and temples were socialized through both religious and socio-cultural events.

Following the Ming, Beijing’s Qing period patronage of religion expanded the city’s number of temples, as well as their properties. Patronage during this time helped form community associations, as well as neighborhoods. Diverse groups began meeting each other, and, as Naquin²⁰ has shown, much of this activity was led by imperial officials. Temple purposes, therefore, came from diverse groups of people, and such uses of temple space socialized each in manners beyond religion.

This brief overview of Ming and Qing Beijing indicates that temples have historically been spaces of varied cultural and religious activities. Activities resembling religious tourism are therefore not unique to China’s contemporary age. However, the temples are understood and experienced in different ways with each time period. By detailing two different Beijing temples, I investigate socio-economic activity related to religious tourism and how such activities mobilize and promote religion as a cultural commodity. Both temples in the following analysis have received reconstruction appropriations, and at each site, China’s past is marketed and sold. As discussed above, China’s gray religious market is government perpetuated via tourism organizations. In its supply of religion, tourism promotes religion as a marker of China’s national past. Oakes writes that “pastness” is a product in contemporary China’s marketplace in the midst of public culture and commercial tourism.²¹ Pastness is a commodity, for it is an object through which consumers can gain cultural capital.²²

WHITE PAGODA TEMPLE

Located in the western part of Beijing, the White Pagoda Temple dates back to the Yuan dynasty and is one of the temples that still stands close to the former Qing inner city.²³ Originally known as the Temple

of the Marvelous Powers of Manifestation (妙应寺), it was installed in 1092 by a Liao emperor. Following this installation, the next major reconstruction occurred in 1271 and took eight years to complete. Kublai Khan reconstructed the temple in Tibetan style. Jiang notes that when this reconstruction was completed, the pagoda became the largest and oldest of its kind in China. Kublai Khan's effect on the site was thus quite considerable, with the sheer size of the pagoda marking the temple in a new way.²⁴

After its completion, the White Pagoda Temple's fairs were significant in Beijing. They were momentous events for local residents, and were saturated with buyers and sellers of various commodities. In general, during the Ming, temple fairs were places where devotion to deities, sight-seeing, and trading occurred. The temple was open once or twice a year for visitors to pay tribute to deities. These days included an influx of tourist activities, and both bartering and business fairs were frequent.²⁵ Following the Ming, temple fairs decreased, but trade (i.e., commercial) fairs remained. Temples in both Ming and Qing thus provided space for economic activities. Devotion to deities occurred, but historical accounts indicate market activities were equally prominent.

Following the Qing, temple fairs declined, and by the 1960s, fairs at the White Pagoda Temple had ceased. Across Beijing, temples were replaced by shopping centers as sites for buying and selling. During this time of religious prohibition, the White Pagoda Temple suffered financially. However, following a 1976 earthquake, revival began, and damage was repaired to protect the site's heritage.²⁶ Designated as a cultural site, renovation again continued at the temple before the Olympics. Over four million dollars went into the site's relocation, with almost five million dollars going to its restoration.²⁷ Provided by the Beijing municipal government, this investment helped the site retrieve what was lost. The temple is once again a place for market activities. What differs today compared to imperial times, however, are the commodities that are bought and sold, and one of the prime temple commodities today is China's "pastness."

Using Pierre Bourdieu's framework, what makes the White Pagoda Temple attractive in terms of cultural commodification is the potential to acquire cultural capital. Cultural capital is one form of economic capital, along with symbolic and social, and commonly refers to prestige, reputation, fame, and so forth.²⁸ Bourdieu writes that people's embedded tastes influence their actions, and one's tastes are

subsequently influenced by the person's place within the social space. A person's tastes are essentially results of one's social class. To raise one's social class, one must be able to apprehend greater amounts of cultural capital. One manner for doing so is having the ability to use *objects* of cultural capital, i.e., cultural goods. Cultural goods are "objects, such as books, works of art, and scientific instruments, that require specialized cultural abilities to use."²⁹ Extending this notion to the White Pagoda Temple, physical locations are cultural objects through which individual consumers acquire cultural capital. In China's gray religious market, religious sites are increasingly mobilized to act as such objects—to represent cultural objects. And by having the ability to consume such objects, individual consumers gain cultural capital and elevate their social status.

The White Pagoda Temple architecturally represents the past, and contemporarily, it is promoted as an artifact of China's past dating to Kublai Khan. In particular, Olympic promotions elevated the site because the pagoda is the largest and oldest preserved from the Yuan dynasty.³⁰ With this connection to China's past, the temple holds cultural significance, and by consuming it one gains cultural capital. Its values include historical lineage and the preservation of impressive objects. The site's connection to Buddhism was not lost in government promotions, but was instead presented as a vehicle for espousing values related to national loyalty and unity.

By marketing religious sites through the value of pastness the gray market manifests itself in China's contemporary marketplace. The gray market is both ambiguous and difficult to restrain. In accordance with this view, one could argue that, although a site is embedded with cultural symbolism through government promotions, it does not have to be consumed as such. Visitors have the freedom to consume a site however they wish. This study does not argue against this idea; instead, my purpose is to point out how reconstructions at, and promotions of, Beijing temples resemble gray market activity. Doing so focuses the attention on the numerous manifestations of religion in Chinese culture, and what the White Pagoda Temple indicates is that religious sites are increasingly commodified as locations of China's past, as opposed to China's religion.

HUOSHEN DAOIST TEMPLE

The Huoshen Daoist Temple is an additional example of a space that is commodified as an object of pastness. Dating to the Ming dynasty, with reconstructions in 1605 and 1770, this temple is one of the country's oldest Daoist temples. At one point, it shared the stage with eight other Beijing temples dedicated to the god of fire. Regular offerings on the god's birthday were received at the temple, primarily because many buildings in Beijing were constructed from wood. Damage by fire was a concern of Beijing citizens, and the Huoshen Temple offered a place where people could seek protection.³¹

It was renovated by the government, as well as the China Daoist Association, in the contemporary period. This relationship between the Daoist temple and the government marks China's contemporary age, and Lai notes, "Whatever the relationship between the government authority and religious bodies in China, it is a fact that basic religious activities in Daoist temples have been considerably revived and continuously expanded."³² The Huoshen Temple signifies such a revision, and before the Olympics, the temple was refurbished with over five million dollars.³³ It is described as a key historical site, with connections to the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. The site's architecture visually connects it to historical artifacts, making it an appropriate place for cultural relic protection. Its architecture is additionally significant because through consuming it an individual receives cultural capital related to cultural objects. Imperial architecture allows the visitor to experience historical China, and consuming the site's architecture requires cultural abilities. The Huoshen Temple and the White Pagoda Temple are similar in this manner. Both are cultural goods due to their connections to China's past. What must be considered, however, is how this connection comes about. Visually, both of the locations embody imperial times, but they do so because their reconstructions were meant to retain the architecture's authenticity. This is an important point revealed in examinations of both locations. Before the Olympics, both were promoted as authentic representations of China's past, and such promotions identified each as a demonstration of imperial China. Physical temples provide spatial structure for the exhibition of national history, but to do so, reconstructions must retain historical "authenticity."

Authenticity, a value in religious tourism, was critical for promoting these sites. Bremer contends that tourists seek authentic places

because they “attribute significant value to authenticity; the most authentic experiences are the most aesthetically pleasing.”³⁴ Tourist and religious perspectives regarding a physical space are equally important because religious places must also be appealing travel destinations. For the Huoshen Temple to be an aesthetically pleasing destination, it must remain authentic. This includes both its religious connections and its imperial architecture. What is deemed authentic is based on the consumers’ values and tastes—their embedded cultural capital. However, tastes are learned and acquired. Promotional material espousing Huoshen Temple as authentic serves to re-imagine the site as significant to contemporary times. This printed material congratulated the local cultural relic protection administrations for rescuing the site and preserving the original appearance and structural materials of the temple.³⁵ This kind of government language upheld the Huoshen Temple’s connections to authenticity, while creating a structure for defining what was and was not authentic. The consequence of such language was an elevation of the site’s original, imperial architecture. Such structures visually located the temple in China’s imagined historical narrative, and within official language, this location was necessary for the temple’s authenticity.

This explicit staging of religious sites as national cultural relics occurred extensively before the Olympics, but it is not a phenomenon limited to Beijing sites during that time. Instead, this kind of gray market activity is proliferated within the tourist market across China. Oakes’ work in Guizhou has shown that the tourist desire for authenticity, along with state-sponsored economic developments, have resulted in elaborate exhibitions of tradition, consumption, and commerce where tourists consume local traditions and local residents consume tourists as exotic objects.³⁶ Through tourism, locals consume tourists, and tourists pay for experiences of authentic places. Their search for authenticity elevates the status of ordinary places to “where they are ‘more real’ than the reality of modern life itself.”³⁷ The resulting paradox of this elevation is that, as places are marked and marketed as authentic, they are spoiled. When a setting is marked as authentic, it is also mediated. Much of this occurs through tourist agencies, and in doing so, the location is not authentic in the sense of being unspoiled. Rather, as the Huoshen Temple demonstrates, locations are often purposefully restructured to represent an authentic past.

Authenticity is an important gray market value. Through marketing sites as authentic, the tourist industry draws eager visitors. Within this buying and selling of a site, however, it seems that the site loses its genuine authenticity. Reconstructing temples furthers this, and what is left is a representation of China's past. These representations are nevertheless promoted as authentic, historical displays, and in staging temples as cultural relics, tourism participates in rewriting China's past onto its present. Bremer contends that a site's temporal location gives it its significance, and a place's commemorative value comes from its different temporalities.³⁸ Spatial locations include pasts, presents, and futures, yet it seems at the Huoshen Temple, the past dominates. Pastness is rewritten into the site's present significance. Its spatial location and inner display of imperial architecture connect it to historical Beijing, while its temporal location socially confirms its position in China's grand narrative. Promotions of the site give visitors the perception they are stepping into China's past, and this commodification implies that the site has a sense of timeless permanence. Before the Olympics, the temple's image as an authentic representation of imperial China was proliferated. Because it evidenced Chinese national culture, the religious site became significant to state projects of national unity, and was promoted in religious tourism as a signpost of cultural unification.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have investigated the White Pagoda Temple and the Huoshen Daoist Temple to demonstrate how Beijing's religious sites have been commodified to meet the needs of a state-run tourist market. I argued that the tourist industry increasingly supplies the experience of religious sites, and this supply occurs in China's gray religious market where religion manifests as culture. Religion as culture promotions influence the meanings and uses of religious sites and artifacts, but in commodifications related to religion as culture, individual consumers are able to acquire higher volumes of cultural capital. Pastness has been shown in this investigation to be a commodity through which one gains cultural capital. But in order for tourist organizations to sell the past, a location must authentically represent it. Government projects thusly renovate religious sites to meet this requirement, and they do so by rewriting the past onto the present—creating a “present past” commodity.

NOTES

1. "Cultural" in this context refers to a constructed "national" cultural identity, i.e., Hanness, as opposed to discourses of popular culture.
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5. Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 19.
6. Anthony Yu, *State and Religion in China* (Peru, IL: Carus Publishing Company, 2005).
7. Italics are in the original. Fenggang Yang, "Triple Religious Markets in China," *Sociological Quarterly* 47 (2006): 93–122, 97.
8. Ibid.
9. Yu, *State and Religion*, 140.
10. Yang, "Triple Religious Markets in China," 97.
11. Ibid.
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17. Justine Digance, “Religious and Secular Pilgrimage: Journeys Redolent with Meaning,” in *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*, ed. Dallen J. Timothy and Daniel H. Olsen (New York: Routledge, 2006), 36–48.
18. Naquin, *Peking*, 57.
19. *Ibid.*, 71.
20. *Ibid.*
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26. Xun Dong, ed., *Fo jiao yu Beijing si miao wen hua* (Buddhist Temple Culture in Beijing) (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu chubanshe, 1997).
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30. Official Website of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.
31. Aldrich, *Vanishing Beijing*; Naquin, *Peking*, 329.
32. Lai Chi-Tim, “Daoism in China Today, 1980–2002,” in *Religion in China Today*, ed. Daniel L. Overmyer (New York: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2003), 107–121, 112.
33. Official Website of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.
34. Thomas S. Bremer, “Sacred Spaces and Tourist Places,” in *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*, ed. Dallen J. Timothy and Daniel H. Olsen (New York: Routledge, 2006), 25–35, 32.

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38. Bremer, "Sacred Spaces and Tourist Spaces."

***Nenbutsu* Mandala Visualization in Dōhan's *Himitsu nenbutsu shō*: An Investigation into Medieval Japanese Vajrayāna Pure Land**

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Vajrayāna and Pure Land practices and traditions are often studied as if they are necessarily exclusive and autonomous spheres of Buddhist activity.¹ Arguing against this still common point of view, I will examine a *nenbutsu* mandala visualization ritual presented in the *Compendium on the Secret Nenbutsu* (*Himitsu nenbutsu shō*, 秘密念仏抄),² an important early twelfth century Pure Land text by the Mt. Kōya monk Dōhan (道範, 1179–1252).³ Dōhan was not the first, nor the last, Buddhist thinker to employ “Vajrayāna Pure Land” ritual technologies, cosmology, or soteriological goals in his ritual program. For Buddhist monks in medieval Japan, “tantric” or Vajrayāna⁴ ritual theory served as the dominant paradigm for negotiating Buddhist conceptions of ritual power, while Pure Land rebirth, an assumed component of Mahāyāna cosmology and soteriology, was a nearly universal aspiration and concern.⁵ In other words, these “two” served a variety of often overlapping functions in a complex intellectual, religious, social, and political environment that the study of Japanese religions based on a sectarian taxonomy has largely ignored. As will be demonstrated below, the example of Dōhan provides a new perspective on how medieval Japanese Buddhists conceived of the relationships between ritual, power, and salvation.

While Dōhan is primarily known as an influential scholar of the works of Kūkai (空海, 774–835), the early Heian period (794–1185) monk who is regarded as the founder of the Japanese Vajrayāna tradition, he was also an important early-Kamakura Pure Land thinker.⁶ The study of Kūkai and Vajrayāna in Japan has largely been conducted through the lens of contemporary Shingon sectarian orthodoxy, and the study of Pure Land thought has been significantly influenced in

particular contemporary Jōdo Shinshū historiography. When taken at face value, orthodox sectarian history might suggest that mantra- and mandala-based practices in some sense “belong” to Shingon (and to a lesser extent, Tendai⁷), and the chanting of the *nenbutsu* and aspiration for rebirth in a Buddha’s Pure Land belong to the Pure Land schools. This type of sectarian consciousness is a rather recent development in the history of East Asian Buddhism, and pre-modern monks would not have recognized such clearly defined demarcations.⁸ In other words, that Dōhan wrote about Pure Land and Kūkai’s thought seems surprising only to the contemporary observer who has been influenced by the taxonomic approach to Japanese religion. This still common approach tends to over-determine the boundaries between groups and define “schools” by their founders and doctrines.⁹ The main problem with this approach, which may at first appear to provide a useful hermeneutic for the study of Japanese religion, is the application of anachronistic and/or polemical criteria uncritically derived from the source material.¹⁰ Moreover, perspectives and concerns that do not fit into narrowly defined idealized contemporary orthodoxy and praxis (such as Vajrayāna ritual conducted for rebirth in a Buddha’s Pure Land) have been ignored. Therefore, in order to understand Dōhan’s contribution to Japanese Pure Land thought, we must first look beyond sectarian assumptions about the development of Japanese Buddhism.

KŪKAI AND THE EARLY SYSTEMATIZATION OF JAPANESE VAJRAYĀNA

Before turning to Dōhan’s *nenbutsu* mandala visualization, I will first briefly outline the early development of Vajrayāna ritual thought in Japan. I would like to suggest that in order to understand the “Vajrayāna Pure Land” thought of an early-medieval thinker like Dōhan, we must first understand how Pure Land thought fit into the writings of Kūkai and other early Japanese Vajrayāna thinkers. Recently, scholars have come to regard Kūkai’s ninth century transmission of Vajrayāna ritual culture not as the founding of a new “Mantra school” (the common translation of the term Shingon-shū, 真言宗) but rather as the presentation of a new vision of the meaning of ritual and the nature of speech acts as efficacious ritual technologies.¹¹ Kūkai established a new ritual program that centered upon initiation into the dual-mandala system of the Vajra World Mandala (*kongōkai mandara*, 金剛界曼荼羅) and the Womb World Mandala (*taizōkai mandara*, 胎藏界曼荼羅), symbolizing

the union of male and female, dynamic and static, dimensions of the universe, respectively, as well as a theory of ritual efficacy that centered upon the importance of mantras, or “true words” (the literal meaning of the characters used to translate the term “mantra” into the Sino-sphere: *zhenyan*, *shingon*, 真言), as tools for actualizing the inherent power of the buddhas. Kūkai taught the ritual activation of the “three mysteries” wherein the body, speech, and mind of an ordinary being was revealed to abide in a non-dual relationship with the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha,¹² and that through secret initiations the practitioner of mantras was able to gain access to the power of the universe itself, the *dharmakāya*, embodied in the form of the Tathāgata Mahāvairocana. Kūkai based his ritual theory on the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* (*Dainichi kyō*, 大日經, T. 848) in which it is argued that the true state of the mind is the *bodhi*-mind (*bodhicitta*), and the cause of enlightenment is naturally arising from the universe itself.

Kūkai's rapid rise to prominence may in part be attributed to the perception at the time that he was presenting to his Japanese audience the latest innovations in Indian and Tang dynasty ritual culture. After all, Kūkai studied under Indian and Chinese masters in Chang'an (長安), the Tang capital and center of the East Asian political and cultural world. As a result of his rise through the monastic hierarchy, Kūkai was able to work with the Nara clergy to establish lineages and ordination platforms at various major monastic centers.¹³ Therefore, after Kūkai, Japanese Vajrayāna was less of a “school” or “sect,” and more a common ritual technology, mastery of which was essential for the acquisition of patronage and prestige.

Upon his return to Japan, Kūkai presented a large body of previously unknown ritual texts to the court. One of these ritual texts was the *Muryōju nyōrai kanyō kūyō giki* (無量寿如来觀行供養儀軌, T. 930), a text composed by Amoghavajra (705–774). The *Muryōju nyōrai kanyō kūyō giki* presents a *sādhana*-style visualization practice centered upon the Buddha Amitābha said to lead to, among other things, Pure Land rebirth. Today, this text remains an important cornerstone of Shingon and Tendai practice. This text draws extensively upon the *Contemplation Sūtra* (*Kanmuryōju kyō*, 觀無量寿經), a text regarded as one of the three “Pure Land sūtras” by Hōnen (1133–1212).¹⁴ For this reason, it is often thought to have been compiled in China.¹⁵ Pure Land contemplation and visualization practices have a long history across the Mahāyāna world, and are well attested in Tibetan, Central Asian, Chinese, and Japanese

sources. It could be argued that the *Contemplation Sūtra* is itself representative of early forms of Buddhist practice that would later lead to the more systematic *sādhana* style visualization practices.¹⁶ It would be a mistake to regard this as an example of syncretism. Rather, it might be more accurate to suggest that Amoghavajra was merely presenting Indian Amitābha contemplative practice in the vocabulary of a text that had already proven quite successful in China.

Here I will briefly outline Kūkai's own summary notes on this ritual before moving on to Dōhan's "*nenbutsu mandala*" visualization ritual.¹⁷ As with other Vajrayāna rituals, the written component is merely one piece of the puzzle, and would have been supplemented by an oral commentary handed down from one's teacher. For now, however, this brief summary of Kūkai's written words will have to suffice.

First, the practitioner performs a series of preliminary purifications and invocations. Next, the practitioner envisions the Pure Land Sukhāvātī. As a great lapis lazuli ocean stretches out beyond the horizon, the Sanskrit seed-syllable *hriḥ* emerges from this ocean, emitting a great crimson light, universally illuminating the Pure Lands of the ten directions. After describing a series of other ritual invocations and visualizations involving Avalokiteśvara and a host of bodhisattvas, the adept then contemplates the luminous crimson body of Amitābha.

Amitābha's chest possesses a moon disc with a Siddham script mantra inscribed on it, pronounced in Japanese as "On Amiri tateje kara un" (Skt. *oṃ amṛta teje hara hūṃ*). This mantra is written in the form of a mandala, with "oṃ" written in the center, and the other letters wrapping around the perimeter. The adept then imagines that his or her own chest also possesses such a moon disc with the same mantra written on it. Next, Amitābha begins chanting the mantra and shoots the moon disc from his mouth into the top of the meditator's head. This is followed by the meditator performing a similar projection wherein the moon disc on their chest shoots into the feet of Amitābha. It should be noted that it is Amitābha who initiates this "union," and it is the practitioner who responds. The mantra is the conduit for realizing the non-dual relationship between Buddha and practitioner. The practitioner is to realize emptiness and equanimity of all *dharma*s and that the mind is originally non-arising, its self-nature is emptiness, and it is as pure as the moon disc atop which the syllable *hriḥ* sits. The adept is then to envision Sukhāvātī as described in the *Contemplation Sūtra*, understanding that the light of Amitābha universally illumines

the buddha fields of the ten directions. This practice is said to purify ones' past deeds, karmic afflictions, suffering, and sickness, and at the end of one's life they will certainly attain rebirth in the highest level of the Pure Land of Bliss.

Kūkai transmitted this ritual to Japan as part of the broader system of Vajrayāna “*mudrā*-mantra-mandala” based practices. We can see from this example that aspiration for Sukhāvātī was present “always-already” within Indian and Chinese Vajrayāna before it was transmitted to Japan. In addition, we can also see that within Vajrayāna there is not a clear division between “self-power” (*jiriki*) and “other-power” (*tariki*). Rather, through the ritual act, the practitioner is able to realize that they are not separate from the buddhas. Pure Land sectarian writing has often over-emphasized the “self-power” nature of Vajrayāna traditions, as well as the division between Pure Land and Vajrayāna traditions in the Japanese environment. How then could something called “Pure Land” and something called “Vajrayāna” be “syncretized” when they were not separate from the beginning? Vajrayāna systems evolved in a Mahāyāna Buddhist world in which Sukhāvātī functioned as a “generalized goal.”¹⁸ As Vajrayāna ritual systems proliferated throughout Asia, newly transmitted and older Pure Land traditions often blended. As Kūkai “systematized” his Vajrayāna traditions in Japan, there was no need to add in Pure Land “elements.” They were already present within the Buddhist environment of Japan, and present within the ritual texts he was transmitting. The *Muryōju nyōrai kangyō kūyō giki* is but one example.¹⁹

DŌHAN'S NENBUTSU IN MEDIEVAL JAPANESE VAJRAYĀNA

Between the time of Kūkai in the ninth century, and Dōhan in the twelfth century, Japanese Buddhism experienced a period of systemic *mikkyōka* (密教化) or “esotericization,”²⁰ wherein Vajrayāna ritual and doctrinal lineages had proliferated across the various monastic institutions, and a pervasive Vajrayāna Buddhist “*kenmitsu*” (顯密) discourse on the mutually dependent nature of the “revealed” (*ken*) and “hidden” (*mitsu*) teachings came to dominate Buddhist thought. It should be noted that in fact, the great architects of this *mikkyōka* development were often associated with the great temples of Nara and the monastic complexes based on Mt. Hiei. By the Kamakura period, all major monastic institutions trained monks in a variety of ritual and doctrinal traditions, and the retention of Vajrayāna specialists was essential

to the procurement of patronage. Moreover, monks tended to move from place to place and study with different teachers with expertise in a variety of areas of study. Like modern universities, a student could “major” or “double major” (*kengaku*, 兼学, literally “simultaneous study”) in a wide range of fields. In other words, both specialization and breadth in knowledge was important. Vajrayāna practices were more or less systematically integrated into each area of study such that monks specializing in Yogācāra, Madhyamaka, *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* studies, *Lotus Sūtra* studies, etc., could also gain mastery of the “Diamond Vehicle.” This eclecticism is present in Dōhan’s work, to which we will now turn.

Dōhan’s *Compendium on the Secret Nenbutsu* provides a number of passages on *nenbutsu* practice drawn from a variety of sources, including great Chinese Buddhist masters like Zhiyi, Zhanran, Shandao, and Amoghavajra, as well as Japanese monks like Kūkai, Ennin, Enchin, Annen, Jippan, Kakukai, and Kakuban. At times Dōhan draws upon, incorporates, critiques, or builds upon the theories of these various thinkers, arguing for what he felt was the correct understanding of the *nenbutsu*, the Pure Land, and the nature of the Buddha Amitābha.

For example, Dōhan presents the *Amida santaisetsu* (阿弥陀三諦説), or the “three truths of A-MI-TA,” an exegetical strategy developed by Japanese Tendai thinkers whereby a series of Buddhist philosophical concepts are subsumed within the three syllables of the name of Amitābha, written with the Siddham characters A, MI, and TA.²¹ Therein, the very syllables composing the name of Amitābha are revealed to contain within them the entirety of Buddhist wisdom. For example, A-MI-TA is used first to present the theory of the “three truths” of the interdependence of emptiness, provisional truth, and the synthesis of both, the “middle.” The three truths were developed by Zhiyi as a way of conceiving of the non-duality of Nagārjuna’s two-truths Madhyamaka doctrine. The *Amida santaisetsu* posits that “A” may be understood as revealing the “ultimate truth” of emptiness, “MI” the “provisional truth,” and the “TA” the “middle” or the simultaneous realization of the truth of both provisional and ultimate reality. Next, A-MI-TA reveals the three bodies of the Buddha: *dharmakāya*, *saṃbhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya*. These three spheres of the Buddha’s activity are represented by the three buddhas Mahāvairocana, Amitābha, and Śākyamuni. Finally, A-MI-TA is revealed to encompass the “three mysteries” of body, speech, and mind, thus signifying not only that the

body, speech, and mind of beings and buddhas are non-dual, but also, by placing speech in the middle, speech is seen to unify the spheres of body and mind. Dōhan's rendering draws extensively upon the Kōfukuji Yogācāra scholar Jippan.²² Dōhan and other monks who have employed the *santaisetsu* system arrange the corresponding concepts in various configurations in order to explicate a great variety of Buddhist teachings. This *kanjin* (観心) style of exegesis grew in importance in the secret oral transmissions (*kuden*, 口伝) of ritual lineages across the medieval Japanese Buddhist world.²³ For Dōhan, the three truths, the three buddhas, and the three mysteries abide in a delicate tension. The three truths are unified by the "middle." This represents the idea that ultimate truth and provisional reality are inseparable, just as nirvana and *saṃsāra* are inseparable. The three buddhas are ultimately all manifestations of the *dharmakāya*, but as taught in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna texts, the *dharmakāya* compassionately takes multiple forms to meet the needs of sentient beings. Amitābha is in the middle position, here representing the simultaneous unity and independence of Mahāvairocana and Śākyamuni. The three mysteries of body, speech, and mind, as propounded by the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, are themselves the body, speech, and mind of the Tathāgata Mahāvairocana. Sentient beings and buddhas are fundamentally non-dual; the three sources of our karma are revealed in fact to be the activity of the Buddha. Here "speech" takes the middle position, representing the unity of body and mind. How does this relate to the *nenbutsu*? Amitābha is the Buddha of the ritual speech act, thus revealing the interdependence of nirvana and *saṃsāra*. The *nenbutsu*, then, is in fact the highest truth, and deepest mystery. Dōhan presents the *nenbutsu* as the highest of the mantra technologies, stating that it was selected by Amitābha in his primal vow precisely because the voice represents the unity of the mysteries of body, speech, and mind. The unity of nirvana and *saṃsāra*, the three bodies of the Buddha, and the three mysteries are unified in this three-syllable *nenbutsu*: A-MI-TA.

Dōhan continues in this mode of exegesis through an analysis of the physiology of the ritual speech act. Dōhan elaborates upon the correspondences outlined above, perhaps driving the point home, by arguing that the letters A-MI-TA correspond to (and in some fundamental sense *are*) the throat, lips, and tongues of sentient beings. The breath that activates these three components to create speech is said to literally be the activity of the Buddha Amitābha in the world. Here

Amitābha is said to be the compassionate activity of the *dharmakāya* which abides in and enlivens not only the *nenbutsu*, but the very breath that sustains life. Amitābha is then the breath of life, the very life-force animating sentient beings.²⁴ A certain unity is suggested between the *nenbutsu*, the Buddha Amitābha, and the Pure Land. The Pure Land is realized at once as the site of the act of chanting, the letters of the *nenbutsu*, the organs of speech, and the activity of the Buddha. In this way, the goal and the destination are at once the same, while still remaining in a delicate tension.

Original Enlightenment thought (*hongaku shisō*, 本覚思想) on Mt. Hiei was key in the development of the *Amida santaisetsu* practice. Just as Vajrayāna ritual theory had come to permeate Japanese Buddhist practice from the time of Kūkai, Mt. Hiei's rise to prominence in the mid-Heian period established the Tendai tradition as the dominant political and intellectual force in the Japanese Buddhist world. Rather than view Dōhan's use of the *santaisetsu* as "syncretism" of Tendai and Shingon, it would be more correct to say that the medieval Japanese Buddhist educational environment necessitated the mastery of multiple areas of study. Tendai Lotus and Madhyamaka scholarship, Shingon mantra practice, Pure Land aspiration and contemplation, and other exegetical and ritual traditions constituted threads in a vast tapestry spanning all traditions and lineages. "Shingon" and "Tendai" were points on a broad continuum, and monks were stationed at various points along that continuum.

Following Dōhan's presentation of the three-syllable *nenbutsu*, he then presents a five- (or six-) syllable version NAMU-A-MI-TA-BUḤ, which is also written in the Siddham script throughout this section of the text.²⁵ These five syllables are arranged in the form of a mandala, mirroring in some sense the mantra inscribed on the moon disc from the *sādhana* discussed above. Each syllable is presented in turn, from the center, to the bottom, and progressing in a counter-clockwise rotation, each time revealing a deeper interpretive layer.

Dōhan explains that "*namu*" is understood as a salutation to all buddhas. It is here said to be synonymous with the letter *om*, as found in various mantras, and often taking the central position in written mandalas. It is also said to symbolize the phrase that opens sūtras, "thus have I heard." Dōhan explains that "*namu*" is the act of taking refuge in the buddhas, and through contemplating the center of this mandala, one is contemplating the very act of taking refuge. Next, the syllable

A is said to signify *bodhi*, or perfect awakening. The syllable A by itself is an important object of devotion within the later Shingon tradition as it symbolizes the “originally unborn” (*honbushō*, 本不生) nature of reality.²⁶ MI is the nature of self, and ultimately the dissolution of self and the arousal of equanimity. TA is thusness, the realization of things as they truly are. BUḤ symbolizes our karma, which, when viewed correctly, is not simply that which binds us to *saṃsāra*, but rather, is in fact a vehicle to awakening.

These five syllables also may be understood to represent the five buddhas (Mahāvairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi), as well as the five forms of wisdom associated with each buddha (see table 2). The five buddhas and the five wisdoms are both understood to emanate from the One Buddha, Mahāvairocana and his all-pervasive wisdom. Dōhan continues to list sets of five, thus revealing that the five syllables of the *nenbutsu* in fact encompass the whole of our spiritual and physical reality: the five elements, five viscera, the five sense faculties, five objects of the senses, five defilements, and the five realms of *saṃsāra*. As is somewhat characteristic of Vajrayāna theory, doctrinal concepts deal not merely with the abstract and ethereal, but are often tied directly to the physical body itself and the constituent particles of reality itself. In this way, for Dōhan, the *nenbutsu* of Amitābha is not merely a mental formation, nor merely an external reality, but rather, a facet of reality itself, manifesting within, around, and through sentient being's very bodies.

CONCLUSION: THE “SECRET” NENBUTSU

In summary, Dōhan suggests that the three-syllable mantra encompasses the Womb Realm Mandala, and the five-character mantra encompasses the Vajra Realm Mandala. Furthermore, the thirteen courts of the Womb Realm Mandala correspond to the thirteen-step contemplation in the *Contemplation Sūtra*. The nine assemblies of the Vajra Realm correspond to the nine levels of the Pure Land as expounded in the *Contemplation Sūtra*. Like the ritual outlined by Kūkai, the *Contemplation Sūtra* is featured prominently in Dōhan's *Compendium on the Secret Nenbutsu*. Just as Kūkai argued for the non-dual relationship between the two mandalas, understood to be two facets of the same reality, so too Dōhan argues for the mutual dependence of the three-syllable and five-syllable *nenbutsu*. The act of speech unifies body and mind, and through the *nenbutsu*, the mandalas are unified

Table 1. Three-syllable *nenbutsu* visualization.

Three-syllable <i>nenbutsu</i>	Three truths	Three bodies of Buddha	Three buddhas	Three mysteries	Three organs of speech
The character A	Emptiness 空	Dharmakāya 法身	Mahāvairocana 大日如来	Body 身	Throat 喉
The character MI	Middle 中	Samṛbhogakāya 報身	Amitābha 阿弥陀如来	Speech 口	Lips 唇
The character TA	Provisional 仮	Nirmāṇakāya 応身	Śākyamuni 釈迦如来	Mind 心	Tongue 舌

Table 2. Five-syllable *nenbutsu* mandala visualization.

Cardinal directions	<i>Nenbutsu</i>	Five buddhas	Five wisdoms	Elements ²⁷	Five viscera	Five faculties	Five sense objects	Five defilements	Five realms
Center 中	NAMU 南無	Mahāvairocana 大日	<i>dharmadhātu-prakṛti-jñāna</i> 法界体性智	Earth 地 / 土 (空)	Liver 脾	Body 身	Touch 触	Hatred 瞋	Hell 地獄
East 東	A 阿	Akṣobhya 阿閼	<i>ādarśa-jñāna</i> 大円鏡智	Wood 木 (空) (風)	Spleen 肝	Eye 眼	Form 色	Craving 貪	<i>Preta</i> 餓鬼
South 南	MI 彌	Ratnasambhava 宝生	<i>samatā-jñāna</i> 平等性智	Fire 火	Heart 心	Tongue 舌	Taste 味	Delusion 痴	Animal 畜生
West 西	TA 陀	Amitābha 弥陀	<i>pratyavekṣaṇā-jñāna</i> 妙觀 察智	Metal 金 (風) (水)	Lungs 肺	Nose 鼻	Scent 香	Doubt 疑	Human 人
North 北	BUTSU 佛	Amoghasiddhi 不空	<i>krtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna</i> 成所作智	Water 水 (地)	Kidneys 腎	Ear 耳	Voice 声	Pride 慢	<i>Deva</i> 天

in the practitioner. For Dōhan, Amitābha is this very act of speech, the breath that animates the life of all beings. The Buddha Amitābha is an all pervasive dimension of the *dharmakāya*, which penetrates to every corner of the universe.

Dōhan contends that those who rely upon the explicit meaning of the sūtras do not fully grasp the inner meaning of the name of Amitābha. Mind and body are one, the Buddha and ordinary beings are one, and yet the seemingly “provisional” teaching is itself a manifestation of the highest realization. If our breath is the functioning of Amitābha, then practice in the form of the *nenbutsu* is the activity of Amitābha as well. The *nenbutsu* is an efficacious ritual because of the compassionate activity of Amitābha, a force that courses through the universe, and within all beings. Dōhan certainly states that there are multiple levels of comprehension. There are those who simply seek rebirth in a Pure Land through their own activity. There are those who recognize Amitābha and Mahāvairocana as one, but there are those who recognize this deeper truth, that Amitābha is a force within and around us. While on the level of provisional reality, the Pure Land is far away. On a deeper level, it is immanent in our present reality. This “ultimate” reality does not negate the provisional reality.²⁸ Just as the *santaisetsu* suggests, they exist in a delicate tension. That pure lands exist “out there” does not mean that they do not also abide “within.” It is perhaps this tension that points towards an even deeper truth, that even the “surface” level interpretation itself is a conduit for awakening.

The question that remains for me, however, is whether or not Dōhan regarded this insight into the true nature of reality as a requirement for the *nenbutsu* to be rendered efficacious. Is the *nenbutsu* an efficacious practice because of something always-already present, or is the *nenbutsu* rendered efficacious through the attainment of a realization of its inner meaning? Dōhan’s ambiguity on this issue is precisely what makes him a fascinating subject. In one passage, for example, Dōhan suggests that there are superficial and profound levels of understanding Amitābha, the Pure Land, and the *nenbutsu*. In some passages he argues that there is no sense in seeking the Pure Land that is far away. And yet, there are numerous passages that seem to point to a resolution, and perhaps an inversion, whereby the “shallow” is revealed to be the “deep” understanding. At present, my own preliminary reading of Dōhan would suggest that it was precisely the “beginners mind,” the so-called shallow interpretation, that he regarded as

the highest realization. This is a “free” reading perhaps, but it seems to be more in line with Dōhan’s position that the compassionate activity of Amitābha functions as if it were a force of nature, forever embracing sentient beings.

ENDNOTES

1. English and Japanese language scholarship has often employed the rhetoric of “influence” or “syncretism” when dealing with Vajrayāna Pure Land thought. See for example, KUSHIDA Ryōkō 櫛田良洪, *Shingon mikkyō seiritsu katei no kenkyū* 真言密教成立過程の研究 (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin 山喜房佛書林, 1965), 181–231. For a more recent example of English language scholarship on Japanese Vajrayāna Pure Land, see James H. Sanford, “Breath of Life: The Esoteric *Nenbutsu*,” in *Tantric Buddhism in East Asia*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2006), 161–189; and James H. Sanford, “Amida’s Secret Life: Kakuban’s *Amida hishaku*,” in *Approaching the Land of Bliss*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Kenneth K. Tanaka (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 120–138. While the views expressed in this essay may differ significantly from both Kushida and Sanford’s presentations, I am deeply indebted to their work on Dōhan and the *himitsu nenbutsu* (秘密念仏). For a critique of the idea of “influence” and “syncretism,” see Richard K. Payne, “Introduction,” in *Tantric Buddhism in East Asia*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2006), 31. For another critique of the supposed gulf between Vajrayāna and Pure Land Buddhism, see Richard K. Payne, “Aparimitāyus: ‘Tantra’ and ‘Pure Land’ in Medieval Indian Buddhism?” *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies* 9 (2007): 237–308.

2. *Himitsu nenbutsu shō* 秘密念仏抄, *Dai Nippon Bukkyō zenshō* 大日本仏教全書 70:51–82, *Zoku Jōdoshū zenshō* 続浄土宗全書 15:79–110, *Shingonshū anjin zenshō* 真言宗安心全書 2:225–266, *Himitsu nenbutsu shō kenkyūkai* 秘密念仏抄研究会. “Dōhan cho ‘Himitsu nenbutsu shō’ no kenkyū—honbun kōtei to kaki kudashi gochū 道範著 ‘秘密念仏抄’ の研究—本文校訂と書き下し・語註,” *Buzan gakuho* 豊山学報 39 (1996): 105–130.

3. In recent years, some English language scholarship has emerged that focuses in particular on Pure Land thought and aspiration in Tibetan Vajrayāna. See, for example, Georgios T. Halkias, *Luminous Bliss: A Religious History of Pure Land Literature in Tibet* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013); Matthew T. Kapstein, “Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet? From Sukhāvātī to the Field of Great Bliss,” in *Approaching the Land of Bliss*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Kenneth K. Tanaka (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 16–51; Todd T. Lewis, “From Generalized Goal to Tantric Subordination, Sukhāvātī in the Indic Buddhist Traditions of Nepal,” in *Approaching the Land of Bliss*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Kenneth K. Tanaka (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 236–263. However, little work has been done on the importance of Pure Land

for Vajrayāna (esoteric Buddhism) traditions of East Asia. A few notable examples include Charles D. Orzech, “A Tang Esoteric Manual for Rebirth in the Pure Land: Rites for Contemplation and Offerings to Amitāyus Tathāgata,” in *Path of No Path: Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism Honoring Roger Corless*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2009), 31–55; Jacqueline I. Stone, “The Secret Art of Dying, Esoteric Deathbed Practices in Heian Japan,” in *The Buddhist Dead: Practices, Discourses, Representations*, ed. Bryan J. Cuevas and Jacqueline I. Stone (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 134–174; and Hendrick van der Veere, *A Study into the Thought of Kōgyō Daishi Kakuban: With a Translation of His Gorin kuji myō himitsushaku* (Leiden: Hotei Publishing, 2000).

4. While it is common practice to use of the terms *mikkyō* (密教) or “esoteric Buddhism” when referring specifically to Japanese and East Asian Buddhism, and tantra and Vajrayāna when referring to Tibetan or Indian Buddhism, I have instead chosen to retain the term Vajrayāna for three reasons. First, I hope to signal to readers that there is indeed great potential for trans-regional comparative inquiry into the various Buddhist traditions in East Asia and the Himalayas, as both have drawn deeply upon the tantric textual corpus. Second, while the term Vajrayāna is often assumed to be more pertinent to Tibetan Buddhist cultures, the term appears throughout ritual texts in the Sino-sphere as *jingang cheng* (金剛乘) in Chinese and *kongō jō* in Japanese. And third, I would like to suggest that Vajrayāna may be a useful alternative to the commonly used terms “tantra,” which has drawn heavy critique in recent years, and “esoteric,” which seems to imply a limited sphere of influence or importance. Though I have taken a different approach, other scholars have made compelling arguments for other strategies for conceiving of the reception of the tantras in East Asia. See Charles D. Orzech, “Seeing Chen-Yen Buddhism: Traditional Scholarship and the Vajrayāna in China,” *History of Religions* 29 (1989): 87–114; Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 263–278; Richard D. McBride, II, “Is There Really ‘Esoteric’ Buddhism?,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 2 (2004): 329–356; Charles D. Orzech, “The ‘Great Teaching of Yoga,’ the Chinese Appropriation of the Tantras, and the Question of Esoteric Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 34 (2006): 29–78; and Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, Richard K. Payne, eds., *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

5. ABÉ Ryūichi 阿部竜一, “Gorinkujimyō himitusyaku 五輪九字明秘密釈,” in *Nihon no Bukkyō: tēma Nihon Bukkyō no bunken gaido 日本のお教: テーマ 日本お教の文獻ガイド*, ed. Nihon Bukkyō kenkyūkai 日本お教研究会 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan 法蔵館, 2001), 80–83; ABÉ Ryūichi, “Mikkyō girei to kenmitsu bukkyō: Myōe Kōben no nyūmetsu girei wo megutte 密教儀礼と顕密お教: 明恵房高弁の入滅儀礼をめぐって,” in *Chūsei Bukkyō no tenkai to sono kiban 中世お教の展開とその基盤*, ed. Imai Masaharu 今井雅晴 (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan 大蔵

出版, 2002), 38–57.

6. Dōhan's Pure Land writings have been recently examined by NAKAMURA Honnen 中村本然 of Mt. Kōya University and SATŌ Mona 佐藤もな of Tokyo University. See in particular, NAKAMURA Honnen 中村本然, "Dōhan no Jōdo kan 道範の浄土観," *Kōyasan daigaku ronsō* 高野山大学論叢 29 (1994): 149–202; SATŌ Mona 佐藤もな, "Chūsei Shingonshū ni okeru jōdo shisō kaishaku: Dōhan Himitsu nenbutsu shō o megutte 中世真言宗における浄土思想解釈—道範『秘密念仏抄』をめぐって," *Indo tetsugaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* インド哲学仏教学研究 9 (2002): 80–92.

7. Shingon has often overshadowed Tendai in contemporary Japanese Vajrayāna scholarship; however, it was indeed the Tendai traditions of Mt. Hiei that truly established Vajrayāna as the dominating force it would become. For more on this historiographic bias, see Stanley Weinstein, "The Beginnings of Esoteric Buddhism in Japan: The Neglected Tendai Tradition," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (1974): 177–191.

8. Carl Bielefeldt, "Filling the Zen shū, Notes on the Jisshū Yōdō Ki," in *Chan Buddhism in Ritual Context*, ed. Bernard Faure (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 181, 199.

9. In fact, many important Heian Period (794–1185) systematizers of Vajrayāna thought in Nara, Kyoto, and Mt. Kōya were keenly interested in Pure Land thought. In addition to such monks as Mukū (無空, ?–916), Ningai (仁海, 951–1046), Saisen (済暹, 1025–1115), Kakuban (覚鑊, 1095–1143), Jippan (実範, d. 1144), Jōhen (静遍, 1166–1224), and Myōhen (明遍, 1142–1224), who are more or less well known for their Vajrayāna Pure Land leanings, there were also many famous Mt. Hiei scholars who pursued similar "simultaneous study" (*kengaku*, 兼学), such as Ennin (円仁, 794–864), Enchin (円珍, 814–891), Annen (安然, 841–915?), Ryōgen (良源, 912–985), and Genshin (源信, 942–1017).

10. In the study of Vajrayāna one anachronistic hermeneutics has perhaps been the most prominent: the supposition that Vajrayāna ritual theory may be divided into "pure Vajrayāna" (*junmitsu*, 純密) and "miscellaneous Vajrayāna" (*zōmitsu*, 雑密). This is a polemical/prescriptive term that privileges particular sectarian readings of history over the complex relationships between the various *dhāraṇī*, mantra, and tantric genres of texts. Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 153; cited in Payne, "Introduction," 18n68. The same argument could be made for Vajrayāna and its supposed opposite, *kengyō* (顕教), or "exoteric or revealed teachings." The supposed line between *ken* and *mitsu* arose with the proposition that there existed a Vajrayāna or secret teaching. I would suggest that *kengyo* is not a kind of Buddhism distinct from *mikkyō*, but rather, the *ken/mitsu* distinction served the same polemical function of the early Mahāyāna usage of the term Hinayāna. On the issue of

the problematic and often anachronistic use of the term “sect” (*shū*, 宗) in Japanese Buddhist history, see Abe, *Weaving*, 203–204 and 411–412.

11. Abé, *Weaving*, 4–7.

12. *Ibid.*, 109.

13. *Ibid.*, 55–65.

14. As Sharf has noted, Hōnen’s *Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū* (選択本願念仏集, T. 2608) is the first time that the “three Pure Land sūtras” are listed as such. “On Pure Land Buddhism and Ch’an/Pure Land Syncretism in Medieval China,” *T’oung Pao* 88, nos. 4–5 (2003): 299–301.

15. While Orzech seems to take for granted that Pure Land and Vajrayāna are in some sense mutually exclusive, his examination of this text is quite useful. See Orzech, “A Tang Esoteric Manual for Rebirth in the Pure Land,” 32. Regarding this text’s place in Shingon ritual, as well as a general overview of how ritual functions in the contemporary Shingon tradition, see Robert Sharf, “Thinking through Shingon Ritual,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26, no. 1 (2003): 63, 68.

16. See: Jeff Wilson, “Pure Land Iconography and Ritual Intent: A Comparative Study of the Visualization Texts *Kuan Wu-Liang-Shou-Fo Ching* and *Amitabha Sadhana*,” *Pure Land* 22 (2006): 167–186.

17. *Kōbō Daishi zenshū* 弘法大師全集, ed. Sofū Sen’yōkai 祖風宣揚會 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan 吉川弘文館, 1910), 2:495–521. Kūkai wrote many ritual texts on many different deities. This text, if it was indeed written by Kūkai, should not be taken to suggest that Kūkai himself aspired for Sukhāvātī. In fact, it appears that Kūkai aspired for “Pure Land rebirth” in the Bodhisattva Maitreya’s (Miroku Bosatsu, 弥勒菩薩) Tuṣita heaven (*tosotsu ten*, 兜率天), perhaps the second most important post-mortem destination sought by East Asian Buddhists.

18. Gregory Schopen, “Sukhāvātī as Generalized Religious Goal in Sanskrit Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature,” in *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 167, 180.

19. A simple word search through the *Taishō* canon’s Vajrayāna section (密教部) reveals that there are perhaps more texts with references to Pure Land imagery, cosmology, and aspiration than without.

20. Abé, *Weaving*, 1–4.

21. For an examination of the *Amida santai setsu*, see SUEKI Fumihiko 末本文美士, “Amida santai-setsu o megutte 阿弥陀三諦説をめぐって,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度学仏教学研究 28, no. 1 (Dec. 1979): 216–222; Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval*

Japanese Buddhism (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 162. For a brief examination of Dōhan's views on the *nenbutsu*, see Sanford, "Breath of Life," 177–179. In addition, Stone suggests that rather than considering this form of reading an "exegesis," a "reading out," we should consider this technique a "reading in," or "*eisegesis*" (Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, 158).

22. Marc Buijsters, "Jichihan and the Restoration and Innovation of Buddhist Practice," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26, nos. 1–2 (1999): 39–82.

23. For a discussion of *kanjin* style commentary and its significance in the Tendai school and broader medieval Buddhist environment, see Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, 156–189.

24. For more on the context for the concept of Amida as breath, and how this idea develops in later Japanese Buddhism, see Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, 133–134, 162–167; Sanford, "Breath of Life," 178, 181, 183, 188–189.

25. According to Stone, this arrangement of fives draws upon Chinese intellectual precedent (*Original Enlightenment*, 160–161).

26. Dōhan in fact wrote meditation manuals for the contemplation of the letter A (*ajikan*, 阿字觀). See Richard K. Payne, "*Ajikan*: Ritual and Meditation in the Shingon Tradition," in *Revisioning "Kamakura" Buddhism*, ed. Richard K. Payne (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 221–222, 231–233.

27. Dōhan has here woven together several distinct traditional views from several Indian and Chinese thinkers.

28. Stone notes that for some "immanentist" Pure Land thinkers, the Pure Land is right here and now does not preclude aspiration for Pure Land rebirth, "as a real event" (Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, 192).

The Development and Representation of Ritual in Early Indian Buddhist Donative Epigraphy¹

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Some of the largest, most valuable resources available for the study of the earliest phase of Indian Buddhism to which we have access² come from large, open-air *stūpa* pilgrimage sites, such as Sanchi³ and Bharhut in ancient central India. At these sites, during the Early Historic period from 300 BCE to 300 CE, there are more than one thousand donative epigraphs chronicling the patronage of monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen, and others from different walks of life. The records are relatively short and contain varying amounts of sociological information pertaining to persons who gifted towards the construction or enlargement of the reliquary site. A few read:

Isirakhitasa dānaṃ //
The gift of Isirakhita.⁴

Dhamarakhitāya madhuvanikāye dānaṃ //
The gift of Dhamarakhitā, [a woman] from Madhuvana.⁵

Pusasa cahaṭiyasa bhuchuno dānaṃ //
The gift of the monk Pusa [from] Cahata.⁶

Although frequently referenced, these inscriptions are not very well understood. Traditionally, scholars searching for historical facts about monastic Buddhists, women in early Buddhism, or references to geographic locations, cite and then forget them.⁷ Despite the value of the sociological information, it is uncommon to find an in-depth study of these little understood written records by specialists who are able to read beyond their relatively simple Prakrit language in a somewhat straightforward Brāhmī script as pioneered during the reign of Aśoka Maurya in the third century BCE. I seek to read between the lines and study these records in some new ways, to illustrate not only their utility as historical records that must be repeatedly revisited but also as

markers of broader historical processes, such as the expression of donation rituals in a completely new way, namely in writing, and in a totally new medium.⁸

In this paper I flesh out the chronological development of marking donation rituals, known in Buddhism as *dāna*, on permanent materials, namely stone, in the earliest phases of Indian Buddhism. First, I introduce the concept of *dāna* as a ritual, and then I present *dāna* as an important if not necessary phenomenon for the survival of institutionalized and domesticated monastic Buddhism. Next, I explore the permanent epigraphical records found throughout ancient India during the Early Historic period (300 BCE to 300 CE) and attempt to trace how, when, and possibly where *dāna* came to be an important aspect of Indian Buddhism. Over time linguistic markers gradually became more complex as the sophistication of donation rituals increased in meaning. I conclude that Buddhist worship centers functioned as financial nodes within larger patronage networks, and that early, pithy statements recording donations over time became highly ritualized with words that carried much soteriological significance. Early Indian Buddhist ritual is a difficult subject to study historically because of questions over dating either the Pāli canon or the problems of preservation and translation in the various fragmented texts surviving in Sanskrit, Gāndhārī, or Chinese. Nevertheless, in the following I hope to add to chronological discourses regarding early Indian Buddhist rituals.

The geography I refer to includes Madhya Pradesh, where the *stūpa* site of Sanchi is located, and Uttar Pradesh, where Bharhut was discovered. Besides these two large sites, other locations, such as Pauni in Maharashtra, Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh, and Bodh Gaya in Bihar also display the exact same epigraphic features. Additionally, I survey several widely ignored early Brāhmī cave inscriptions from Sri Lanka that may indicate a southern origin to written markers of donation rituals that completely contrast the thousands of inscriptions from Sanchi and Bharhut. Therefore, in this paper, I argue that the systemization of donative formulae was a complex phenomenon and may partially come from a very unexpected stimulus.

DĀNA

The Sanskrit noun *dāna* (also used in Prakrit) derives from the verb *√dā*, “to give,” and can refer to giving as an action or a physical gift. *Dāna* as both a gift and the act of giving begins from the earliest times in

India with the *Ṛg Veda*. The close link between rituals and gift exchange need not be discussed here,⁹ but it is safe to say that *Dānastuti* hymns in the *Ṛg Veda* glorified patrons who gave gifts (here called *dakṣiṇā*), who will obtain renown.¹⁰ Other non-*śramaṇa* texts, such as the *Mahābhārata* or the *Dānakhaṇḍa*, discuss *dāna* in much of the same way. In this literature, *dāna* is always a ritual with six *aṅgas*, or constituents, i.e., the donor (*dātṛ*), donee (*pratigrahitṛ*), charitable attitude (*śraddhā*), gift subject (*deyaṃ*), and a proper time and place (*deśakālo*). The literal gift to priests, *dakṣiṇa*, functions as a payment for a ritual or sacrifice. Romila Thapar has studied how this changed with urbanization and the expansion of kingdoms, which in turn changed societal customs.¹¹

The advent of Buddhism, according to Buddhist religious literature, added new layers to this rite. Some scholars suggest that new sources of wealth and the emergence of influential householders (*gahapatis*)¹² helped Buddhism take advantage of access to new financial networks. The innovation saw the rise of reciprocity whereby monastic Buddhists provided opportunities to the laity for merit-making.¹³ The ritual now involved two parties who gave equally to each other. Material donations to the sangha led to spiritual merit (*puṇya*) bestowed upon the donor. In some cases, it could be distributed to family members, monastic teachers, or even, eventually, “all beings.”¹⁴

According to the corpus of Pāli literature, there is a clear connection between the gifts and monastic property. Giving lodgings or property to the sangha is the highest, most auspicious gift of all, probably because it required a tremendous amount of resources for the donor.¹⁵ Similarly, gifting land to a religious organization for the construction of buildings for religious use is also the most meritorious out of all Vedic *dāna* gifts.¹⁶ Monks are allowed to construct their own dwellings with or without a donor if what they build is with “found things.”¹⁷ In the *Pātimokkha*, if furniture and fabrics (meaning possessions within the monastery) are not cared for properly it constitutes a *pācittiya* offense requiring expiation.¹⁸

The gift of a monastery from a story in the early Mahāvagga section of the Pāli *Vinaya* illustrates how such a dedication ritual of a physical place may have occurred. In the story, lay king Bimbisāra ritually presents a monastery located in the perfect place to the Buddha for sangha’s use. My slightly truncated version reads as follows:

Atha kho bhagavā yena rañño māgadhasa seniyassa bibbisārassa nivesanaṃ, tenupasaṅkami upasaṅkamtivā paññatte āsane

nisīdi saddhiṃ bhikkhusaṅghena [...] Ekamantaṃ nisinnassa khā rañño māgadhasa seniyassa bimbisārassa etadahosi: “kattha nu kho bhagavā vihareyya, yaṃ assa gāmato neva atidure na accāsanna gamanāgamanasampannaṃ aṭṭhikānaṃ aṭṭhikānaṃ manussānaṃ abhikkamaṇiyaṃ divā appakiṇṇaṃ rattiṃ appasaddaṃ appanigghosaṃ vijanavātaṃ manussarāhaseyyakaṃ paṭisallānasārappaṇ’ti”?

Then the Lord went to the abode of King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha. Once there, together, with his monastic order, the Buddha sat in the appropriate seat.... When King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha was sitting at a respectful distance, he thought: “Where might the Lord dwell that is neither too far or too near a village, that is easy for coming and going, that allows all kinds of people to approach [for the sake of dhamma], that is not crowded during the day, not too noisy or lonely at night, and is suitable for seclusion?”

Atha kho rañño māgadhasa seniyassa bimbisārassa etadahosi: idaṃ kho amhākaṃ veḷuvanaṃ uyyānaṃ [...] Yannūnāhaṃ veḷuvanaṃ uyyānaṃ buddhapamukhasa bhikkhusaṅghassa dadeyya”nti. Atha kho rājā māgadho seniyo bimbisāro sovaṇṇamayaṃ bhīṅkāraṃ gahetvā bhagavato onojesi: “etāhaṃ bhante, veḷuvanaṃ uyyānaṃ buddhapamukhasa saṅghassa dammi”ti. Paṭiggahesi bhagavā ārāmaṃ. Atha kho bhagavā rājānaṃ māgadhaṃ seniyaṃ bimbisāraṃ dhammiyā kathāya sandassetvā samādapetvā samuttejetvā sampahaṃsetvā uṭṭhāyāsanaṃ pakkāmi. Atha kho bhagavā etasmiṃ nidāne dhammiṃ kathaṃ katvā bhikkhu āmantesi: “anujānāmi bhikkhave ārāmaṇ’ti.

King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha had a thought: “[My] Veluvana pleasure park is [suitable for all of these needs].... I will give Veluvana to the community of monks with the Buddha at its head.” At that time, King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha grabbed ahold of a golden vessel filled with water and offered it to the Lord, saying: “May I bestow this pleasure garden known as Veluvana to the sangha led by the Buddha?” The Lord accepted the pleasure garden as an *ārāma* [a monastery suitable for dwelling]. Having given King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha a dhamma talk, the Buddha rose up and departed. It was from this [event] that the Lord told the monks: “*Bhikkhus*, I permit the use of *ārāmas* for dwelling.”¹⁹

Pouring water from a ceremonial golden vessel over the hand of the gift’s receiver eventually becomes one standard method of donation to the monastic community in Theravādin texts.²⁰ However, what happens next? In this short story, the Buddha accepts the donation,

gives a dhamma talk, and then gives permission for monks to stay in *ārāmas*. Within the context of the historical development of the monastic Buddhist institution in India, in actual practice—at least according to our epigraphic evidence examined below—sometimes the early Buddhist community ended smaller donation and dedication rituals with acts of writing, whether the writing was considered to be a by-product or a magic ritual in itself.

In his study of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*, Schopen discusses the origination of pious religious donations and their accompanying votive formulae written on physical objects.²¹ He tells the story of how King Bimbisāra, who we know rather well, donates his deceased father's furnishings to the sangha. In order to not mislead others into thinking that the sangha stole the furnishings, the Buddha orders a specific formula to be written on the religious gifts: "This thing is the religious gift of King Bimbisāra." The gift should be displayed publicly. The formula correlates nearly perfectly with what is inscribed on monuments like those at Sanchi.

DONATIVE EPIGRAPHY

Common wisdom regarding donative inscriptions suggests that the inscriptions were meant to transfer merit²² to the donor through the gift to the monastic community and/or also via the donor's proximity²³ to the Buddha, meaning the *stūpa*, probably via their names.²⁴ Although I do not disagree with these conclusions, the common assumption is that they were always, from the beginning, very powerful end products of ritualistic donation. I disagree. As I will show, the donative inscription formula grew in ritualistic power over time and in the beginning was likely not much more than a record of posterity recording only the very act of donation rather than an elaborate attempt to transfer merit. With time engravers—and indeed the community itself—began to realize the power associated with the written word and then utilized the written word as an efficacious ritualistic marker of *dāna*. Intentionality changed over the centuries, and it would be a disservice (not to mention anachronistic) to the study of the history of Indian Buddhism to propel a ritual complexity on to the earliest extant body of known Buddhist epigraphy.

We may historically trace the developments leading up the fully ritualized donative epigraphy beginning with the very first written records in India: the edicts of King Aśoka from the third century BCE.

Rock Edicts 8, 9, and 12, written in Brāhmī script using epigraphic Prakrit language, tell how Aśoka still practiced the old Vedic mode of *dāna* with gifts to religious orders as payment for ritual services.²⁵ In other edicts, such as Rock Edicts 5 and 11 and the Queen's Edict, Aśoka describes how generosity should be promoted by his ministers. Aśoka promotes one-sided gifting from patron to priest for services rendered and not two-way reciprocity as advocated later by the Buddhists. Despite this, the word Aśoka uses is simply *dānaṃ*—a term the Buddhists who erected monumental stone construction projects for the next millennium eventually claimed as their own. I argue that during the time of Aśoka, the material record suggests that there was no connected dedication ritual associated with gifting just yet, as the Barabar and Nagarjuni cave inscriptions confirm.²⁶

The earliest strata of Buddhist inscriptions found at cult worship and pilgrimage sites reveal some precursors to expressing the donation ritual in writing. These inscriptions seem to be very similar to Aśoka's administrative edicts in contributed content, albeit with much less overall information. They tend to mark the construction of physical objects at these worship and pilgrimage sites, like pieces of *stūpas*, architectural fragments, cave *vihāras*, or *caityas*.

At Kesanapalli, a *stūpa* site in Andhra from around the second century BCE, are fifteen inscriptions which label various architectural fragments, mostly stone slabs called *paṭas*. These inscriptions are short and to the point. For example, one reads only "*oṇipino paṭaṃ*" (The [stone] slab of [a man named] Onipi) in Prakrit.²⁷ These records remind us of the simple administrative seals used for marking commodities as studied below. Two of these simple inscriptions from Kesanapalli include the word *dānaṃ* at the end of the written formula in the space normally reserved for the word *paṭaṃ*. For instance, one record might be translated as "A gift (*dānaṃ*) of the Noble Badhaka, pupil of the Noble Elder Deva." Missing is the simple label of the established architectural fragment. In its place is this little word that becomes increasingly important with time.

At Bodh Gaya, the seat of enlightenment, also from around the second century BCE, are about a dozen inscriptions which utilize this same word, *dānaṃ*, to describe the physical gifts of actual people to the Buddhist community. Unlike at Kesanapalli, these records display unique conformity with their usage of the word *dānaṃ* indicating that at least at Bodh Gaya in the second century these religious gifts and

their subsequent display and written record were standardized while at Kesanapalli the end result of ritualistic donation, namely the written record, was not uniform in its formula. However, the Bodh Gaya corpus is not without its archaic features either, as the grammar switches between dative and genitive cases rendering it sometimes unclear if the gift was *of* or *for* the named person.

A single reliquary inscription from Kolhapur²⁸ in Maharashtra seems to indicate the next step in recording ritualistic donation. The record is again very brief and simple and is written on a reliquary. Its inscription reads “1²⁹ bamhasa dānaṃ / 2 dhamagutena kāritaṃ” in two lines. The first translates to “Gift of a brāhmaṇa.” The curious second line translates to “caused to be created by [a man named] Dhamaguta.” It is very likely that Dhamaguta is not the same person as the anonymous brāhmaṇa who gifted the vessel because the names are separated onto separate lines and are in different grammatical cases. Rather, Dhamaguta was probably some sort of stonemason who personally constructed the stone reliquary. This tiny inscription marks a kind of official departure from labeling property, like at Kesanapalli, to a somewhat detailed account of the history of the reliquary, a very important religious gift with great significance because of its propensity for worship.

A century or more later, by the time the famous sites of Sanchi, Bharhut, Amaravati, and others were enlarged to their present forms, nearly every inscription becomes “gift [*dānaṃ*] of such and such” along with an increasingly frequent appearance of their occupations, lineages, and villages. By the end of the first century BCE, the total epigraphic corpus utilizing *dānaṃ* and many of these sociological features to mark the end of a ritualistic donation numbers around a thousand or more, showing not only the popularity and remarkable uniformity of the practice but the importance for the expansion of Buddhism into new regions and continued enlargement of known worship centers like the *stūpa* at Sanchi. In contrast, the most logical place for Aśoka in the third century BCE to use the word *dānaṃ* in the same sense as the Buddhist donative inscriptions is in the Barabar Cave inscriptions where he “gives” caves to religious ascetics for religious practice. But he does not record these gifts in the same way as the later Buddhists, thus indicating an early stage in the development of *dānaṃ* in written records versus a mature phase in the first century BCE at Sanchi and Bharhut.

Schopen astutely observed in these very same inscriptions that “The vast majority of donors at [Sanchi and Bharhut] do not record their intentions.”³⁰ He links this problem with the “textual doctrine” of karma in that the epigraphic data suggests an alternative understanding of that doctrine. While this may be the case, I would like to present the very same epigraphic material—and also the very same exception—as evidence of a different process. Looking closely at the single exception Schopen cites from Sanchi and Bharhut, it becomes clear that there is a different phenomenon happening altogether. The single exceptional inscription from Bharhut reads:

Sagharakhitasa m[ā]tāpituna aṭhāyā dānaṃ /³¹

The gift of Sagharakhita, for the sake of [his] mother and father.

Indeed the formula is different in this case, although only slightly. The usage of *aṭhāyā* (“for the sake of”) is a very literal, almost forced way to convey this meaning as the engraver could have just simply put *m[ā]tāpituna* in the ablative plural instead of the genitive plural. In the ablative plural the meaning would essentially remain the same whereas putting the *m[ā]tāpituna* into genitive plural seems superfluous, especially with the *aṭhāyā*. In other words, we might see here an early and perhaps sloppy attempt to convey intention (with the added layer of merit transfer). Later inscriptions do the same thing but with more efficient linguistic constructions.

Although numerous, the fate of the Buddhist donative inscription during the Early Historic period was not to remain in the same form as it appears at Sanchi and Bharhut. Rather, inscriptions become gradually more complex in similar ways to how Sagharakhita’s inscription reveals more than meets the eye. One such innovation appears at Pauni, a *stūpa* site in Maharashtra roughly contemporaneous to Sanchi and Bharhut. A partially fragmented donative inscription says,

...ya+ visamitāya dāna sukhāya hotu savasātānaṃ //^{*32}

A gift [of the lay-woman] Visamitā for the happiness of all beings.³³

The Pauni inscription shows something new. Gifts “for the happiness of all beings” expand the idea of intentionality. Now donors are knowingly transferring merit with words inscribed permanently onto sandstone. The Bharhut donation “for the sake of his mother and father” and the Pauni inscription “for the happiness of all beings” are clear exceptions to general rule from *stūpa* sites in central India. Where these offer intention, almost all of the thousands of other inscriptions do not,

indicating not only an outlying style but an overwhelming uniformity of the style as seen in the records saying only “The gift of Isirakhita,” or “The gift of Dhamarakhitā, [a woman] from Madhuvana,” or even just “The gift of the monk Pusa [from] Cahata.” When looking at later records, it becomes obvious that the written style and physical presentation changes. But why and from where would such an incentive to change come? As the drive to represent significant gifts in a ritualistic manner increased, so too did the impulse to record them for others to read because of their religious rather than administrative importance. In the following section, inscriptions from Sri Lanka show that the ritualistic function of donative inscriptions could have been an older preoccupation of Buddhists living in the south.

SRI LANKAN CAVE INSCRIPTIONS

Some donative inscriptions from caves in Sri Lanka display a very early, possibly third or even second century BCE, usage of a ritualistic formula similar to the exceptions found at Bharhut and Pauni. For instance,

Gamaṇi-uti-maharajhaha(jhita abi-ti)śaya leṇe daśa-diśaśa sagaye
dine mata-pitaśa aṭaya

The cave of the princess (Abi) Tissa, daughter of the great King Gāmaṇi-Uttiya, is given to the sangha of the ten directions, for the benefit of (her) mother and father.³⁴

At least four other inscriptions from Sri Lanka describe gifts given “for the welfare and happiness of beings in the boundless universe” (*aparimita-lokadatuya śātana śīta-śukaye*).³⁵ There are many questions surrounding these early donative inscriptions from Sri Lanka. First, are the dates for the Sri Lankan inscriptions completely certain? It would seem yes, at least for the Abi Tissa cave inscription since we are confident in the historicity of her father, the king. However, the others warrant further study.³⁶ If these inscriptions found in Sri Lanka do indeed potentially date to a century or more earlier than those at Sanchi and Bharhut then we may be looking at a very clear starting location for the use of ritualistic record-keeping in early Buddhist material culture, although it would have a non-Indian mainland origin. If ritualistic donative formulae etched into stone were the southern schools’ innovation then it only gradually worked its way up into central India and then eventually to the northwest and northeast. Such a process may

have taken several decades at its quickest or several centuries at its slowest. As its popularity increased, the old style of inscribed administrative records for posterity was discontinued.

Two first century BCE inscriptions from central India demonstrate a different kind of donative expression that closely mimics the records from Sri Lanka and obviously contrasts the well-known contemporaneous donative formulae from Sanchi and Bharhut. One comes from a stone slab at Kaushambi and is a testament to the development of intentionality in epigraphy on architectural pieces that were not surrounding *stūpas*. A brown sandstone piece now found in the Allahabad University Museum reads:

1 bhayaṃtasa dharasa āntevāsisa bhikhusa phagulasa...
2 budhāvase ghoṣitārāme sava budhānām pujāye śilā kā(rito) //

Bhikhu Phagula, the disciple of the honorable Dhara, caused this stone (slab) to be made at Ghoṣitārāma, a place where the Buddha stayed, for the sake of honoring all the buddhas.³⁷

Interesting in many ways, the intention here, to honor all the buddhas, is not only a very early case from the South Asian mainland but reveals an early awareness of the importance in worshipping divine figures, like buddhas, and, presumably, earning merit for oneself by honoring the buddhas in such a ritualistic manner with the written word.

The Manibhadra inscription found at Masharfa near Kosam shows something similar:

Namo bhagavate sathavāhasa mānibhadasa gahapatikasa
ejāvatiputasa varisa puto gahapatiko seliyāputo kusapālo nāma tasa
putena gahapatikena gotiputena aśikāyaṃ kārītā vedikā piyataṃ
[bhagavā]³⁸

Adoration to the Holy One! A [rail] was caused to be made at Aśikā by Gotiputa, a householder, who was the son of one named Kusapāla, a householder who was the son of Seliyā and the householder Vāri, the son of Ejāvati, a follower of Manibhada and the leader of a caravan. May (the Holy One) be pleased.³⁹

While neither is exceeding complex, both inscriptions are mid-first BCE century parallels to the Sri Lankan cave inscriptions and contemporaneous to the short, pithy donative inscriptions from Sanchi, Bharhut, and Pauni. One describes the donation of a stone slab and the other the installation of a *vedika* railing—two common architectural features found in abundance at Sanchi, Bharhut, Pauni, etc.—and both contain

the intentions of the donors (“for the sake of honoring all buddhas” and “adoration to the Lord!”).

Eventually the concept of recording intentions—for the sake of accumulating intangible aims such as merit—explodes, and ritualistic writing becomes an integral part of Buddhist material culture. For instance, an early, Common Era potsherd inscription from Tor Dherai exemplifies how the words may be just as important if not more important than the item itself since, after all, a potsherd is only a potsherd. The inscription reads:

Shahi-yola-mirasya viharasvamisya deyadharmo yaṁ prapa
svakiya-yola-mira-shahi-vihare saṁghe caturdiśe acaryanaṁ
sarvastivadinaṁ pratigrahe.

This hall for providing water is the religious gift of the Shahi Yola-Mira, the Owner of the Monastery, to the Community from the Four Directions, for the acceptance of the Teachers of the Sarvāstivādin Order, in his own—Yola-Mira, the Shahi’s—monastery.⁴⁰

The expansion of donative formulae into long, multifaceted explanations containing numerous references to self, community, family, and king becomes the standard nearly everywhere, including Sanchi, and on all types of material culture imaginable ranging from potsherds to spoon ladles to sacred sculptures. In the Kuśāna period, donated images and their accompanying records adopted the formula. For example, on an image of Śākyamuni from Sanchi there is the inscription,

1 raño vaskuṣāṇasya sa 20 2 va 2 di 10 bhagavato śakkyam[un]eḥ
pratimā pratiṣṭāpitā vidyamatiye pu...+
2 ...mātāpitṛṇa sarvvasatvanā ca hitasu...+

In the (reign) of King Vasukushana, the year 22, the second month of the rain season, on the tenth day, (this) image of the Bhagavat Śākyamuni was installed by Vidyāmatī for...and for the welfare and happiness of (her) parents and all creatures.⁴¹

Another on a Mathura sandstone bodhisatva image records “...(sa)tāna+ hi[ta]sukha’rtha[m] bhavatu /”⁴² or “May it be for the welfare and happiness of (all) beings.” Sanchi, previously the home of the largest number of short administrative donative records now becomes the home to lengthy written markers of ritual and abandons the old model.

CONCLUSION

Why are these longer types of inscriptions so dissimilar to inscriptions like “the gift of Isirakhita” from the first century BCE? I believe the answer lies in the intentionality of the site record-keepers. The early BCE administrators at Sanchi seem to have a different agenda altogether than those at Kaushambi or in Sri Lanka. Into the Common Era, at Sanchi and similar sites such as Amaravati we gradually see fewer and fewer short, pithy administrative donative inscriptions that record merely the “gift of so and so” and more complex donative epigraphs that echo those found in the Sri Lankan caves and those found elsewhere in north, east, and west India.

One theory for such a shift centers on what Vidya Dehejia calls “collective patronage,”⁴³ where donors from all rungs of society contributed to construction projects, such as the enlargement or erection of a *stūpa*, as a unified egalitarian group. She argues that the pattern of patronage eventually changed in favor of a more heavy-handed approach that allowed elites and royals to carry the bulk weight of the donations. However, it is very clear from even this small sampling that persons of considerable power contributed large gifts to the monastic community from a very early time period shadowing the kind of patronage established in the Aśokan inscriptions.

I would like to suggest that the Sanchi donative epigraphs and those like them from the first century BCE or thereabouts represent an attempt at something different altogether. Is it possible that the Sanchi inscriptions were intended to function primarily as simple records of posterity and not as markers of rituals? If so, do they bear a resemblance to any other known forms of record keeping in ancient South Asia? The answer may lie in a future study of Indian mercantile seals that record the exact same types of information we find in the Sanchi inscriptions and in the same style.⁴⁴ For now, it may be sufficient to hypothesize that recordkeeping at Buddhist worship centers acting as financial nodes within regional patronage networks slowly evolved linguistically from pithy documents for posterity into deeply ritualized words with much soteriological significance.

NOTES

1. I wish to thank the many people who have contributed towards this article in one way or another, including Oliver Freiburger, Courtney Bruntz, Amanda Boundy, and several of my students. Sections of this article also appear in

my dissertation: Matthew Milligan, "Of Rags and Riches: Indian Buddhist Patronage Networks in the Early Historic Period" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, forthcoming).

2. I refer specifically to material culture whereby there is little, if any, actual properly excavated extant evidence. Although some Mauryan remains exist, aside from the limited epigraphic evidence, they are sparse and not securely dateable let alone Buddhist. For a survey of Aśokan materials see Harry Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts: A Source-Book with Bibliography*, Monographien Zur Indischen Archäologie, Kunst Und Philologie 18 (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 2006). For a reimagining of Aśoka and the Mauryas see Patrick Olivelle, *Aśoka: In History and Historical Memory*, 2 vols. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2009); and Patrick Olivelle, Janice Leoshko, and Himanshu Prabha Ray, eds., *Reimagining Asoka: Memory and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012). Recently the *Arthaśāstra* has been re-translated and re-examined in Patrick Olivelle, *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kautilya's Arthaśāstra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Mark McClish, "Political Brahmanism and the State: A Compositional History of the Arthaśāstra" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2009).

3. Throughout this paper I will be using place-names without diacritics. For example, in some scholarly literature, the archaeological site known as Sanchi may be rendered with diacritical marks as Sāñcī.

4. Sanchi inscription no. 648 from Keisho Tsukamoto, *Indo Bukkyō Himei no Kenkyū* (A Comprehensive Study of Indian Buddhist Inscriptions), vols. 1–3 (Kyoto-shi: Heirakuji Shoten, 1996). Henceforth, all numbered inscriptions refer to their corresponding site as organized in Tsukamoto. All translations are my own unless specified otherwise.

5. Sanchi no. 657.

6. Sanchi no. 636.

7. Although one could cite numerous examples, I will reference several of the most valuable studies: Vidya Dehejia, "The Collective and Popular Bases of Early Buddhist Patronage: Sacred Monuments, 100 BC–AD 250," in *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Upinder Singh, "Sanchi: The History of the Patronage of an Ancient Buddhist Establishment," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 33, no. 1 (1996); Kumkum Roy, "Women and Men Donors at Sanchi: A Study of Inscriptional Evidence," *Position and Status of Women in Ancient India* 1 (1988); and Ranabir Chakravarti, "Merchants and Other Donors at Ancient Bandhogarh," *South Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (1995). For a creative approach in applying these inscriptions to broader historical phenomenon within the history of Buddhism see, for example, Jonathan Walters, "Stupa, Story, and Empire: Constructions of the Buddha Biography in Early Post-

Asokan India,” in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliane Schober (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997). More recently, see Meera Visvanathan, “Before Genealogy? Marking Descent in the Inscriptions of Early Historic India,” *Religions of South Asia* 5, no. 1 (2012).

8. Subject to much debate over the past few decades, the use of material culture to study ancient Indian religion has led to the identification of several problems with exclusively relying on religious literature. Gregory Schopen, although not an archaeologist himself, has been at the forefront of this movement away from written sources and towards a more hybrid approach, which is the research style I adopt here. Some of the problems of relying exclusively on written textual sources are: (1) they are mostly undated; (2) they derive from a very late manuscript tradition; (3) they are heavily edited by monastic elites (in the case of Buddhism); and, lastly, (4) they intend to inculcate an ideal. See Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 3. Moreover, Norman and others are of the opinion that all of our textual canonical sources, including the Pāli, are translations, at the very least, from an earlier source. See K.R. Norman, “The Value of the Pali Tradition,” in *Jagajjyoti Buddha Jayanti Annual* (Calcutta: 1984). Inscriptions, generally, do not have this problem, except for the rare case of royal edicts being copied in multiple places and changed slightly throughout, like the case of several Aśokan edicts.

9. Jan Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, vol. 9 (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), 198–228; Jan C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kinship, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

10. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. 2.2 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 1974), 838–839.

11. Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History* (New York and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 521–522.

12. Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

13. Ellison Banks Findly, *Dāna: Giving and Getting in Pali Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003).

14. Schopen, *Bones Stones and Buddhist Monks*, 36.

15. Vin 2.147.

16. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2.2:858.

17. Vin 3.148–157. Traditionally, the Pāli tradition claims that at the beginning of the monastic tradition only *nissayas*, or “resources,” were permitted for use: (1) scraps (of food) (*piṇḍiyālopabhojana*); (2) rags for robes (*paṃsukūlacīvara*); (3) lodgings at the foot of a tree (*rukhamūlasenāsana*); and (4) medicine of foul

urine from cattle (*pūtimuttābhesajja*). See Vin 1.58.

18. Vin 4.41–42.

19. Vin 4.38–39.

20. Mohan Wijayaratna, *Buddhist Monastic Life: According to the Texts of the Theravada Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 30.

21. Gregory Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 24.

22. Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 6–7. The same was definitely true for Gandharan inscriptions, as “the aim of the votive inscriptions was not, perhaps, that they should be read and understood, but to ensure religious merit through the mystic power of the *akṣara*-s” (Sten Konow, *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions with the Exception of Those of Aśoka*, 2 vols. [New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1929; repr., 1991], 2:93).

23. Schopen, “Burial Ad Sanctos and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism: A Study in the Archaeology of Religions,” in *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks*; and I.B. Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline*, 6 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), vol. 2, translation.

24. Schopen, “What’s in a Name: The Religious Function of the Early Donative Inscriptions,” in *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters*.

25. For easily accessible translations of the edicts, it may be simplest to refer to those printed in Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1961; repr., 1997). Editions and better translations are scattered throughout the secondary literature.

26. For some recent editions and discussions of Aśokan inscriptions, including the Barabar and Nagarjuni caves, see Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts*.

27. Kesanapalli no. 12.

28. Kolhapur no. 1.

29. The roman numerals presented within inscriptions cited here refer to the separate etched lines on the surface of the inscribed object.

30. Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 6.

31. Bharhut no. 163.

32. A single dot indicates a partially lost *akṣara* on the original record while three dots indicates three missing *akṣaras*. A + replaces a completely missing *akṣara*. Lastly, an asterisk indicates an editorial restoration.

33. Pauni no. 2, but the first part of the fragmented inscription likely reads *upāsikāya*, “lay-woman,” since the same donor, the woman Visamitā, made a donation from Pauni no. 1.

34. Inscription no. 34 from S. Parānavatana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon Vol 1: Containing Cave Inscriptions from 3rd Century B.C. to 1st Century A.C. and Other Inscriptions in the Early Brahmi Script* (Colombo: Dept. of Archaeology, 1970).
35. Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 7. However, see nos. 338–341 from Parānavatana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon Vol 1*.
36. Another question pertains to the nature of the relationship of the “others” to the donors themselves. Were the parents, for instance, still alive at the time of the donation or were they deceased?
37. Edition and translation found in S.R. Quintanilla, *History of Early Stone Sculpture at Mathura, Ca. 150 BCE–100 CE* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 270–271.
38. The edition comes from Harry Falk, “The Tidal Waves of Indian History: Between the Empires and Beyond,” in *Between the Empires: Society in India 300 BCE to 400 CE*, ed. Patrick Olivelle (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 150.
39. Translation from Quintanilla, *History of Early Stone Sculpture at Mathura*, 257.
40. Translation and edition is from Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters*, 220.
41. No. 829 in John Marshall and Alfred Foucher, *The Monuments of Sanchi*, 3 vols. (Delhi: Swati Publications, 1982), 1:386. My translation adapted from N.G. Majumdar’s in the Marshall volume.
42. No. 909 in Marshall and Foucher, *The Monuments of Sanchi*.
43. Dehejia, “The Collective and Popular Bases of Early Buddhist Patronage.”
44. Such a discussion is one subject of my dissertation and a focus of a working paper.

BOOK REVIEWS

***Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal.* By Keith Yandell and Harold Netland. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009. 230 pages. Paperback, \$22.00.**

Given the nature of the work being reviewed here, we wanted to assure balance. For this reason two reviewers, one a Christian theologian and the other a Buddhist scholar, were invited to review the same work. It is hoped that this somewhat unusual procedure provides the reader with a good sense that the limitations and problems identified are not based on a sectarian affiliation.

A Christian Theologian's Reading

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The authors of *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal* say in the introduction that this text belongs to a genre of theological writing that they call “interreligious polemics or interreligious apologetics” (xv). As the name suggests, texts within this genre examine the religious views of a tradition different from one’s own, and then elaborate on the truth of one’s own religious tradition, over and against the other. Thus, in this book, Buddhism is examined and explored; and then, in the concluding chapter, the truth claims of Christianity are judged to be superior to those of Buddhism. Indeed, the concluding sentence of the penultimate paragraph in the book says as much: “Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection provide the Christian answer to the question that haunted the Buddha” (212). To be sure, the authors themselves seem to be a little ambivalent about this enterprise. They state in the introduction that “the book is not intended as a refutation of

Buddhism or even as an argument for the truth of Christian theism as opposed to Buddhism" (xvii). Yet, the title reveals that the book is not simply an "exploration" of Buddhism, it is also an "appraisal"—that is, an assessment of Buddhism's value. And, in that regard, their position is clear: "It is our contention that, whatever other merits Buddhism might have, some of its central beliefs are deeply problematic and should be rejected" (xiv).

Thus, before describing the actual content of the book itself, it is worth taking a moment to reflect on this whole genre of interreligious writing. Christian apologetics, of course, is a field with a long history—as long as there have been competing religious doctrines against which a true exposition of the faith needed to be asserted. There have been Christian apologetics written against other (deemed heretical) Christians, and there have been apologetics directed at non-Christians. However, all apologetics face the same temptation: in "exploring and appraising" one's opponent, there is a tendency to present the tradition in the worst light, with all warts visible, such that the final conclusion of Christianity's superiority is most convincing. In a contemporary context, to take this stance with another religious tradition seems to violate the spirit in which most interreligious dialogue occurs—a spirit of openness and humility, and a willingness to see things differently, to view one's own tradition in a fresh way. Since this is so clearly not the spirit in which the book was written, it is not entirely obvious who the audience for this book might be: certainly not Buddhists, certainly not those looking for a measured, non-judgmental introduction to Buddhism, and certainly not Christians looking to engage more deeply in a positive way with Buddhist doctrine and practice. It seems, then, that "interreligious polemics" serves exclusively those Christians whose sole motivation for dialogue is to more deeply solidify the truth of their own faith; and, of course, this is no dialogue at all.

Now to the book itself. The first few chapters are very straightforward and clear, describing the origins of Buddhism and its geographical spread. None of this material is new, but it is presented in a very accessible way for the presumed target audience: Christians who know little about Buddhism. Chapter 1 introduces Theravāda Buddhism, beginning with the Indian context into which the Buddha was born. The first few pages deal with the cosmology that is shared by Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism: the cycle of rebirth and the need for release.

It then describes the Buddha's own enlightenment, and the four noble truths, including the teachings of impermanence, no-self, and nirvana.

Chapter 2, titled "The Dharma Goes East," is concerned primarily with Mahāyāna Buddhism, touching only briefly on Tibet and Vajrayāna. Helpful in this chapter is the emphasis on cultural differences, and how those differences influenced the character of Buddhism in the different countries into which it expanded. Included here are explanation of bodhisattvas, and a discussion of Nāgārjuna and emptiness. Extensive treatment (by comparison) is given to Pure Land Buddhism; and one wonders if the reason for that isn't revealed in footnote 46, which offers several examples of publications considering parallels between Pure Land and Christianity—including the one mentioned in the text itself, Shinran and Martin Luther. The authors, however, make clear the important distinctions between the two traditions that should mitigate any close comparisons.

The authors then shift to a discussion of Zen Buddhism, which actually is the main topic of chapter 3, but here they seek to introduce its transmission from India through China. Interestingly enough, the authors rely rather heavily on D.T. Suzuki in this chapter, even though they state at the beginning of this section that "The Western conception of Zen [popularized in the 1950s and 1960s] does not always fit the actual Chinese and Japanese historical tradition" (56). Since Suzuki was perhaps the primary figure responsible for this "Western conception," the use of him as a source here seems somewhat incongruous. The chapter closes with brief mention of Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama.

As promised, chapter 3 focuses primarily on Zen, looking specifically at the American context. The two figures treated most fully here are Masao Abe and D.T. Suzuki, and the authors give the impression that the reason for this is that these two are the ones most responsible for promulgating the particular form not only of Zen Buddhism, but of "Eastern Spirituality in general," that has been very influential in the United States (79). It is not insignificant, in my view, that this whole section of the chapter begins with the questionable nature of American Zen. The authors write: "...the extent and nature of the changes in Western Buddhism cause some to question whether this is still Buddhism. There is no need for us to try and determine just what constitutes 'authentic Buddhism.' In any event, this is a question for Buddhists themselves to settle" (79). This suggests that perhaps the

book is directed at those Christians who find themselves enamored of this particular expression of Buddhism without, perhaps, fully understanding the specific teachings and practices it entails. This impression is strengthened when one goes on to read the multiple critiques of Suzuki leveled at him by other Buddhists, including his emphasis on pure experience and the “dehistorization” of the Zen tradition. The authors conclude this section saying, “But the attraction of Buddhism in the West is due in part to the skillful and effective use of such discourse [generalizations and dichotomies] to depict a profound and esoteric ‘Eastern Spirituality’ as the antidote to ‘Western rationalism’ and materialism” (95). Abe is given similar treatment, as the authors emphasize his nonethical stance that argues for an awakened view of good and evil that recognizes their non-duality. They quote Abe as saying, “While in a human, moral dimension the Holocaust should be condemned as an unpardonable, absolute evil, *from the ultimate religious point of view even it should not be taken as an absolute but a relative evil*” (101–102)—they add the emphasis themselves for good measure. Somehow, the accusation that Buddhism seems unable to recognize the profound horror of the Holocaust—a sensitive point for many readers—seems to me to be a bit of a low blow. The authors conclude the chapter with a quote from Tillich, who they argue also “noticed the moral ambivalence of Buddhism” (102).

Chapter 4 is where the specific doctrinal claims of Buddhism are examined and evaluated; and here one notices some of the previous ambiguity around how much of an “apologetics” this book is intended to be. So, the authors open this chapter with a discussion of diagnoses and cures, emphasizing how Buddhism and Christianity offer different diagnoses about what is “wrong” with human existence, and how to fix it. The authors appreciate this metaphor in particular because, in their view, it highlights how serious the differences between the two religions are: “These are serious matters, since mistakes in diagnosis or treatment can be fatal” (106). They follow this introduction with a defense of “religious exclusivism,” arguing that Christianity has been “widely accepted” as exclusivist, in the sense of insisting that “the diagnosis and cure offered in one’s own religion is distinctively accurate and efficacious” (106–107). They then posit that many other religious traditions, including Buddhism, also can be defined as “exclusivist” in this way, given the fact that Buddhism also asserts the superiority of its doctrine (the Dalai Lama is quoted in support here). The point? “The

stakes are high. To put it in a particular idiom: there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun; there is only one way to gain heaven and shun hell, but there are plenty of ways to shun heaven and gain hell” (107). Whether or not this is true is somewhat beside the point: the problem is that this language feeds into Christian fears that interreligious dialogue leads them down a dangerous road, which, apparently, ends them in hell. Even in a book that self-identifies as a Christian apologetic, this stands out as over the top: exceptionally unhelpful, and a dubious theological scare tactic.

So, as one might imagine, the main point in this chapter is to correct the tendency of Western Christians to minimize the differences between Christianity and Buddhism, emphasizing the inherent soteriological focus of the Buddha’s teaching. Clearly, the authors recognize that many Christians simply import various practices and beliefs in a superficial manner, without actually understanding the larger doctrinal system of which they are a part. Thus, the authors seek to explain some key Buddhist doctrines by relating them to a larger soteriological goal—that is, explaining how they are part of the “cure” of the illness the Buddha has diagnosed for humanity. They discuss rebirth and karma, impermanence, no-self, and appearance and reality, among other things. Chapter 5 continues this analysis in the same vein, but this time focusing on particular Buddhist schools, in order to give specific examples of the general observations of chapter 4. In light of who the intended audience for this book seems to be, this chapter is perhaps the least helpful, as it is far more complex and philosophical in its analysis than the previous chapters; and the specific choices of examples is not apparent: Pudgalavādins, three varying interpretations of *Madhyamaka*—none of which reflect a standard Buddhist interpretation—and what the authors call “Buddhist Reductionism,” which describes the *Yogācāra* and *Theravāda Abhidharma* schools. It almost seems as if the schools were chosen specifically to illustrate inherent difficulties in the Buddhist teaching of no-self.

Finally, the concluding chapter, titled “The Dharma or the Gospel,” is quite revealing; and to my read, actually explains at least in part some of the reason for the book. The authors begin the chapter with the following statement:

In considering the relation between Christianity and Buddhism we face a curious paradox. As Buddhism becomes better known in the West, in certain quarters there is an intense interest in emphasizing

commonalities between the religions, often with the result that Buddhism and Christianity are regarded as complementary religions.... Yet, if each religion is taken seriously on its own terms, as understood by traditional Buddhists and Christians, it is clear that the two religions offer very different perspectives on the religious ultimate, the human predicament, and ways to overcome this predicament (175).

It is clear that the whole book has been in service of the goal of that last sentence—helping Christians take Buddhism seriously on its own terms, and therefore better understand and appreciate the core differences between the religions. Thus, the final chapter brings the apologetic task to its logical conclusion, as the authors reveal their goal of not only clarifying the differences between the two traditions but “at points, to suggest, in a very preliminary manner, why Christian theism is more plausible than Buddhism” (177).

I agree with the authors that all too often Christians attempt a shallow appropriation of Buddhist teachings, seamlessly fitting them into their already-existing Christian practice/belief without a second thought. In this way, this book is helpful because it makes very clear that the religions are different—with different understandings of the world, the human person, and the final goal/end of life. However, the piece that seems both unnecessary and incongruous is the “apologetic” piece—the part where the authors show that Christianity is superior to Buddhism (“more plausible” is less heavy-handed, I know, but the idea behind it is the same). As noted above, it makes me question for whom this book is intended. Certainly, it doesn’t function as a straightforward introduction to Buddhism—the polemic prevents that. Nor is it an example of interreligious dialogue: strengths of Buddhism are not noted, nor are there places where Buddhism is said to be able to helpfully inform or challenge Christianity. It’s a monologue, not a dialogue. So, perhaps it is intended for Christians who want to draw family members or friends back from “dangerous” engagement with Buddhism, by demonstrating exactly what it teaches, and the problems inherent in Buddhist teaching. In the twenty-first century, there must be a better way.

A Buddhist Scholar's Reading

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PREFACE

This review could have been much shorter: "This is a bad book about Buddhism. Don't read it."

The work, however, constitutes one instance of an important aspect of the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity. In the last half century of scholarly discourse on Buddhist-Christian encounter much attention has been given to dialogue between the two (Buddhist-Christian dialogue), and more recently attention has been paid to the complexities of personal engagement with both simultaneously ("dual-belonging" or other related conceptualizations).

Following the Parliament of the World's Religions (Chicago, 1893), the tenor in academia regarding the study of religions has largely been one of understanding leading to appreciation in expectation that this would lead to peaceful coexistence, harmony, and cooperation in relation to issues of mutual concern. This attitude constitutes an almost official dogma for much of undergraduate education in religious studies. I recall a colleague who, for example, once explained during a faculty retreat that his approach to teaching was modeled on the approach of music appreciation—a metaphor I only much later realized he had gotten from one of the most widely used textbooks in the field.

Such a perspective does little, however, to prepare students—even those who later become scholars themselves—for the realities of the religious world of fundamentalists and polemicists. They constitute a part of the Buddhist-Christian encounter today just as much as do all the "dialogue partners."

This review will, hopefully, provide something of a window on these sectors of the Buddhist-Christian encounter, ones not commonly attended to in Buddhist studies. In addition to this goal, however, I found it effectively impossible to not respond to what these authors claimed about Buddhist thought—noting why it was wrong factually, interpretively, or methodologically. As extensive as this review is—possibly enough to tax the patience of the reader—the responses given here are only selectively indicative of the book's failings.

INTRODUCTION: A SMALL EXERCISE
IN THE HERMENEUTICS OF SUSPICION

On the publisher's website, and repeated on Amazon.com, we find the following noteworthy claim:

The disproportionate influence of Buddhist thought and philosophy found in cultural circles such as education, entertainment and the media coupled with the dramatic recent surge of asian [*sic*] immigrants, many of whom are Buddhist, has brought Buddhism to the forefront of Western culture.¹

There are two parts to this claim that are helpful in understanding the underlying motivation for the production of this work. First, that it constitutes a necessary corrective to the "disproportionate influence of Buddhist thought and philosophy found in cultural circles such as education, entertainment and the media." Second, we find the not so covertly racist reference to "recent surge of asian immigrants," which chillingly resonates with the early twentieth century language of the threats to White, Christian America posed by the "Yellow Menace."² We introduce this work by noting the publisher's claim since it itself focuses our attention on the way in which the publishers wish to motivate potential readers, that is, by fear and resentment—fear of change, fear of the foreign, and resentment about a perceived de-centering of Christianity from cultural discourse.³ Although the authors themselves make a pretense of a balanced "appraisal" of Buddhism, the conclusion is foregone—so far foregone that it is in fact leading the construction of the putative appraisal.

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Although it is tempting to simply dismiss this work as an anti-Buddhist polemic, it can serve as a means of examining some of the recurring issues in the comparative study of religious philosophies.⁴ Prior to moving to a consideration of some of the issues, however, it is useful to place it in the spectrum of attempts by modern theologians to respond to an increasingly sophisticated awareness of other religious traditions, and to the failure of earlier formulations, such as the division of the world into Christians, heathens (those who had never heard the Gospel and were thus candidates for missionizing), and pagans (those who despite having heard the Gospel, rejected it). Hugh Nicholson has described the different theological positions taken in response to this increasing awareness of religious diversity as a developmental

trajectory.⁵ According to Nicholson this trajectory begins in the nineteenth century with what was then a single field called “comparative theology.” Motivated by the rise of a secularized understanding of a scientific inquiry into religion as a social phenomenon, comparative theology bifurcated, the specifically secularized academic project coming to be known as “comparative religions.” Comparative religions laid the groundwork for the way in which the study of religion entered into the curriculum of state-supported secular universities in the 1960s.⁶ The development of comparative religions as distinct from comparative theology led then to the religiously motivated consideration of the theological implications of the diversity of religious traditions, identified as the “theology of religions.”

Nicholson describes the theology of religions as itself having developed in three stages: exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist.⁷ (The system of three categories and this terminology for them can be traced to John Hick.⁸) Nicholson describes the exclusivist perspective as one in which the theologian attempts to demonstrate the exclusive superiority of Christianity *per se*, that is, as focused on the redemption of human sin by Christ’s sacrifice, over all other religions which lack access (or, block access) to Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. Inclusivism in contrast claims that Christianity “includes and fulfills other faiths.”⁹ Or, as Hick expresses it, “one’s own tradition alone has the whole truth but that this truth is nevertheless partially reflected in other traditions.”¹⁰ Pluralism shifts from a focus on Christ as the defining center to God, that is, from a Christocentric to a theocentric conception of Christianity. In this understanding, the variety of religious traditions are all manifestations of divine grace, providing a route to salvation. Hick claims this view as his own, and defines it as that “the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate from within the different cultural ways of being human; and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness is manifestly taking place.”¹¹ In terms of this framework, Yandell and Netland’s “Christian evaluation of Buddhism” can be located as an exclusivist theology of religions. This placement is important for understanding a work that presents itself as “an exploration and appraisal,” and hence seems to attempt two contradictory undertakings—an accurate representation of Buddhist thought, but with the intention of demonstrating the necessary inferiority of Buddhism to Christianity.

Throughout the work, the latter goal seems to influence the choices made both about what to represent as either typical or foundational for Buddhism, as well as the choices made about how to represent Buddhist thought.

STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

Yandell and Netland's study falls into two approximately even parts: history and doctrine. Examining this structure per se is important for what it reveals about the conceptual framework within which the authors construct their argument. Specifically, the importance of doctrine for the authors is evidenced by the at least equal structural importance it has in relation to the section on history. The structure employed by the authors is not a structure that reflects the organizing principles of any emic understanding of Buddhism.¹² In constructing the work in this fashion, they simultaneously construct the reader's understanding according to two concerns that are central to much of Protestant Christian thought, that is, the historical nature of Jesus, and the salvific character of proper belief.

The history section is a bit more problematic than most textbook treatments of Buddhism. Like most such treatments, it draws on a variety of what may be called tertiary sources, that is, general summaries, rather than primary or secondary ones. Some of these are more recent, while some are quite dated, making for a certain unevenness in the representations of Buddhism. One such oddity is that the first chapter is on "early Buddhism," while we find Mahāyāna being introduced in chapter 2, entitled "The Dharma Goes East." This creates a very distorted picture of the development of Buddhism in India, suggesting as it does that Mahāyāna is an East Asian phenomenon. More striking is the rhetorical question at the end of the first paragraph of chapter 3, "The Dharma Comes West," which identifies Buddhism as a "transnational" religion, that is, one of those "religious traditions with universal pretensions and global ambitions."¹³ The suspicion that the authors hold toward Buddhism is evident in the question that follows: "Can this quaint and exotic religion of meditating monks and serene gardens have global ambitions?"¹⁴

ETHICS AND ONTOLOGY

At the end of the third chapter, "The Dharma Comes West," we find one of the places in which it seems most likely that the authors have

intentionally distorted Buddhist thought and practice, though perhaps only as a means of emphasizing the dangers of an ethical relativism that they see Buddhism entailing. They take the absolutism of Masao Abe with his rhetorical transcendence of all values as representative of Buddhist ethics generally. Highlighting Abe's claim that "from the ultimate religious point of view even [the Holocaust] should not be taken as an absolute, but a relative evil," they assert that "Zen clashes with a widely shared aspect of human experience which recognizes an irreducible distinction between good and evil, right and wrong."¹⁵ Yandell and Netland have chosen to highlight one particularly provocative claim by one Buddhist philosopher, Masao Abe, as representative of the actual consequences of Buddhist ontology. In doing so, they claim justification on the markedly shaky grounds of "a widely shared aspect of human experience," and at the same time explicitly brush aside all Buddhist ethical teachings and the ethical behavior of Buddhist adherents as irrelevant. At the very end of the history section, they assert that

While in practice Buddhists often show exemplary moral character and Buddhist sacred texts call for cultivation of moral character, many have sensed a deep tension between such moral imperatives and an ontology in which moral distinctions are overcome. It remains to be seen whether Buddhism's encounter with the West, with its (diminishing) Christian heritage, will alter the traditional ontology in a way that strengthens the Buddhist basis for moral action.¹⁶

In other words, they promote a particular interpretation of Buddhist thought—one that many people, including many Buddhists, would find offensive—as foundational to all Buddhist thought.

An argument by analogy against their representation might be to take some particularly provocative claim by a single Christian leader as indicating the true nature of Christian ethics and its philosophic underpinnings. For example, consider Pat Robertson's claims that Satan is the active force behind the movements for equal rights for homosexuals, and for protecting a woman's right to choose.¹⁷ To claim that these assertions represent the cosmology fundamental to all Christianity, while at the same time dismissing all Christian ethical teachings and the ethical behavior of many Christians, would be methodologically invalid.

Yandell and Netland's representation of Buddhist ethics fails for two reasons: first, by treating one individual author, Masao Abe, as

representing the entirety of “traditional Buddhist ontology”; second, despite being in the section on Buddhist history, it fails to historically contextualize Abe’s philosophic location. Abe is heir to the Kyoto school, which is in turn heir to the strain of German idealism and Romanticism that promotes an absolutization of the self that transcends social values.¹⁸ What Yandell and Netland are objecting to, therefore, is not “traditional Buddhist ontology” but rather a re-representation of nineteenth century European Romanticism.

SOURCES AND ASSUMPTIONS

One of the distortions that the doctrine section of the work creates is by its selective attention only to the teachings of Indian Buddhism. The authors explain this by saying,

The Buddhist tradition is rich and complex.... The criterion for what within the teachings of these schools gets our attention is simply its relevance to the proposed Buddhist diagnosis of our fundamental religious disease and its cure.¹⁹

While this sounds reasonable enough, and is a positive step in that it makes the authors’ criterion explicit, it does not in fact warrant the almost exclusive attention to Indian Buddhist thought. Of greater concern, however, is that the selection of doctrinal positions they attend to is dependent on their own conception of the Buddhist view (see § Deferral of Authority, below). While the construction of a representation is necessarily based on an author’s conception of the subject being represented, the way in which Yandell and Netland formulate the Buddhist view is highly problematic and even idiosyncratic. One of the aspects of Yandell and Netland’s work that marks it as part of the “modernist” theology of religions, as opposed to the “postmodernist” comparative theology, is their treatment of Buddhism and Christianity as “cohesive wholes.”²⁰ Their formulation of Buddhist thought as a “cohesive whole” implicitly depends on taking the doctrine of momentariness, a technical *abhidharma* doctrine, as foundational for all Buddhist thought. According to Alexander von Rospatt, the “fundamental proposition” of momentariness

is that all phenomena—more precisely, all conditioned entities (*saṃskṛta*, *saṃskāra*), that is, everything but those special entities which have not been caused (hence their designation as *asaṃskṛta*, “unconditioned”), but which have always existed in the past and which always will exist in the future—pass out of existence as soon as

they have originated and in this sense are momentary. As an entity vanishes, it gives rise to a new entity of the same (or almost the same) nature which originates immediately afterward. Thus there is an uninterrupted flow of causally connected momentary entities of the same nature, the so-called *santāna*. Because these entities succeed upon each other so fast that this process cannot be discerned by means of ordinary perception, and because earlier and later entities within one *santāna* are (almost) exactly alike, we come to conceive of something as a temporally extended entity even though it is in truth nothing but a series of causally connected momentary entities. According to this doctrine, the world (including the sentient beings inhabiting it) is at every moment completely distinct from the world in the previous or next moment. It is, however, linked to the past and future by the law of causality, insofar as a phenomenon usually engenders a phenomenon of its kind when it perishes, so that the world originating in the next moment reflects the world in the preceding moment.²¹

Though Yandell and Netland do not discuss the details of the doctrine of momentariness as such, they do consistently presume that this complex of ideas is foundational for Buddhist thought. However, it is neither universally accepted by Buddhists, nor even philosophically central to Buddhist ontology, including Buddhist conceptions of the person.

What is critical for the project of comparative philosophy at the heart of Yandell and Netland's exclusivist theology of religions is the "cohesive whole" that they hypostatize, and the presumption that it is determinative for Buddhism, not just as a system of thought but also as a lived religion. This has two parts. First, that the portrayal of Buddhism that they construct for presentation to their readers be accurate. Second, that thought be determinative of action, an assumption that, although highly prevalent among intellectuals, is an analytic artifact, not phenomenologically justified. There is a difference between the coherence of an ideological system together with its expression in practice, and a logically and philosophically consistent system of thought. As von Rospatt has put it, "Canonical Buddhism is not a systematic philosophy aiming at maximal coherency."²² The presumption that all religions must be founded on a systematic philosophy that can be justified is one of the distorting presumptions of the projects of comparative philosophy and comparative religion (as distinct from the use of a comparative method). As summarized by Victoria Urubshurow,

Paul Mus argues to much the same effect in his study of Barabudur, the Buddhist monument in Java:

Mus states that one must make a “simple but radical change in point of view” when studying the history of Buddhism. In his opinion, scholars who see a “problem” posed by Buddha Śākyamuni’s answer to metaphysical questions create their own difficulties by trying to solve it philosophically. Their impasse stems from a wish to “construct for themselves an intelligible picture of Buddhist thought before having posed the conditions of its intelligibility.”²³

Mutatis mutandis, the same can be said for theological attempts at solution. This points to a problem pervading the comparative projects of philosophy, religion, and theology generally, as well as Yandell and Netland’s in particular. Frequently, without first “having posed the conditions of [Buddhism’s] intelligibility,” authors treat the categories, positions, and issues of their own primary discipline as unproblematically universal. Whether it is a category such as eschatology, a position such as idealism, or an issue such as the role of reason in belief, these exist within the conceptual framework created over the course of the history of the Western intellectual tradition, and as such entail certain additional commitments. Since the conceptual frameworks within which the various forms of Buddhism operate are in fact radically different, inadequately nuanced use of the categories, positions, and issues of the Western philosophical and Christian theological traditions will necessarily distort an understanding of Buddhist thought and practice.

THE DOCTRINAL TURN

Following the historical survey constituting the first half of the book, the authors turn to a consideration of Buddhist thought. Interestingly they adopt the quasi-medical analytic system found in the four noble truths as a basis for comparing the fundamental structures of Christianity and Buddhism. As it sets the basis for the rest of the analyses that follow, we should consider the paragraph in which they set up the contrast in full.

If we compare Christianity and Buddhism, for example, we see that quite different diagnoses and cures are offered by the two religions. In Christianity, the “illness” is sin; the causal conditions involve our misuse of the gift of freedom in an effort to become free from God; the disease is curable; and the cure requires God’s gracious, redemptive

action in Jesus Christ—his life, death for our sins, and resurrection—and our repentance and trust in God. In Buddhism, by contrast, the “disease” is the unsatisfactory nature of existing transitorily and dependently; the cause is that we mistakenly suppose ourselves to be persons who endure through time; the disease is curable; and the cure requires the occurrence of an esoteric, profound experience in which calm lack of attachment is accompanied by deep acceptance of a Buddhist account of how things really are. Clearly, the diagnoses and cures in the two religions are different.²⁴

The description of Christianity is not one that I am competent to comment on, but I believe it safe to assume that it represents one particular theology within a range of different understandings of the Christian life. The same can, of course, be said of the description of Buddhism, that it is one particular view of the teachings. With that qualification, let us consider the description of Buddhism in detail, phrase by phrase.

In Buddhism, by contrast, the “disease” is the unsatisfactory nature of existing transitorily and dependently,

This does seem to capture something of the quality of the first of the four noble truths, that our lives are characterized by suffering or more generally, dissatisfaction (*dukkha*, i.e., the perception that things don’t work right, also sometimes rendered “stress”). At the same time, however, it manages to also conflate the cause—existing transitorily and dependently—into that initial expression as well. In doing so Yandell and Netland make the “presenting symptom” as understood in Buddhism less obvious than simply “life is frustrating, dissatisfying, and involves suffering.” The validity of that phenomenological description of human life may be more easily recognized when not conflated with ontological claims regarding impermanence.

the cause is that we mistakenly suppose ourselves to be persons who endure through time;

This next phrase further distorts the authors’ diagnostic-prescriptive summary away from that of the four noble truths. It is not “that we mistakenly suppose ourselves to be persons who endure through time.” The second noble truth is simply that the frustration, dissatisfaction, and suffering that we experience has a cause. In suttas considered early, the Buddha gives two causes for these characteristics of human existence: obsessive desire (*trṣṇā*) and *ātman*. While obsessive desire is easily recognized as a source of suffering, it is also obviously

true on the personal, phenomenological level that we are persons who endure over time. In order to understand Buddhism, therefore, it is necessary to investigate the nature of the *ātman* that Buddhism is denying with careful attention to the original context, rather than simply assuming that we today use the term “self” with the same meaning that Buddhist thinkers have employed the term *ātman*.

the disease is curable

the cure requires the occurrence of an esoteric, profound experience in which calm lack of attachment is accompanied by deep acceptance of a Buddhist account of how things really are

This last description diverges from the four noble truths, which ends with the eightfold path as the prescription. The authors’ summary, however, reveals how they understand awakening. Fitting into the commonly shared presumptions regarding religion that date from Schleiermacher (1768–1834), they present awakening as a kind of experience, one that leads to “calm lack of attachment” and “deep acceptance of a Buddhist account of how things really are.” However, the presumption that awakening is some kind of mystical, or “esoteric” and transformative experience is part of the Romantic understanding that is pervasive in contemporary discourse on Buddhism, both popular and academic. This again follows from the uncritical acceptance of the Romantic conceptions of the nature of religion deriving from Schleiermacher, through Rudolf Otto, to the Kyoto school, and to both D.T. Suzuki and Masao Abe. The latter have created a “pizza effect,” in which the Romantic conception of religion as fundamentally experiential in nature now comes back to the West as if it were Buddhist. Further, the structure of Buddhist thought is not such that belief *per se* has any has the same kind of salvific import as is found in much of Christian thought. It is not necessary to “accept a Buddhist account,” since the Buddhist account is not something to be believed. It is instead intended as a description of the way things actually are—the recognition of its truth is not dependent upon believing it.²⁵ This description of Buddhism offered by Yandell and Netland depends upon the fallacy of the primacy of thought over action, that is, the mistake that there is a singular causal connection running from thought (belief, or “deep acceptance” in this case) to action.

This review of their introductory summary gives some idea of the difficulties the authors have grappling with Buddhist thought within

the frameworks provided by Christian theology and Western philosophy, even when these intellectual projects are themselves framed in comparative contexts. The work has several problematic aspects, of which we are only able here to mention several briefly, and explore only a few in some depth.

HISTORY, TELOS, AND MEANING

The authors, discussing contrasting images of time and history, claim that for Christianity “since there is a singularity to history—individual lives and events are not repeated endlessly—history has significance.”²⁶ This is contrasted with the supposed Buddhist view that there “is no beginning point, no purpose or direction to history, and no culmination to the historical process.”²⁷ What is of import is the metaphysical linkage being made between there being a beginning and end to history and the sense that history has a meaning—and additionally, the implication that the meaning of human life is dependent upon something external to the individual, that their existence is made meaningful by the meaningful character of history. In other words, axiology is seen as depending on cosmology.

Such a view of history is, both in origin and significance, fundamentally a theological view, and one that can only be accepted as a matter of faith.²⁸ Especially in light of the events of the first half of the twentieth century, such as the two world wars and the Holocaust, as well as the lack of significance in natural disasters, neither the providential nor the progressive view of history is self-evident.²⁹ Such views of history take on a particular religious significance when the idea that history has meaning is linked to the idea that the meaning of each individual’s life is dependent on the meaning of history. It is, further, mistaken to say that any other view is nihilistic—the critique Yandell and Netland level against Buddhism without any actual inquiry into the variety of Buddhist cosmologies and their significance for the individual.

“NATURE” ≠ “ESSENCE”

There are a few spots at which the lack of thorough proofreading of the work is glaring. An example from the section on “Impermanence, No-Self, and Dependent Origination”: “But the Buddhist tradition typically denies that anything denies that any composite has a nature.”³⁰ More important than the simple incoherence of the sentence as it

appears in the work is the apparently intended assertion that Buddhism denies that any composite entity has a “nature.” As it stands, however, this claim is false. It is, for example, the nature of all composite entities to lack any permanent, eternal, absolute, or unchanging essence. More specifically, there is extensive discussion within Buddhist thought regarding the number, kinds, and nature of characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*). It is only possibly true if the authors had intended to use “nature” (the quality or characteristic of something) and “essence” (the defining characteristic that exists in addition to the components that constitute something) synonymously, which—without explicating the synonymy—is philosophically misleading.³¹

CONSTRUCTS

Similarly imprecise is the discussion of the notion of constructs, introduced as one of the “Buddhist strategies for dealing with the idea that there is any such thing as an enduring soul, mind, self, or person.”³² Initially, I assumed that by constructs, the authors meant *skandhas*. However, they define constructs as “concepts that do not fit anything that actually exists; what actually exists is very different from what the constructs represent as existing.”³³ In this psychological or conceptual usage, they would seem to mean *prapañca*,³⁴ which would make some sense—though as they are using it, it only addresses the relation between concepts and their referents and does not go to the more crucial issue that they are supposedly addressing, the emptiness of all existing entities. “One common Buddhist strategy is to treat the concept of the soul, mind, self, or person as only a construct.” Although this statement may just reflect hasty writing, it is less than merely rhetorical to ask, What else could a concept be other than a construct? They further confuse the issue by then linking “constructs” with the simultaneously philosophically and emotionally loaded term, “deconstruct.” “This is a typical Buddhist move, used not only to deconstruct the notion of a soul but also to analyze away physical objects.”³⁵

The authors’ confusing use of nature and essence as synonyms reappears in their discussion of “constructs.” In their discussion of Madhyamaka, for example:

According to this version of Buddhism, then (i) nothing has an essence or nature; (ii) anything that lacks a nature is only a construction; and thus (iii) everything is a construction. As other varieties of Buddhism pointed out, however, this cannot be right. For constructions require

a constructor. The world cannot be constructions “all the way down.” As an account of what there really is, this view is obviously³⁶ mistaken. A necessary condition of there being any constructions is that something that is not a construction construct them. After all, anything that is a construction does not actually exist; it is only thought to exist. But nothing that is only thought to exist can do anything. So nothing that is only thought to exist can construct anything. Without belaboring the point any further, the incoherence of this view was recognized within the Buddhist tradition by other versions of Buddhism which flatly rejected it—it is not even logically possible that the view be true.³⁷

At this point, Yandell and Netland seem to have inadvertently stumbled into a fallacy of equivocation. There are two (quite ordinary and acceptable) usages for the term “construct.” One is the usage Yandell and Netland employ, that is, “mental construct,” or what we might more simply call a concept, and they only consider this meaning in their discussions of Buddhist discourse that employs this term. It is indeed the case, for example, that constructs (meaning “mental constructs,” i.e., concepts) have different characteristics from percepts and from objects perceived. This usage can be described as a psychological one.

In most English language Buddhist discourse, however, construct is used ontologically, that is as a way of talking about how things exist, rather than the psychological usage, that is, as a way of talking about the contents of conscious thought. An ontological usage is inclusive of a psychological one, and thus what is said about constructs ontologically also applies to mental constructs as well.³⁸ The ontological usage of “construct” in English language Buddhist discourse signifies the claim that everything that exists exists as a consequence of causes and conditions. A lack of attention to the specific original concept being identified (*skandhas?*, *prapañca?*, *pratītyasamutpāda?*), facilitated by the comparative projects and by the veil of secondary sources and apoloia, all apparently contribute to Yandell and Netland having committed a fallacy of equivocation—while their critique is applied to mental constructs, and they define that as the only meaning of the term “construct,” they fallaciously contend that their critique applies equally to the ontological usage as found in present day English language Buddhist discourse.³⁹

Not only does Yandell and Netland’s idiosyncratic rendering of constructs as “merely conceptual” fail to accurately reflect the Buddhist analysis, but it also obscures the significance of the tendency

to misunderstand mental constructs as indicating some kind of permanent essence—for it is that tendency that Buddhism identifies as the human predicament, the ground of the path of practice. The point from the perspective of Buddhist thought as I understand it is not that constructs as such are merely conceptual. Rather, the problem lies with our interaction with ontic constructs in such a way that we think of them as being monolithic wholes that manifest or possess some permanent essence. This way of thinking about constructs is merely conceptual, that is, the concept of existing entities (ontic constructs) as either permanent, eternal, absolute, or unchanging, or as manifesting or possessing an essence that has those characteristics, is itself a mental construct added to actually existing constructs by human attribution. We think of it as “a house” and then construct the category of “house” as something eternal, absolute, permanent, or unchanging—an essence—of which this particular one is an instance or a manifestation. It is this specific conceptualization of ontic constructs as having characteristics that no actually existing entity can have—such as permanence—that is the religious problem according to the Buddhist analysis. Ruth Sonam has expressed this very clearly and cogently.

Statements, made by the Buddha and frequently repeated by the great Buddhist masters, that things are “like dreams and illusions” are often misinterpreted and taken to mean that things do not exist. Mādhyamika philosophy demonstrates through the use of reasoning that though things do not exist independently and concretely as they seem to do, they nevertheless exist: their mode of existence is a dependent one.⁴⁰

Mādhyamikas, therefore, have no quibble over whether things exist. They do, however, reject that any existing thing is absolute, permanent, eternal, or unchanging, or possesses or manifests an essence that has those characteristics.

TWO TRUTHS, OR THEREABOUTS

The authors then address the “doctrine of two truths.”⁴¹ I want to give an extended treatment to their critique for two reasons. First, since this is one of the notions that makes Buddhist thought radically divergent from the system of thought that is not only found in the Western tradition, but which is also shared by the majority of Indian philosophic traditions. Second, the authors do reflect the way in which Buddhist teachings on the subject are widely misrepresented in both

popular and academic discussions. The reason for the latter is also important, as it evidences one of the problematic dynamics of comparative philosophy of religion.

Yandell and Netland's treatment, were it to actually address the two truths, would be devastating. And, unfortunately, what they critique is the interpretation of the two truths that one finds throughout the popular literature on Buddhism. Indicative of this misinterpretation is the heading under which this treatment appears: "Appearances and Reality." This is, of course, an old trope for Western philosophy, going back to the Greek philosophers and reworked repeatedly since. The issue for Buddhist thought, however, is not the relation between appearance and reality, but rather the relation between conditioned co-production (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which can also be referred to as the relation between existence and impermanence.

One problem fundamental to the common representation of the two truths is the almost now normative rendering of *satya* as "truth."⁴² In the range of contemporary philosophic discourse "truth" is easily converted to "truth claim" without specifying that a reinterpretation has been made. A more adequately philosophically nuanced rendering for *satya* would be an expression such as "actually existing." The critique made by Yandell and Netland has to do with "truth claims" rather than with "truth" as "actually existing." It is indeed the case truth claims are either true or false:

Although often called the "doctrine of two truths," this is a misleading way of putting things. The tradition makes a distinction between "conventional truth" and "ultimate truth." A proposition is true if and only if things are the way it says they are. Such a proposition is an ultimate truth. A proposition is conventionally "true" if and only if it says how things seem to someone but is not true about the way things actually are. Thus, in plain English, conventional "truths" are false. The locution "ultimate truth" is redundant and "conventional truth" is an oxymoron.⁴³

Though this is a wonderfully succinct—and breathtakingly condescending—version of an interpretation of the two truths frequently encountered in both popular representations and in some academic critiques, it is simply wrong. By presuming without any critical reflection that the issue being discussed in Madhyamaka thought is satisfactorily expressed in terms of a highly familiar Western philosophic issue, Yandell and Netland are in fact no longer actually discussing Buddhist

thought at all. Unfortunately for the critique—as well as for most presentations of it—it is a strawman. Or rather, we might say that it is Plato in Buddhist robes. Under the “appearance and reality” rubric of Western philosophy which is uncritically ready at hand, the two truths are converted to a hierarchy of truth claims—a claim that is merely true conventionally versus a higher truth, that which is ultimately true. This is of course, an old sophomoric philosophic game, encountered for example in almost every discussion of “modern” physics: the table you experience isn’t really real, it is really just a buzzing mass of energy....

The term *satya* (as in *paramārthasatya* and *samvṛtisatya*, the names of the two truths in Sanskrit) is being poorly, although with long tradition, glossed by Yandell and Netland as “truth.” Its root, *√sat*, means being, existence.⁴⁴ Thus, the two “truths” identify two different aspects of the way in which an entity exists. The two truths are not two separate truths, much less a hierarchy of truth claims. Rather, they are two ways of expressing the same truth about existing entities. For these reasons, Yandell and Netland’s representation of the two truths, despite what might be called its “high familiarity factor” (that is, it seems right because it is familiar) is, in fact, mistaken and misleading. It is mistaken because the relation between the two terms employed is between terms identifying two different aspects of the existence of entities—not appearance and reality. It is misleading in that discussing the two truths in terms of appearance and reality leads to an interpretation that is based on the discourse of Western philosophy and not that of Buddhist thought itself.

Rather than being either a metaphysical or epistemological hierarchy, the two truths are two ways of expressing the same idea, differing in emphasis. As Jay Garfield has expressed it, emptiness is “merely a characteristic of conventional reality. And this...is what provides the key to understanding the deep unity between the two truths.”⁴⁵ This is neither some “mystical” teaching that attempts to transcend, nor is it a failure to understand the logical principle of the excluded middle—other interpretations by which the two truths have been forced into the categories of Western comparative philosophical discourse in order to implicate respectively either the superiority of the Romantic rejection of Aristotelian logic or the superiority of Western philosophy over Buddhist thought.

NECESSARY TRUTH—REALLY?

Yandell and Netland use the phrase “necessary truth” in their rejections of Buddhist philosophic positions. For example, “Now the Buddhist assumption that anything that exists dependently must be impermanent, existing only for a while and then going out of existence, is not a necessary truth.”⁴⁶ They then go on to explain that

For example, if an omnipotent God wished to create something—say, an angel—that always existed dependently only on God, and on nothing else, God could do this. Noting this is true does not assume that God does exist, or that God does not exist. The point here is simply that it is not logically impossible that God exist, and if God does exist, this is something that God, as omnipotent could do. So there is no logically necessary connection between dependence and impermanence.⁴⁷

Contingent statements are those that are either true or false by reference to the human world of lived experience. Necessary truths are those which are logically valid without reference to any experience; they are true by definition or by following logically from true premises.⁴⁸ We cannot here address the problematic issue of whether the distinction between contingent and necessary is universal or not.⁴⁹ However, we can point out that in the context of Western philosophic discourse there is a sharp distinction between the truth value of a contingent statement and the “truth” of a “not logically inconsistent” claim, that is, claims of necessity may follow validly (be “not inconsistent”), but do not on that basis alone have a truth value, i.e., they are neither true nor false. This distinguishes logically necessary truths, i.e., truth claims, from a claim such as “this table is made of Formica,” which is in fact either true or false depending on what the table is made of. Yandell and Netland’s use of the term “necessary truths”—as in the quote above—refers only to claims that are not logically inconsistent, and *only* to the extent that they are not logically inconsistent. That is, in Yandell and Netland’s analysis, it is not logically inconsistent for something to be both dependent and permanent, and therefore the Buddhist claim that anything dependent is (necessarily) impermanent, is not a necessary truth.

However, as usually understood in the Western philosophic discourse necessary truths are analytic; that is, they derive from the meaning of the concepts employed. Thus, being unmarried follows analytically (i.e., as a necessary truth) from the meaning of the concept

“bachelor.” The meaning of “bachelor” is synonymous with “unmarried male” and thus although it necessarily follows that if Albert is a bachelor then Albert is unmarried, such a conclusion in fact tells us nothing new about Albert. Thus, the relation between existing dependently and existing impermanently depends upon how the two concepts are defined. Clearly, Yandell and Netland choose to define them as two separate characteristics, that is as different from one another, and construct an argument that the one does not necessarily follow logically from the other. However, in Buddhist discourse, the two are generally understood to be synonymous with one another. Unfortunately for Yandell and Netland, the “not inconsistent” status of their understandings of impermanent and dependent (i.e., that something can be both permanent and dependent) does not establish that their understandings are the (only) correct ones, merely that they constitute a set of logically “not inconsistent” claims based upon one specific way of defining the terms. By imposing a different set of meanings on impermanent and dependent from those employed in Buddhist thought, their argument fails. One may suggest that their argument here is another instance of the fallacy of equivocation—they have changed the meanings of the terms under discussion such that they are no longer addressing the real issue.

“ENDURING” ≠ “PERMANENT”

Part of the difficulty with the authors’ treatment is that, as with their conflation of nature and essence, they conflate enduring (existing over some period of time) with permanent (existing without change, and without beginning or end) in their claims that Buddhism rejects the idea of an enduring self. This is where their unacknowledged presumption that momentariness is definitive for Buddhist thought comes into play—were momentariness accepted by Buddhist thinkers generally, then indeed there would be nothing that endures. However, constructed entities—whether houses or selves—do endure over time. This is why the authors’ critique of Buddhist thought as not accepting enduring entities is again both mistaken and misleading.

When these two categories—enduring and permanent—are distinguished from one another, and Buddhist teachings are placed in their appropriate social, historical, and intellectual context—rather than presuming the universality of Western philosophic discourse—significant errors in interpretation such as those of Yandell and Netland

can be avoided. For example, discussing the teaching of *anātman*, Asaf Federman notes that “Buddhism rejects a kind of self (*ātman*) which is eternal, blissful, and identical with the creative force of the universe (Brahman). It identifies the attachment to such a self as a source of misery, and thus provides logical considerations (philosophy) and practical exercises (meditation, morality) as antidotes.”⁵⁰ In other words, it is the understanding of the self being promulgated by other religio-yogic traditions over the course of Buddhist history in India that is being rejected. Extending that rejection to contemporary understandings of the self requires careful application of the logic of *anātman* nuanced to other understandings of the use of the term “self.”⁵¹ In this particular case, distinguishing between a permanent or eternal self and an enduring self would avoid much of the tortured logic that Yandell and Netland produce. The following paragraph demonstrates the results of conflating permanent or eternal (which in the context of Buddhist thought I understand to be synonymous) with enduring. It is quoted at length because the logic of the argument involves an *argumentum ad absurdum* that itself requires careful attention in order to apprehend the authors’ argument.

There is, from a Buddhist perspective, great danger in believing that one is a permanent, or at least enduring, being. According to Buddhism, such belief is false and must be abandoned in order for enlightenment to be attained. If we take ourselves to be selves or souls, permanent or enduring, then whatever must exist in order for us to possess that belief must exist. It is thus crucial for the Buddhist tradition that *there being an enduring conscious mind* is not a necessary condition of *there being the belief that there is an enduring conscious mind*. Suppose that what must exist in order for us to possess that belief is that we must be enduring conscious beings. Then any view that admits that we have this belief, but denies that it is true, must be false. In that case, one who wishes to accept the standard “no self” view must hold that the very conditions that standard Buddhism diagnoses describe as creating the disease that Buddhism addresses must exist in order for one to have diagnosed the disease. But the condition is a disease only if the view that there are enduring minds is false. Then a condition of having the diagnosed disease is that it not be a disease after all. So, for most Buddhist traditions, the supposition must be false—it must not be the case that there being beliefs requires enduring believers.⁵²

First, in order to clarify the argument of the paragraph, which being highly convoluted seems opaque and may tend to lead the uncareful reader to simply accept the conclusion and move on, the *argumentum ad absurdum* is approximately:

1. The standard Buddhist view of no self holds that there is no enduring self.
 2. To accept that view is to accept that there is an enduring self: either the enduring self who accepts that view, or the enduring self that is to be denied.
- ∴ The Buddhist view is self-contradictory.
- ∴ There is an enduring self.

Looking at the rewritten version of the argument, there are three problems with the premises. First, the “standard Buddhist view of no self” does not assert that there is no enduring self, but rather that there is no permanent self, and the difference between enduring and permanent is significant. Second, it is quite possible to hold mistaken views, including about oneself. Third, the negation of something does not necessarily imply its existence. (The two alternatives in premise 2 are required due to the ambiguity of the original argument.)

Since it may be argued that the rewritten version is not a perfectly accurate representation of the original, let us then turn to the problematics of the paragraph as cited. There are two items in this paragraph that deserve particular attention: the failure to discriminate between permanent and enduring, and the implication that belief produces awakening. At the opening, the authors assert that in the Buddhist view there is “great danger in believing that one is a permanent, or at least enduring, being.” As suggested above, the conflation of permanent and enduring is only possible by taking momentariness as basic to all Buddhist thought, that is, according to the teaching of momentariness, there is no difference between permanent and enduring, as all existing entities are described as only existing momentarily. Rather than being foundational for all Buddhist thought, however, momentariness is speculative and is not as widely accepted as the authors presume. While the opening of the paragraph apparently distinguishes the two, they immediately drop the qualification and only talk about “enduring.” Taking momentariness as the common basis of Buddhist thought, they treat permanent and enduring as synonyms. Conversely, the presumption that momentariness is the common basis of Buddhist

thought allows them to avoid actually addressing any of the arguments given by those who assert momentariness in support of the appearance of continuity in a causally linked sequence of moments, which for the most part they were pressed to make by other Buddhists.

That Buddhist thought does generally distinguish between a permanent self and an enduring self, rejecting the former and debating the nature of the latter, is evident by the many ways in which Buddhist thinkers have presented conscious awareness as enduring over time. Two examples are the stream of consciousness, *santāna*, and the underlying ground of awareness, *ālayavijñāna*. That believer and belief both exist, and exist in relation to one another, hardly seems problematic for Buddhist thought (specifically, *Yogācāra*). This would be expressed in Sanskrit terminology as the relation between the grasper (*grāhaka*) and the grasped (*grāhya*), or to employ a more scholarly Latin terminology, the apprehender and the apprehended. Such a believer, for example, a person who believes the self is permanent, exists (only) as long, i.e., endures, as they hold that belief. When they stop believing that, then they are no longer that kind of believer. They may have come to believe something else, and thus become a different kind of believer. It would, however, be an instance of a category mistake to take the two different kinds of enduring believer as indicating the metaphysical existence of a permanent believer.

This distinction between a permanent and an enduring self may seem like a purely ontological, and therefore perhaps insignificant, matter. Its relevance to Yandell and Netland's overall project becomes evident in the authors' final chapter, "The Dharma or the Gospel?" In the course of their contrasting Buddhism with Christianity, among several other items they address Buddhist ethics. They first make the false claim that Buddhism is deterministic. "Buddhism accepts the doctrine of dependent co-arising which says that every event is caused by events that precede it as well as depending on events that occur at the same time as it does, and it is difficult to see how this allows for individual freedom and responsibility."⁵³ This reads onto Buddhist thought an interpretation of causality that arose in European thought in light of the work of Laplace (1749–1847), who hypothesized a purely mechanical, and therefore fully determined universe. The issue of the nature of the self enters their comparison in the following claim, that "Buddhism denies that there are any enduring agents to have freedom."⁵⁴ At this

point it should be clear to the reader that the claim is false, conflating as it does permanent with enduring.

NOT YOUR DADDY'S MADHYAMAKA!

Some of the argumentation appears to be philosophically and scientifically naïve. An example is a rebuttal offered to what the authors refer to as the reductionist interpretation of Madhyamaka, specifically the analysis of a person into component *skandhas* (which is both misspelled as “skhandas” and misdefined as momentary states). The rebuttal is performed in two parts. In the first, a collection of material objects (in their example, six pens) is distinguished from a living organism. They claim that the characteristic of living, which distinguishes a living organism from a “mere” collection, is really something new and different from the collection of components per se. Unlike adding a seventh pen, “if a living thing—a thing that has the property of life—comes from putting non-living things together, then that new thing has a property that is not merely additive.”⁵⁵ This sounds as if they are hypostatizing “life” as something more than an emergent property resulting from the items of a collection working together in some fashion.⁵⁶ The second step of the refutation is to claim that living organisms are able to do things that mere collections cannot. As they put it, for a living organism, its “acting potential and its receptive potential are radically different from the acting-potential and the receptive-potential of its components.”⁵⁷

The refutation is only effective if one accepts a simplistic dichotomy between collections of material objects and living organisms, and ignore the many marginal examples lying between the two—there being important borderline cases, such as viruses,⁵⁸ which make the situation look much more like a continuum than the sharp dichotomy Yandell and Netland seem to assume. Similarly, emergent properties do not require the hypostatization of additional characteristics. For example, while neither hydrogen nor oxygen will quench one’s thirst, water can. While neither hydrogen nor oxygen are “thirst quenching,” that does not make “thirst quenching” some mysterious new property added on to the mere combination of the two.

There are many additional issues that could be addressed; however, this review is not the appropriate venue to go into each of these. Four more general issues do deserve comment, however. These are the deferral of authority, the selectivity of the authors’ representation

(including a woefully inadequate consideration of Yogācāra), the presumption of comparability, and the use of generalities.

DEFERRAL OF AUTHORITY

Beyond the factual and interpretive errors, and the distortions imposed by the framework of an exclusivist theology of religions, however, there are some serious problems with the representation of Buddhism provided. At the most basic level, they engage in a deferral of authorship. They never, that I recall, admit that it is their image of Buddhist thought that is being presented, referring rather to such things as “typical Buddhism.” Additionally, throughout their treatment appears to be almost entirely dependent on secondary (or even what might be considered tertiary) sources. Working at this level involves the interpretive construction of a representation that is in turn based on interpretive representations. Since there is no foundation that is not itself an interpretive representation, the representation constructed needs to be claimed as an author’s own, rather than cloaked in the pseudo-authority of phrases such as “traditional Buddhism.”

SELECTIVITY OF REPRESENTATION

Perhaps equally distorting is the fact that their doctrinal section only addresses Indian Buddhist thought and rather limited portions of that as well. No doubt they had good reason to not attempt to undertake a comprehensive treatment, as that would have led to such complex issues as the self-empty/other-empty debate in Tibet, the sudden/gradual debate in East Asia, the development of tantric Buddhism, the linkage of *tathāgatagarbha* and *ālayavijñāna* in *The Awakening of Faith* and its influence on the development of East Asian Buddhist conceptions of buddha-nature, and so on.

However, even within the range of Buddhist thought to which they limit themselves, the lack of adequate attention paid to Yogācāra (Pudgalavāda gets more adequate treatment) obviates any claim that the Buddhism they have addressed is “typical Buddhism.” Even the criterion of selection that they put forward to justify their treatment of doctrinal points (“relevance to the proposed Buddhist diagnosis of our fundamental religious disease and its proposed cure”⁵⁹) does not justify reducing Yogācāra to one of two versions of “Buddhist reductionism” and describing it solely as holding the view “that there are only conscious states (unowned mental states).”⁶⁰ This caricature excludes any

of the Yogācāra discussions of many of the same issues that Yandell and Netland themselves find problematic, such as continuity of identity over time.⁶¹

THE PRESUMPTION OF COMPARABILITY

Like almost all comparative studies this work suffers because of the presumption that the two terms of the comparison are instances of the same general category, and are therefore comparable. This is now a very long-standing problem in the comparative study of religions, dating to the nineteenth century when the modern category of “religion” was created. It is in fact problematic whether the category of religion applies to Buddhism in such a fashion as to allow for direct comparison. In contrast to this presumption of comparability, the relation between Buddhism and Christianity is better understood as one of “complementary incommensurability,” in the phrase of my friend and colleague, Peter Yuichi Clark.

GENERALITIES

It is probably the case that the audience that Yandell and Netland intend to address is one for whom the generalities—Christianity and Buddhism—are operative. It may, therefore, seem inappropriate to point out the vast variety of actual forms grouped together under these general categories. (Indeed, it might be dismissed as merely knee-jerk postmodernism.)

There are, however, two consequences that follow from Yandell and Netland’s use of generalities. The first is that it creates a situation in which the two terms of the comparison are incommensurate—as Daijaku Kinst, another friend and colleague, recently said, not just apples and oranges, but rather apples and boats. Second, the incommensurability is, however, cloaked beneath the wide and uncritical use of the generalities. This is a problem that unfortunately continues in the various comparative projects, that is, comparative religions, comparative philosophy, and comparative psychology.

CONCLUSION

Almost two decades ago now, while discussing the project of comparative philosophy, D. Seyfort Ruegg noted that

comparison of the type “Buddhism and X” or “Nagarjuna and Y” can only take us just so far. More often than not, it has proved to be of rather restricted heuristic value, and methodologically it often turns out to be more problematical and constraining than illuminating. In the frame of synchronic description this kind of comparison tends to veil or obliterate important structures in thought, whilst from the viewpoint of historical diachrony it takes little account of genesis and context. For however much a philosophical insight or truth transcends, *in se*, any particular epoch or place, in its expression a philosophy is perforce conditioned historically and culturally.⁶²

In the case of Yandell and Netland’s *Buddhism: A Christian Exploration and Appraisal*, however, we find the intellectual problems created by employing a dehistoricized and decontextualized construction of Buddhism compounded by the polemic intent of proving Buddhism inferior to Christianity.

NOTES

1. <https://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=3855>, accessed April 3, 2014.

2. Much the same threads are found in the introduction to the issue of the *Areopagus Journal: The Journal of the Apologetics Resource Center*, which includes an essay on Buddhism by Keith Yandell that discusses some of the same themes found in the book under consideration here. The introduction, “Veritas: Eastern Religions” by the journal’s senior editor Craig Branch, explains the thinking behind devoting an issue of the journal to this topic. The first subheading, titled “Why We Should Care about the Eastern Turn,” opens with the following: “There are several reasons why the Body of Christ needs to become acquainted with these religions. One reason is our missional calling and responsibility both at home and abroad. Another reason is that there are many contemporary off-shoots of these parent religions that are impacting Western culture and gaining followers. A third reason is the concern not only for the spiritual death of its followers, but also the growing physical harm, persecution, and murder being conducted by certain militant subgroups of Hinduism in the Far East.” (Craig Branch, “Veritas: Eastern Religions,” *Areopagus Journal: The Journal of the Apologetics Resource Center* [May–June 2009]: 3). It is noteworthy that where one might have expected the usual demonization of Islam, one finds in this case Hinduism being highlighted as the dangerous religion.

3. Resentment is used here in its Nietzschean sense of *ressentiment*, that is, the anger directed by one who, perceiving a status differential, is angry toward those they perceive to be higher than they are, even though the latter may

have no actual responsibility for the status differential.

4. This is particularly relevant as one of the two authors has published on the philosophy of religion. See Keith E. Yandell, *The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and idem., *Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999). We can trace the mistaken conception of Buddhist theories of the self found in the book under review here to the first of these two, in which the author treats *nirvana* as an experience (26–27). The second gives rather more attention to Buddhism, but commits the error common to comparative philosophy of assuming the universality of Western philosophic positions, into which Buddhism is made to fit. This is the Procrustean fallacy discussed in the conclusion.

5. Hugh Nicholson, “The Reunification of Theology and Comparison in the New Comparative Theology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77, no. 3 (Sept. 2009): 609–646.

6. Russell T. McCutcheon, “‘Just Follow the Money’: The Cold War, The Humanistic Study of Religion, and the Fallacy of Insufficient Cynicism,” *Culture and Religions* 5, no. 1 (2004): 41–69.

7. Nicholson, “Reunification,” 616ff.

8. John Hick, “On Conflicting Religious Truth-Claims,” *Religious Studies* 19, no. 4 (Dec. 1983): 485–491. That this system is limited to Christian theology, and not itself universalizable, is evident from Hick’s discussion of the three categories as different ways of thinking about how people claim “awareness of the divine” (487).

9. Nicholson, “Reunification,” 617.

10. Hick, “On Conflicting Religious Truth-Claims,” 487.

11. Hick, “On Conflicting Religious Truth-Claims,” 487. Note that Nicholson goes on to propose a “new comparative theology” to supersede all three positions in the theology of religions (note 5 above).

12. One commonly found instance of the latter is the tripartite system used for example by Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga*, that is, morality (*śīla*), contemplation (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). This is a developmental sequence—the foundation is learning to control one’s behavior in light of understanding karma. *Śīla* is the necessary basis for engaging in and sustaining practice—of which a very wide variety are to be found across Buddhist history. That is, if one is not living a morally informed lifestyle, it is impossible to engage in such practices as meditation, contemplation, visualization, or *sādhana* on a sustained basis. It is not the case, at least in the majority of emic interpretations that I’ve myself encountered, that morality is of inherent value, that is, that moral action in isolation gives rise to awakening, but

rather that it is a requisite for a life that enables one to engage in practice. This contrasts with at least one strain of Christian soteriology in which moral behavior, in the sense of overcoming—or perhaps living in dynamic struggle with—one’s naturally sinful nature, is inherently salvific. This helps us to understand perhaps the emphasis the authors give to the ethical quandaries produced by certain “absolutist” interpretations of Zen, discussed *infra*. Similarly, contemplative skill is not itself the goal of practice. Rather, contemplative practices are (again, for the most part) intended to allow the practitioner insight into the way things actually exist (*bhūtatathatā*). All existing things exist as the result of causes and conditions (*pratītyasamutpāda*) and are therefore empty (*śūnya*) of any essence (*ātman*). This insight is wisdom (*prajñā*). Note that despite the frequent use of the modernist rhetoric of experience found in many of the popular representations of Buddhism, such insight is not a mystical, or transformative, or even dramatic experience. Rather, it is cumulative, a gradual increasing of clarity regarding the fundamentally transitory and dissatisfying character of all existing things. Even those traditions that fall on the “sudden” side of the sudden-gradual divide in Buddhist thought usually entail a great deal of preparatory practice before the sudden moment in which awakening takes place.

13. Quoting from Mark Juergensmeyer, “Thinking Globally about Religion,” in *Global Religions: An Introduction*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7; appears in Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 69.

14. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 69.

15. *Ibid.*, 102.

16. *ibid.*, 103. The parenthetical insertion of “diminishing” evidences, like the publisher’s blurb, the authors’ attitude of defending a culture under attack by more powerful forces. This theme is one that goes deep in the Christian mythos, to the very earliest days of the church when it was a threatened minority. Since the time of Constantine, however, Christianity has been the dominant worldview in the Western world, so much so that prior to the rise of nation-states, the West was referred to as Christendom.

17. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/pat-robertson-recalls-days-when-gays-were-stoned-death-blames-satan-gay-rights>, accessed May 8, 2014.

18. It is sadly ironic that in their section on the history of Buddhism they fail to historically contextualize a Buddhist author to whom they refer.

19. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 145.

20. Reid B. Locklin and Hugh Nicholson, “The Return of Comparative Theology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 2 (2010): 494.

21. Alexander von Rospatt, *The Buddhist Doctrine of Momentariness: A Survey of the Origins and Early Phase of this Doctrine up to Vasubandhu* (1995; repr.,

Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies and Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai America, forthcoming), 1.

22. *Ibid.*, 80.

23. Victoria Urubshurow, "Transformation of Religious Symbol in Indian Buddhism: Reflections on Method from a Reading of Mus's *Barabudur*," *Numen* 35 (1988): 261. Internal citations are to Paul Mus, *Barabudur: esquisse d'une histoire du bouddhisme fondee sur la critique archeologique des textes*, 2 vols. (1935; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1978).

24. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 106.

25. This is not to be confused with the philosophic debates over whether accepting the truth of some claim entails also believing it. Rather the issue is the distinction between the salvific role of belief in much of Christianity, and the assertions of impermanence, and so on in Buddhism. In the Buddhist view the latter are true whether one believes them or not, and failure to recognize their truth means simply that one will remain frustrated and dissatisfied. In much of Christian thought, however, proper belief (orthodoxy) is either causally productive of or a necessary condition of salvation.

26. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 196.

27. *Ibid.*

28. See Samuel Moyn, "Jewish and Christian Philosophy of History," in Aviezer Tucker, ed., *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

29. According to Peter Sloterdijk, "What was previously called philosophy of history amounted without exception to delusional systems of prematurity. They always led to hasty montages of their material onto violently drawn straight lines, as if the thinkers had been seized by an overactivity syndrome that chased them towards the wrong goals." He goes on to describe grand narratives, including the Christian, as having "been seen through as unsuitable attempts to seize power over the world's complexity." Peter Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital: For a Philosophical Theory of Globalization*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 4–5. This applies to the Buddhist/Hindu philosophies of history as well, so setting that up as the alternative to the Christian philosophy of history is also not sustainable. At the same time, Sloterdijk is clear that this does not mean that we should, even if we could, simply ignore history.

30. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 121.

31. Using "nature" and "essence" as synonyms leads the authors into a confused claim that "common sense belief" is a more accurate version of existence than Buddhist thought: "Another basic error of common sense belief is said to be the idea that things have natures or essences, what the

tradition often calls ‘own being.’ There are feature that a cow, for example, must have in order to be a cow. The features that are necessary and sufficient for Bessie, the cow out in the field, to be a cow constitute Bessie’s nature. So common sense holds” (Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 121). Since, as discussed here, Buddhist thought does not reject the idea of characteristics or natures (*lakṣaṇa*), the argument completely fails. To that extent, Buddhist thought and “common sense” are in agreement. Again, what Buddhist thought generally rejects is the idea of a permanent, eternal, absolute, or unchanging essence of some kind, not characteristics or natures. Here, common sense and Buddhist thought are also in agreement, since common sense cannot establish the truth of a metaphysical claim, such as the existence of “cow-essences.”

32. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 122.

33. Ibid.

34. See Jayarava Attwood, “Papañca 1: Translating Papañca” (posted 23 March 2012) and “Papañca 2: Understanding Papañca” (posted 30 March 2012), *Jayarava’s Raves* (blog), <http://jayarava.blogspot.com>.

35. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 122.

36. A critical reading will stumble over the rhetorical use of “obviously” in this section. Once one steps back from the Western philosophic horror of infinite regressions, it is not obvious at all. Nor is it obvious that the dichotomy of either an infinite regression or an Aristotelian unmoved mover of some kind is not a false one. In regard to the rhetorical use of “obviously,” consider the discussion of “surely,” in Daniel Dennett, *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 53ff.

37. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 158–159.

38. Unfortunately some present-day writers on Buddhism continue to be influenced by an older philosophically idealist interpretation of Buddhism, thus confusing this distinction. Such interpretations are eisegetic readings onto Buddhism of pre-existing presumptions about what it means to be “spiritual,” and are particularly frequent in the self-help versions of Buddhism.

39. It would appear to reflect the uncritical appropriation of the postmodern language of constructs by some (or many) present-day Buddhist apologists, who themselves may not clearly distinguish the psychological and ontological meanings.

40. Ruth Sonam, “Introduction,” in Rgyal-tshab dar-ma-rin-chen, *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas: Gyel-tsap on Āryadeva’s Four Hundred*, trans. and ed. Ruth Sonam (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1994), 7.

41. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 128ff.

42. Like all technical philosophic terms, rendering them into a foreign

language as well as the even more complicated foreign philosophic discourse, is complicated. For example, Michael Broido has noted that “The Sanskrit word *satya* has been used as an ontological category (‘reality’), as a property of statements or propositions (‘true,’ ‘truth’), and perhaps as an axiological category (‘genuine’),” and goes on to add “veridical sensory cognition.” Michael Broido, “Padma dKar-po on the Two *Satyas*,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 8, no. 2 (1985): 20–21.

43. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 128, internal citation to Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 69–72, elided.

44. *Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (2008 revision), s.v. “sat,” <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>, accessed April 29, 2014.

45. Jay L. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 91.

46. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 127. Similarly, “The assumption that anything that exists dependently necessarily lacks a nature or essence is also not a necessary truth” (128).

47. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 127. I am tempted to offer as a general principle the assertion that any author hypostatizing an omnipotent god who is capable of doing whatever is needed in order to win the argument is cheating. Such an argument is constrained in the same way that all possible worlds arguments are, that is, they can only show what is not possible because it is contradictory.

48. I am well aware that this is a complex philosophic issue. It has been debated since Leibnitz formulated the categories. Not everyone agrees to the view presented here. For example, Kant, whose first Critique is intended to resolve the problem of synthetic a priori truths, articulated an important and highly nuanced view. Similarly Quine argued against the view presented here as well. See Mario Gómez-Torrente, “Logical Truth,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/logical-truth>. Yandell and Netland, however, employ the terminology without reference to any nuancing, and it seems, therefore, reasonable to take them as using the categories in the way that they are commonly employed in contemporary Western philosophic discourse.

49. The view on this that I have come to is that such claims are “universally applicable” while at the same time historically contingent, having been produced at some particular time and place in response to some particular problem.

50. Asaf Federman, “What Buddhism Taught Cognitive Science about Self, Mind, and Brain,” *Enrahonar: Quaderns de Filosofia* 47 (2011): 47.

51. I would argue that in fact the term “self” for *ātman* has been vastly misleading, in that it almost invariably leads English speaking readers to think only in terms of the personal, psychological self. As seen in Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamikākārikā*, the analysis extends to all essences, that is, the idea that there is something permanent, eternal, absolute, or unchanging that can be attributed to either persons or entities.

52. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 131. Emphasis in original.

53. *Ibid.*, 185.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*, 168–169.

56. Though they do not go into the matter here, one suspects that members of their presumably intended audience would understand that they are thinking of something along the lines of a soul that God adds to the collection of components comprising a human being that makes for a person.

57. *Ibid.*, 169. We note that the authors give no explanation of how they are using “acting potential” or “receptive potential.” The terms do not appear to be at all standard philosophic terms, as a search of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* revealed no entries using these terms. Conversely, *Google Books* only gave this work itself in response to a search for these terms. The terms “action potential” and “receptor potential” are used in biology to describe how the electrochemistry of sensation and action is affected at the level of transfer across membranes, such as the synapses between neurons. Unfortunately, what this might have to do with their argument escapes this reader, except perhaps as giving a patina of scientificity to their apparently vitalist ideas.

58. See, for example, Luis P. Villarreal, “Are Viruses Alive?,” *Scientific American* (Dec. 2004), available online at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/are-viruses-alive-2004>.

59. Yandell and Netland, *Buddhism*, 145.

60. *Ibid.*, 167.

61. Their focus on Madhyamaka perhaps follows from the Tibetan doxographic placement of it as the highest teaching, or from accepting the characterization of Yogācāra as psychology, and therefore of less interest to their own philosophic inquiry. In the latter case we see another of the problems endemic to the comparativist projects, that is, presuming that the disciplinary categories found in Western intellectual discourse are themselves universally appropriate—when they are not.

62. David Seyfort Ruegg, “Some Reflections on the Place of Philosophy in the Study of Buddhism,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 154–155.

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The *Pacific World*—Its History

Throughout my life, I have sincerely believed that Buddhism is a religion of peace and compassion, a teaching which will bring spiritual tranquillity to the individual, and contribute to the promotion of harmony and peace in society. My efforts to spread the Buddha's teachings began in 1925, while I was a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley. This beginning took the form of publishing the *Pacific World*, on a bi-monthly basis in 1925 and 1926, and then on a monthly basis in 1927 and 1928. Articles in the early issues concerned not only Buddhism, but also other cultural subjects such as art, poetry, and education, and then by 1928, the articles became primarily Buddhistic. Included in the mailing list of the early issues were such addressees as the Cabinet members of the U.S. Government, Chambers of Commerce, political leaders, libraries, publishing houses, labor unions, and foreign cultural institutions.

After four years, we had to cease publication, primarily due to lack of funds. It was then that I vowed to become independently wealthy so that socially beneficial projects could be undertaken without financial dependence on others. After founding the privately held company, Mitutoyo Corporation, I was able to continue my lifelong commitment to disseminate the teachings of Buddha through various means.

As one of the vehicles, the *Pacific World* was again reactivated, this time in 1982, as the annual journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies. For the opportunity to be able to contribute to the propagation of Buddhism and the betterment of humankind, I am eternally grateful. I also wish to thank the staff of the Institute of Buddhist Studies for helping me to advance my dream to spread the spirit of compassion among the peoples of the world through the publication of the *Pacific World*.

Yehan Numata
Founder, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai

In Remembrance

In May of 1994, my father, Yehan Numata, aged 97 years, returned to the Pure Land after earnestly serving Buddhism throughout his lifetime. I pay homage to the fact that the *Pacific World* is again being printed and published, for in my father's youth, it was the passion to which he was wholeheartedly devoted.

I, too, share my father's dream of world peace and happiness for all peoples. It is my heartfelt desire that the *Pacific World* helps to promote spiritual culture throughout all humanity, and that the publication of the *Pacific World* be continued.

Toshihide Numata
Chairman, Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai