BOOK REVIEWS

Spells, Images, and Maṇḍalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals. By Koichi Shinohara. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. 352 pages. $55 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-2311-6614-0.

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Koichi Shinohara's *Spells, Images, and Maṇḍalas* is perhaps the most important book on esoteric or tantric Buddhism (Ch. *mijiao*; Jpn. *mikkyō* 密教) to be published in decades.[1] It reconfigures the history of esoteric rituals through a series of careful studies of some twenty texts translated into Chinese between the fifth and eighth centuries. The book's modest tone and dry prose belie its far-reaching claims. It aims to show us the very creation of esoterism as we know it.

What's new here is that, whereas previous scholars focused on the idea of esoterism and its relationship to elite theorists of China or Japan, Shinohara wants to focus on "the actual content of ritual practice" (p. xii) by looking at spell collections, *maṇḍala* ceremony descriptions, and ritual handbooks. His basic thesis is that "pure" esoteric Buddhism—the kind practiced in Japan today, which privileges

1. Shinohara uses the term "esoteric" in an admittedly anachronistic way in order to conveniently designate the corpus of *dhāraṇī*- and *maṇḍala*-focused texts he discusses. I'll flag the teleology implied by this term here as a warning to readers before adopting Shinohara's terms myself for the remainder of this review.

the *Mahāvairocana* and the *Vajraśekhara* sutras—is not a coherent whole but "a series of distinct phases in a process of continuous evolution" (p. xiv).[2] That is to say, it is an ordering of things, a system created out of disparate (and often resistant) parts. Stated baldly in this way, the book's central claim seems obvious—things are more complicated than they seem, the various elements of a system or text are in "negotiation" or "tension" or what have you. Yes, everything deserves more nuance; but Shinohara goes further to tell us exactly *how* the spells and images of the early ritual books evolved into a system. The result is a "hypothetical reconstruction" (p. xi) that is admittedly speculative but generally plausible, and, like the best historical hypotheses, has strong explanatory power for large swaths of evidence that have rarely been considered in Western academia before.

The general outline of Shinohara's hypothesis is that spells (*dhāraṇī*) went from being simply recited (with miraculous visions confirming their efficacy) to becoming associated with images of specific deities, which were then synthesized in *maṇḍalas*, which soon began to stress visualization instead of image worship, until finally the practitioner was encouraged to identify the *maṇḍala*'s many deities with the central deity, and the central deity with him- or herself. In this way, "pure" esoteric Buddhism developed through a process of accretion and deliberate systematization. It also means that the oral practice of spell recitation produced a rich visual culture that would become standardized into two parallel traditions: mental visualization and physical iconography.

In section 1, comprised of chapters 1–4, Shinohara proposes three basic ritual "scenarios" that underlie his later analysis. In the first scenario (chap. 1), a practitioner recites a spell in hopes of receiving specific, this-worldly benefits, and the ritual's efficacy is confirmed by a vision of one or multiple deities. To illustrate this scenario, the author examines two Chinese *dhāraṇī* collections from the fifth and sixth centuries.[3] The entries in these collections are heterogeneous in nature,

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2. See, for example, works by Michel Strickmann, Ryūichi Abé, Robert Scharf, Ronald Davidson, Fabio Rambelli, Robert Gimello, Charles Orzech, and Paul Copp.

3. These are *The Divine Spells of the Great Dhāraṇīs Taught by the Seven Buddhas and Eight Bodhisattvas* 七佛八菩薩所說大陀羅尼神咒經 (*T.* 1332, fourth to fifth centuries) and the *Miscellaneous Collection of Dhāraṇīs* 陀羅尼雜集 (*T.* 1336, early sixth century). Translations of titles follow Shinohara.

ranging from a simple listing of the spell and its effects, to complex accounts of the spell's origins and the deity to whom it should be addressed. Redundancies suggest that the collections are hodgepodges of spells that grew over time. At this point, the spells are not strongly associated with icons of deities. Instead, what is most common to these collections is the assumption that practitioners will experience spontaneous visions to confirm the efficacy of the ritual.

In the second ritual scenario (chap. 2), the spell is recited before an image of a deity, which will sometimes speak or emit light if the ritual has been performed properly. To trace the development from the first to the second scenario, Shinohara analyzes four translated texts from roughly 570–750 related to Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara, which he proposes are different stages in the evolution of the same ritual.[4] These ritual texts share a common core consisting of two parts: spells directed to Avalokiteśvara and a long series of instructions on how to create a wooden image of the bodhisattva. Shinohara posits that the earliest layer of this core is only the spells without the image since a Sanskrit fragment of the same text contains only this part. If this is true, then an earlier ritual without an image becomes transformed into one performed around a specific icon. Instead of the practitioner having a spontaneous vision, it is a pre-existing icon which moves and speaks in confirmation of the ritual's efficacy. Thus, the ritual of the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara follows the same trajectory as the *dhāraṇī* collections. But these texts go one step further: in two of the later versions, the image worship is replaced with visualization techniques, the sort of thing found in "mature" esoterism.

Which brings us to the third ritual scenario (chap. 3) in which the practitioner is initiated before a whole pantheon arranged in a *maṇḍala*, and various spells are associated with specific deities. The key text in this stage of development is the All-Gathering Maṇḍala Initiation Ceremony (variously called *pujihuitan* 普集會壇 or *douhui daochang* 都會道場) described in the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutras* (translated

4. These are *The Sutra of the Divine Spell of the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara* 十一面觀世音神咒經 (*T*. 1070, trans. ca. 570); part of the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutras* 陀羅尼集經 (T. 901, trans. 654); *The Sutra of the Divine Spell of the Eleven-Faced* 十一面神咒心經 (*T*. 1071, trans. 656); and *The Ritual Manuals for the Recitation of the Secret Mind Mantra of the Eleven-Faced Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* 十一面觀自在菩薩心密言念誦儀軌經 (*T*. 1069, trans. mid eighth century).

and compiled at the capital in 654). As opposed to the earlier spell collections, which were jumbled agglomerations, the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutras* is "carefully organized," full of cross-references, and "presents a coherent and carefully worked out picture" of its *maṇḍalas* (p. 31). In the first eleven fascicles of the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutras*, rituals are numbered, given introductory narratives, and are said to "belong to" a specific deity.

At this point, Shinohara goes into great detail describing the variety of rituals and images associated with the *maṇḍalas* presented in this part of the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutras*, including a fivefold typology of *maṇḍalas* (pp. 45–48), a six-page description of an entry on Vajragarbha (pp. 39–44), and a summary of four other entries (on the Bhṛkuṭi Maṇḍala, pp. 48–49; on the Śṛṅkhalā Maṇḍala Ceremony, pp. 50–53; on the iconography of the deity Prajñāpāramitā, pp. 54–57; and on the iconography of the deity Kuṇḍalin, pp. 56–63). All of this illustrates two main points. The first is that *maṇḍalas* are a way of bringing various deities in relation to each other, making them part of a single system. At this stage, there is no strong hierarchy to the deities; in "water *maṇḍalas*," for example, any deity can serve as the central or king deity. The second main point is that *maṇḍalas* destabilize the status of icons. In the first two ritual scenarios, when the practitioner expects to have a miraculous vision or to see an image come to life, the individual is left with little control. But with *maṇḍalas* comes visualization, and this gives the individual control over the deity. I cannot make a Buddha statue speak, but I can create an image of the Buddha in my mind. Moreover, visualizations make images somewhat redundant. Thus, by the time of the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutras*, icons and elaborate rituals have split.

In the twelfth fascicle of the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutras* (covered in chaps. 3–4), these various rituals are integrated in the All-Gathering Ceremony. This was the "first synthesis in the Esoteric ritual tradition" and proved to be "profoundly influential" (p. 70). The All-Gathering ceremony collects various deities and orders them under the gaze of a central deity. Importantly, this central deity is usually Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara, not Vajragarbha, as would be the case in "mature" esoterism. That is to say, the first systematic esoteric *maṇḍala* developed prior to the dominance of Vajra deities, and may even have emerged out of an Avalokiteśvara cult (p. 142).

In the remainder of chapter 4, Shinohara attempts to show that the All-Gathering Maṇḍala Ceremony is modeled on other post-Vedic rituals in India, especially the *śānti* or appeasement rituals which would later become central to Purāṇic Hinduism. I find these efforts unconvincing, since the parallels drawn are tenuous at best. For example, Shinohara notes the fact that the ceremony grounds for both the All-Gathering Ceremony and the post-Vedic Puṣyasnāna Ceremony must be cleaned of bones, hair, and other undesirable things (p. 75). But the idea of sanctified ritual ground is practically ubiquitous in world religions, so this is not sufficient evidence to posit a shared origin. He also draws a parallel between the two ceremonies' threefold schemas for protection: in the All-Gathering Ceremony, this is the earth, four directions, and sky, while the post-Vedic *Śāntikalpa*, this is the earth, atmosphere, and heavens (p. 86). The three parts listed here are not the same—the *Śāntikalpa*'s schema does not mention the earth. The reader is left to believe that Shinohara wants to assert a shared origin merely based on the existence of a tripartite division in both.

The basic leap in logic made by part 1 is the assumption of an evolutionary model of textual development. Things are assumed to go from simple to more complex; they get bigger, they become systematic. Shinohara occasionally admits that things may have been more complicated, that simpler forms may have been preserved alongside the more complicated ones (pp. xiv–xv), but this sort of qualification is defensive and never actually influences his model of development. We may also note the possibility of spells and rituals becoming *simplified* over time, a possibility Shinohara never seems to consider. In fact, we know that many sutras were indeed abbreviated in translation, since the medieval Chinese audience often had little patience with the expansive, repetitive style that was the norm in India.[5]

In part 2, comprised of chapters 5–6, Shinohara takes a closer look at the emergence of the genre of *dhāraṇī* sutras and the related introduction of visualization practices. What sets Shinohara apart

5. Cf. Dao'an's "Preface" to the *Abridged Mahāprañjāpāramitā Sutra* 摩訶鉢羅若波羅蜜經抄序, in which he describes translators who, finding "the words [of sutras] strange and endless, excise sometimes five hundred to a thousand words" 向語文無以異，或千五百刈而不存 (*T.* 2145, 55:52b). The early catalogue *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 (comp. 515), for example, lists many "extracts" (*chao* 抄) and more than a dozen "smaller versions" (*xiaopin* 小品) of scriptures.

from previous scholarship is his decision to start from a series of so-called "miscellaneous" *dhāraṇī* sutras translated by Bodhiruci in the early eighth century instead of the *Mahāvairocana* and the *Vajraśekhara* sutras that would become normative for the later tradition. These represent a further development from the three scenarios of part 1, in which a sequence of spells "maps" the ritual ceremony and come to be associated with specific *mudrās*. In chapter 5, the author examines three esoteric sutras translated by Bodhiruci, along with other translations of the same sutras.[6] The fundamental assumption is that these different translations, which can vary enormously in their content, represent different Sanskrit originals that had developed over time. In general, the earlier versions of these sutras have little to say about visualization practice, while the later versions contain extensive visual instructions in service of more elaborate ritual ceremonies. Moreover, the later versions use a new term, "accomplishment" (*chengjiu* 成就), to describe ritual efficacy.

Shinohara's assumption that the different Chinese versions represent Sanskrit originals from very different time periods is another major logical leap that the reader must approach with caution. For the second of the texts considered in chapter 5, we are looking at four translations which were all completed in the first decade of the eighth century. That is to say, they are all contemporaneous. There is no evidence for dating one version earlier than another, aside from the way it fits into Shinohara's hypothesis. The conclusion is used as an interpretive lens for the evidence under consideration. Moreover, at least two of these translations—those by Śikṣānanda and Bodhiruci—have been found in several manuscripts from the Dunhuang corpus, dating to the late medieval period (eighth to tenth centuries). This proves definitively that at least one "earlier" version which placed less emphasis on visualization was consistently used by practitioners in later periods. This fact in itself does not disprove Shinohara's hypothesis, but it

6. The three Bodhiruci sutras are *The Secret Dhāraṇī That Resides in the Great Jewel Pavilion Sutra* 廣大包樓閣善住祕密陀羅尼經 (*T.* 1006; earlier translation: *T.* 1007; later translation: *T.* 1005), *The Cintāmaṇicakra Dhāraṇī Sūtra* 如意輪陀羅尼經 (*T.* 1080; earlier translations: *T.* 1081, 1082, and 1083), and *The One-Syllable Buddhoṣṇīṣa Cakravartin Sutra* 一字佛頂輪王經 (*T.* 951; earlier translation: *T.* 952; later translation *T.* 950).

does make it far less certain. The hypothetical development of *dhāraṇī* sutras is not so linear as presented here.

In chapter 6, Shinohara examines the tradition of Amoghapāśa sutras, looking at four predecessors to Bodhiruci's massive 33-fascicle translation.[7] The earliest versions describe rituals in which a spell is recited 1008 times in front of an image of Avalokiteśvara. If successful, "the body of the practitioner emits light, and Avalokiteśvara appears, rubs the top of his head, and fulfills his wishes" (p. 142). Later versions of the Amoghapāśa sutras incorporate the same spells and rituals into a *maṇḍala*, following Shinohara's proposed model of development. The evidence here is slightly stronger, since the translations are not so tightly clustered together—the first version appears in 587, 120 years prior to Bodhiruci's. Still, we should remain cautious in assuming that date of translation closely correlates to an imagined Sanskrit original's date of compilation. In any case, Bodhiruci's expanded translation is important for introducing the visualization of individual syllables as part of the ritual program. It also begins to associate *maṇḍalas* more strongly with Vajra deities like Vairocana, especially in its "Universal Liberation" ritual cycle (p. 143). Shinohara's main point, which I find convincing, is that Bodhiruci's version does not bear the influence of the *Mahāvairocana* and *Vajraśekhara* sutras and should instead be understood in relationship to the simpler (and perhaps earlier) esoteric rituals discussed in part 1 of the book.

Part 3 (chaps. 7–8) examines how these earlier *maṇḍala* rituals became codified into the "pure" esoteric Buddhism we recognize today. Again, Shinohara scrupulously avoids privileging the *Mahāvairocana* and *Vajraśekhara* sutras, choosing instead to focus on commentaries and ritual manuals to see how practitioners actually understood the tradition. Chapter 7 examines Yixing's commentary to the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*. His argument centers on interpretations of the rite of flower-throwing, in which the practitioner tosses flower petals onto a *maṇḍala*, such as in the All-Gathering Ceremony where the flower's falls determines the deity with whom the practitioner will be affiliated. The *Guhya Tantra* 蕤呬耶經,[8] which aims to outline practice

7. For Bodhiruci's version, see *T.* 1092. For his predecessors, see *T.* 1093, 1094, 1096, and 1097.

8. Yixing refers to this text under a different transliterated name, *Juxi[jing]* 瞿醯經, which must have predated the earliest extant Chinese translation (*T.*

applicable to all *maṇḍalas*, makes a further distinction—the practitioner will be granted one of three grades of accomplishment depending on where the flower falls in relation to the deity's depicted body (on the upper, middle, or lower parts). Crucially, Yixing's commentary follows the *Guhya Tantra*'s interpretation of the flower-throwing rite, which highlights a hidden tension in these rites. In the earlier All-Gathering Ceremony, which lacked visualization, the flower-throwing rite was necessary because the practitioner had to choose a single deity to address. In the ritual outlined in Yixing's later commentary, the central deity becomes Vairocana, who is in turn identified with all other deities on the *maṇḍala* through visualization. The act of "choosing" a deity through the flower-throwing rite (as in the All-Gathering Ceremony) is illogical since all the deities are now one. Therefore, the *Guhya Tantra*'s idea of grades of accomplishment is necessary to Yixing if he wishes to preserve the flower throwing. The important point here is that visualization renders iconography obsolete, since the pantheon is identified with the central deity, and the central deity is in turn identified with the practitioner's mind (p. 167). The flower-throwing rite must be reinterpreted to match the theories underlying these practices.

Chapter 8 is a study of two ritual manuals attributed to Amoghavajra (705–774).[9] These manuals add a new layer to *maṇḍala* practice: they introduce explicitly yogic visualization techniques to the esoteric ritual tradition. In this version, a general ceremony introduces the practitioner to a sequence of ritual visualizations which can be applied to any deity. Whereas the All-Gathering Ceremony only loosely integrated individual deities into a pantheon, Amoghavajra's manuals produce a totalizing system featuring an entire suite of Vajra deities. In short, "all Esoteric rituals are now understood to follow the model of the initiation ritual" (p. 170), which will define esoteric practice for centuries to come. The earlier of Amoghavajra's manuals (*T.* 1085) draws on the ritual tradition of the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*, while later one (*T.* 1086) more explicitly aligns itself with the *Vajraśekhara-sūtra*. This is important, because it amounts to an application of old mantras (originally applied to Vajra deities) to a new context (Avalokiteśvara deities). The

897), completed some twenty years after Yixing's death.

9. Namely, the *Manual for the Recitation Ritual for Bodhisattva Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara* 觀自在菩薩如意輪念誦儀軌 (*T.* 1085) and the *Cintāmaṇicakra Yoga of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara* 觀自在菩薩如意輪瑜伽 (*T.* 1086).

relationship between these two sets of deities continued to be carefully negotiated for the next few centuries, and even when we leave the esoteric tradition in the late eighth century, it remains in a state of flux.

In the "Conclusion," Shinohara jumps ahead several centuries to twelfth- and thirteenth-century Japan to note some of the ripple effects of the development process he has outlined. In particular, we find a codified iconography of deities in compilations like the *Zuzōshō* 図像抄, *Bessonzakki* 別尊雜記, *Kakuzenshō* 覚禅鈔, and *Asabashō* 阿娑縛抄. This iconography draws on both canonical instructions on how to paint deities found in sutras and the detailed descriptions of visualized deities. However, we must remember that these are essentially two different practices: the creation of physical images for widespread devotion and the creation of mental images for initiates' private rituals. The visualizations were never meant to be portrayed physically—a point that becomes clearer when we consider the practice of visualizing abstract syllables. Thus, Shinohara notes a gap between the production of physical images by artisans and the production of visualizations by ritual specialists, which he traces back to All-Gathering Ceremony in the *Collected Dhāraṇī Sutras* (p. 201). The conclusion also highlights in a concrete way the main thrust of the book: how an oral ritual practice eventually produced a rich visual culture.

Spells, Images, and Maṇḍalas is not for the faint of heart. It is philology. The main content of the book consists of a series of careful studies of repetitive and often boring texts. Translations, editions, textual structures are compared at length. The subsections of each chapter, shorn of its introduction and conclusion, read like entries in a reference work. And perhaps this is how it is best understood: reading notes for *dhāraṇī* sutras, to be consulted by students in a graduate seminar, holding the *Taishō* canon in one hand and *Spells* in the other. Shinohara often spends five or more pages simply summarizing a ritual text, and such passages look less like the content of a scholarly monograph and more like decontextualized *Taishō* marginalia.

This makes for a very odd experience. On the one hand, there are no extended quotations (or translations) from primary sources; on the other hand, the book is composed of almost nothing *but* primary sources, albeit in abbreviated form. The result is that reading *Spells* feels a lot like sitting down to watch a movie, only to have someone stand between you and the screen and describe the characters' every move. Sometimes you want the learned commentator to just get out of the way and let you see for yourself.

But this method is one of the book's strengths, too. Most of these texts are obscure even by esoteric standards, and we have Shinohara to thank for bringing them to our scholarly attention and reaffirming their value to the history of Buddhism. His careful comparison of ritual and textual details yield some fascinating insights (see, for example, his treatment of the flower-throwing ceremony in chapter 7). Few other scholars, working in any language, could pull off Shinohara's mix of macro- and microscopic research. The ability to generate a far-reaching hypothesis (albeit speculative) from the minute particulars of a remote corner of the Chinese Tripiṭaka is enviable indeed. It also shows us that one need not always wade deep into the trenches of epigraphy, excavated epitaphs, or Dunhuang manuscripts to yield fresh insights on medieval Buddhism. Sometimes it is enough to dust off a few neglected volumes of the *Taishō* canon.

At the very least, *Spells, Images, and Maṇḍalas* reaffirms for us the importance of the nascent esoteric Buddhist tradition in medieval China—a phenomenon all too often ignored by Sinologists and Buddhologists alike. Think, for a moment, about the fact that four different translations of a *dhāraṇī* ritual text were produced—some in the capital—in the first decade of the eighth century (discussed in chap. 5). This means that such rituals were popular and important enough to devote an enormous amount of resources to translations of the texts on which they were based. It also means that different temples or lineages offered competing versions of these rituals to practitioners, which implies that there was a high demand for them.

This should make us pause and reconsider the fact that the study of esoteric Buddhism has emerged as a specialized subfield of Buddhology, rarely integrated into the broader cultural histories of East Asia. If esoteric Buddhism was indeed so widespread, should we not expect to feel its influence in, say, medieval Chinese economic history or Tang poetry? Sure, recent scholarship has examined the cultural impact of "Buddhism" as a whole, but what about *dhāraṇī* and *maṇḍala* practice?

Despite a few stylistic infelicities and logical leaps, *Spells, Images, and Maṇḍalas* is a monumental achievement. It offers a coherent and powerful new proposal for the emergence of esoteric Buddhism. It proves the central importance of visual culture to this tradition, charting the shifting relationship between spell, icon, and visualization over the course of four centuries. Anyone who wishes to understand the early history of esoteric Buddhism cannot afford to ignore it.

Real and Imagined: The Peak of Gold in Heian Japan. By Heather Blair. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. 364 pages. $49.95 (hardcover), ISBN 9780674504271.

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Premodern Japan's religious horizon was characterized by a plurality of rituals and traditions that were part of a natural landscape shaped by the practitioners who walked its mountains and trails. Through meticulous research on primary sources and critical engagement with Japanese and Western scholarship, Heather Blair has produced a monograph that addresses the story of Heian period (794–1185) Kinpusen, a mountain known for extensive religious practices as early as the eighth century. By using the hermeneutical distinction between the "real and imagined" Kinpusen, Blair delves in the "cultural prominence" the mountain achieved over the course of the Heian period and shows how this site of religious praxis both shaped, and was shaped by, its illustrious pilgrims. As the author puts it, "This book is a history of religious practice in a particular place, but it is also a history of practices of place-making" (p. 9). Through three parts addressing both the historical and religious meaning of this famous mountain, this monograph provides the first in-depth treatment of Kinpusen in English scholarship and offers a welcome addition to previous works by, for example, Max Moerman, Ian Reader, or Barbara Ambros on Japanese pilgrimage.[1]

The first part, "The Mountain Imagined," is divided in three chapters that revolve around the concept of the "imagined mountain" and its Heian period representations. In chapter 1 Blair introduces the "affective landscape," a concept roughly analogous with the "imagined dimension" of spatiality (p. 19), to untangle the connection between

1. On Kinpusen see also Takuya Hino, "The Daoist Facet of Kinpusen and Sugawara no Michizane Worship in the Dōken Shōnin Meidoki: A Translation of the Dōken Shōnin Meidoki," *Pacific World,* 3rd ser., no. 11 (2009): 273–305. This work is very useful but not included in Blair's bibliography, though Sugawara no Michizane is addressed and "Daoism" is used extensively to refer to praxis at Kinpusen. In addition, the *Fussō Ryakki*, in which the *Dōken Shōnin Meidoki* is included, is mentioned several times in *Real and Imagined*.

the "imagined" and devotional practices of (lay) pilgrims. In doing so, she characterizes the courtier Minamoto no Masazane as a "Buddhist holy man" who imagined crossing the physical and conceptual distance between the city and the mountain as a "Daoist immortal" (p. 21). While transgressing between city and mountain is an interesting line of thinking, the usage of "Daoist immortal" is, however, potentially problematic. As shown by the works of Olivia Kohn and Anna Seidel, in-depth discussions and disagreements exist about the application of the word "Daoism" in the Japanese context.[2] Especially in the case of Classical Japan the presence of Daoism or the image of Daoist immortals is heavily contested. Of course, Blair does not have to solve this discussion in this book, but since Daoism is brought up several times throughout the first part, more engagement with the topic certainly would have been relevant. The debate is briefly mentioned later on in the chapter (p. 42), making one wonder why the concept Daoist immortal is used extensively a central notion from the beginning of this section.

Chapter 2, "The Local Pantheon," is an intriguing part and discusses the centrality of Kinpusen's main deity, Zaō or "the King of the Treasury." The author here argues that Kinpusen does not represent a "local religion" but rather a "localizing religion" and that Zaō exemplifies that "localization went hand in hand with doctrinal and ritual hybridity" (p. 62). Through its theological diversity, the mountain thus was able to attract the attention of the higher nobility in the capital.

In the third chapter, the author proposes the new concept *ritual regime* to approach the "interdependency of ritual and politics" and turns to the question as to why the (governmental) elite went to Kinpusen in the first place. She concludes that the mountain played the role of source of political legitimacy. Thus, "Kinpusen's rise and eventual fall as an elite pilgrimage destination were linked to the culture of the capital and its shifting flows of power," a conclusion Blair reaches through the meticulous analysis of specific Buddhist rites and famous pilgrims such as Fujiwara no Michinaga during the so-called "Regents period" (p. 126). However, while Michinaga is often taken as

2. See for example Anna Seidel, "Chronicle of Taoist Studies in the West 1950–1990," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 5 (1989), 223–347; Livia Kohn, "Taoism in Japan: Positions and Evaluations," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8 (1995): 389–412.

the example of the powerful regent, it is often forgotten that Michinaga was *not* regent (*sesshō* or *kanpaku*) through the majority of his career but in fact *nairan.*[3] It does not change the argumentation, but some of the examples provided by Blair (for example the 1002 *Thirty Lectures on the Lotus Sutra*, pp. 112–114) therefore do not strictly speaking represent the actions of a regent. This chapter provides a very insightful analysis of the connection between ritual development and political change, but I am not convinced that the concept "ritual regime" itself adds to our understanding. The insight that ritual supported sovereignty is quite established, and I would argue that there never was a strict separation between ritual and policy making throughout the pre-modern period in the first place. In other words, couldn't one argue that everything was a "ritual regime" prior to the modern period? Many Japanese historians such as Uejima Susumu (well engaged with by Blair) have done extensive work on the connection between doctrine, ritual, and political change, and the author's usage of these works and her readings of primary sources in itself seem to me strong enough without this new concept.

The second part, "The Real Peak," moves away from the mountain as a concept and over the course of three chapters delves into the actual "pilgrims' engagement with the real mountain" (p. 14). Chapter 4, "The Trail," focuses on Michinaga and Moromichi's pilgrimages and their "decided conservatism in religious practice" (p. 131). Blair's emphasis on precedent and trace is especially helpful in understanding the continuity of this form of ritual practice over the course of the Regents period. In chapter 5, "Offerings and Internments," she offers a detailed analysis of the praxis of burying sutras on Kinpusen and situates these ritual acts within the larger context of the "ritual regime" formulated in the beginning of the book. Insightful is her conclusion that the phenomenon of sutra burial cannot simply be understood by referring to *mappō* (age of declining dharma): "It is also true that *mappō* anxieties did motivate sutra burial at other sites, but it does not follow that the regents buried sutras because they were convinced that the Dharma was fading away" (p. 185). Chapter 6, "Personnel and Politics," discusses Retired Emperor Shirakawa's involvement with Kinpusen and the eventual integration of the mountain into Kōfukuji's organization.

3. Michinaga held the position of *nairan* (a form of inspector) between 995–1016 and was only regent for one year, from 1016–1017.

Here, Blair provides further insight in the conflict between Kinpusen and Kōfukuji and how this should be situated within the larger development of the *kenmon* or "power blocs." However, much research has been done (both in Japanese and in English) on the formation of exoteric-esoteric lineages under the Retired Emperors and their rituals in relation to Kōfukuji or Ninnaji (p. 205), but unfortunately Blair does not mention recent scholarship on this matter.[4] Nevertheless, this remains a strong chapter.

The third and final part, "Changing Landscapes," brings together concepts and examples of the first two parts and analyzes the "religious culture of Kinpusen in the wake of the eleventh-century boom in elite pilgrimage" (p. 14). The seventh chapter, "The Fall of the Peak of Gold," deals with the period following Shirakawa, while the final chapter 8, "Engi and Interchange," discusses the genre of *engi* (origin chronicles) as sources of authority that came to influence both the conceptual and the institutional landscape (p. 268). In this final chapter, Blair describes the fascinating case of the recluse En no Gyōja and how he was portrayed as a "founder-figure" though the *Ōmine Engi*. This final discussion is followed by an insightful epilogue, "The Rise of Shugendō," in which she discusses the influence of Shugendō on the perception of Kinpusen's past. Blair convincingly argues that all too often the mountain's early history has been discussed in the light of the later Shugendō tradition. In contrast, this monograph presents the mountain in its specific context of the Heian period and shows how Kinpusen and its practices "...later became part of the medieval landscape dominated by power blocs and characterized by religious ferment" (p. 290).

While the book engages well with Japanese scholarship and introduces interesting primary sources, there are a few issues I found at times distracting. First, Blair uses her own translations for terms that have already been established in English scholarship. Of course, in certain instances this can be justified, but most of the time these new versions simply do not fit the time and context. For example, using *kanpaku* as "viceroy" (p. 213), *bettō* as "stewart" (p. 236), or referring to the court as "the Crown" (p. 225) does not always work. Second, and more relevant to the book's argumentation, is the term "trace." Blair

4. Mikael Bauer, "Conflating Monastic and Imperial Lineage: The Retired Emperors' Period Reformulated," *Monumenta Nipponica* 67, no. 2 (2012).

coins the concept "trace-ism" and provides the Japanese term *ato shugi* for this (p. 131). However, such a pre-modern or modern term does not exist. It does not seem necessary for Western scholars to come up with new Japanese words. Blair's good usage of sources and insightful engagement with Japanese historians could stand on itself without this.

With *Real and Imagined* Heather Blair has produced a monograph that draws our attention to important features of pre-modern Japanese religiosity on the one hand and the connection between religious praxis and institutional change on the other. In addition, she has done so by actively engaging with existing Japanese scholarship and introducing a rich variety of primary sources. While I raise certain concerns regarding the usage of Daoism or the formulation of new theoretical concepts, I am convinced that this monograph is an important contribution to the field, and for this reason it is already part of my own undergraduate and graduate reading seminar. The connections between center and periphery, religious praxis and institutional developments, and, implicitly, the contrast between diachronic and synchronic views on history are at the heart of this new study. For this reason it provides an ideal position to further explore Classical and Medieval Japanese religiosity.

***Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy*. By Jay L. Garfield. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 400 pages. $99.00 (hardcover), ISBN 0190204338.**

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Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy is Jay L. Garfield's call to the philosophical community to respect Buddhist philosophy and to consider teaching it alongside the Western core. As Garfield sees it, Buddhist philosophy has in its history dealt with problems not unlike those faced by Western philosophy, deriving both similar and dissimilar positions, and thus the two can be put into conversation with relative ease. Garfield's work is comprised of nine chapters, each dealing

with a specific philosophic topic or theme, followed by a postscript on methodology.

The first chapter, "What is Buddhist Philosophy?" (which also serves as an introduction), describes what Garfield understands to be Buddhist philosophy. Garfield states that his work will be neither encyclopedic nor a systematic introduction to any, let alone all, of the Buddhist tradition. He openly expresses that he will ignore significant pieces of the Buddhist tradition such as karma and rebirth, since, in his view, the more "soteriological, cosmological, devotional, and practice concerns" of Buddhists generally are not "principal sites of engagement with Western philosophy" (p. 4). He also notes his downplay of the philological elements ever present in Buddhist studies for the reason that it is not the practice of Western philosophy, i.e., "we philosophers don't do that when we quote Kant, Descartes or Aristotle" (p. 6). According to Garfield, philosophical thinking for Buddhists is not knowledge for its own sake; rather, it is aimed at describing the "primal confusion" humankind has about the nature of reality. As a consequence of this confusion, Buddhists hold the human condition to be characterized by dissatisfaction (*dukkha*), for in taking ourselves and other things to be permanent, independent, and with their own nature, humankind is constantly pained and stressed by the true nature of phenomena. It is not enough, however, to describe this reality of our collective confusion; for Buddhists philosophy is also tasked with illuminating the nature of reality for all people, thus putting an end to their dissatisfaction.

The following two chapters deal with the metaphysical principles of pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism, "interdependence and impermanence" and "emptiness," respectively. Following the theme of primal confusion in the human condition, Buddhist metaphysics is aimed at demonstrating the impermanent and conditioned nature of phenomena. Over the course of these two chapters Garfield points to and examines two notions that, according to him, are key to Buddhist metaphysics: the doctrine of two truths and dependent origination.

Pre-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna Buddhists view the relationship between these two notions differently. Mainstream schools hold that the conventional and the ultimate truths refer to ontological categories, those being ultimate momentary tropes called *dharmas*, and the conventional composite entities which are composed of *dharmas*. Thus, according to Garfield, pre-Mahāyāna Buddhists hold to the doctrine

of mereological dependence of wholes. On the basis of this formula Garfield explains how Buddhists understand causality, concept formation, and temporality all the while pointing to Western analogs. Mahāyāna Buddhists, particularly the Mādhyamikas, are hostile to the pre-Mahāyāna ontological view of the two truths; they hold, rather, that all which is dependently originated exists in and through convention alone. That is to say, nothing has an ultimate, independent existence (*śūnyatā*). The Mādhyamikas, on Garfield's account, hold as integral to their position the twin pillars of anti-realism and anti-essentialism. Garfield also touches on the Yogācāra take on emptiness in the three-nature theory (*trisvabhāva*) as well the syncretist views of Fazang, Śāntarakṣita, and Ju Mipham.

The fourth chapter, "The Self," brings the theme of primal confusion to the question of the nature of selfhood. This question is a deeply important one for Buddhists, who of course hold the self to be an illusion of our unexamined experience. Garfield sets out in the chapter to observe the issue of the self from four conceptual frameworks: diachronic identity; syncretic identity; personal essence; and the minimal. He looks at these various positions as they arise within Western and Indian philosophy and then turns to a dialogue between the Westerners and the Buddhists. The upshot here is that Buddhists, in terms of their theories about the self, have to explain themselves on four points: how to account for the persistent illusion of the self; how to account for the temporality of existence, which includes the possibilities of memory, intention, and anticipation; how, in Kantian terms, "we experience not a manifold of intuitions, but the intuition of a manifold" (p. 117); and how it is that we are incapable of mistaking ourselves and our experiences for those of others.

In the fifth chapter, "Consciousness," Garfield brings Buddhist philosophy into conversation with contemporary consciousness studies. He explores issues such as the "hard-problem" of consciousness, reflexivity, qualia, zombies, and self-knowledge, all the while providing various Buddhist perspectives on these topics. However, before delving into these topics Garfield addresses issues among Buddhist thinkers on consciousness, such as the question of consciousness as the designation of the basis of the self; whether the *skandha* of *vijñāna* is the illusory self or the conventional self; and the status of the Yogācāra doctrine of the ā*layavijñāna* or "foundation consciousness." Garfield also leads his reader through the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist dialectical doxography

of theories of perceptual experience, beginning with the Vaibhāṣika school, then to the Sautrāntika, Yogācāra, and Madhyamaka schools. Key to the Buddhist understanding of consciousness, according to Garfield, is that it is no mere thing or a property of something but a complex of relations and processes in and between the *skandhas* which form the body-mind complex in Buddhist psychology.

Likely stemming from the importance of consciousness studies for contemporary analytic philosophy, this chapter is the longest in the book. Those who feel that Buddhist philosophy has the most to offer in this arena will be vindicated by Garfield's careful work in this chapter; that being said, they may not agree with his outcome. Garfield tends to endorse the views of the Mādhyamikas Candrakīrti and Tsongkhapa, for whom consciousness is understood as a complex of processes which are profoundly opaque to introspection. Thus, any robust structural account of consciousness, on this view, is bound to err, taking introspective illusion for reality in some way or another. Further, the perhaps more radical conclusion of this view is that there is nothing "what it is like" to be a conscious being. It is this view which has the most to offer contemporary consciousness studies according to Garfield.

Chapter 6, "Phenomenology," can be considered a continuation of the discussion started in the previous chapter on the opacity of the mind to itself. Though the express intent of the chapter is to demonstrate how the positions of Husserl and Heidegger are not as different as they appear, it ends with a critique of the appeal to transcendental subjectivity in Husserlian phenomenology and in the Pramāṇavāda-Yogācāra of Dignāga. Criticism of transcendental subjectivity and its various iterations is not at all new; rather, the truly curious thing about Garfield's chapter is his stance on the accounts of meditators in light of the opacity and complexity of the interior.

While Garfield acknowledges that the "reports of meditators are often important—though not the only—evidence for certain Buddhist claims about deep phenomenology" (p. 183), it seems that not all reports are equal in his view. Reports on consciousness made by those who "argue that consciousness is immediately knowable, self-revealing and hence always in principle the object of veridical apperception" (p. 184) are rejected by Garfield. He is unconvinced by the arguments for this understanding of consciousness, for he states that "they rely either on

the assurances of experienced meditators that when they look inside they know what that they see ... or on an *a priori* claim that there can be no appearance-reality gulf in the domain of the psychic interior" (p. 184). Further, he sees the reports themselves as subject to bias, i.e., "Hindu meditators find their ātman; Buddhist meditators find its absence and so on" (p. 184).

Again, while Garfield does acknowledge that the "deeper and more subtle levels of consciousness ... are, according to some (but not all) Buddhist traditions, accessible to the introspection of highly advanced meditators" (p. 184), his rejection of certain reports creates certain philosophical problems. For one, Garfield later admits that his claim for the opacity of the mind is a theoretical, and therefore an *a priori*, claim. Now, if Garfield's claim is indeed an *a priori* one, it must be subject to the same criticism he levels against the reports of meditators mentioned above, for he states, "theoretical reflection can yield different results if undertaken from different starting points" (p. 186). That theoretical reflection can lead to drastically different results does not affirm one claim over another; rather, it demonstrates the real conclusion of opacity: all apperception is mediated and therefore no one explanatory apparatus can be absolutely right about the deep structures of consciousness.

In the seventh chapter, "Epistemology," Garfield uses *paramāṇa* to explore Buddhist theories of knowledge. He begins by introducing the Pramāṇavāda-Yogācāra school, then moves to the theory of *apoha*, presenting its iterations and problems in thinkers such as Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Ratnakītri, and Gyaltsap. Garfield then turns his attention to the issue of *pramāṇa* in the anti-foundationalism of the Madhyamaka school. He first addresses the problem of relativism and the possibility of knowledge for Candrakītri. Then, in further justifying Madhyamaka anti-foundationalism, Garfield examines Nāgārjuna's reply to his Nyāya interlocutor on the matter of the emptiness of *pramāṇa* in the *Virgrahavyāvārtanī*. He closes the chapter with a consideration of the implications of epistemology for ontology and the identity of the two truths in Madhyamaka philosophy.

Chapter 8, "Logic and the Philosophy of Language," focuses on the issue of paradox and dialethism. Garfield begins with an examination of the *catuṣkoṭi* in Madhyamaka philosophy; he eschews much discussion of the formal logic developed by the Pramāṇavādins, as he finds it to be less interesting than the *catuṣkoṭi*. According to Garfield, Nāgārjuna's use of the *catuṣkoṭi* identifies Madhyamaka logic with paraconsistent logic in tolerating certain contradictions and, further, demonstrates the Mādhyamikas' lack of commitment to the principle of explosion in classical logic. Moving to the philosophy of language, Garfield considers the "paradox of expressibility" and the non-discursive or silent response to it. Drawing on the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, Jizang's *Dasheng xuanlun*, and the Zen Ox Herder paintings, he demonstrates how Buddhists reject the ontological and semantic commitments of conventional language yet are not restricted to silence alone. Following this, Garfield, through the philosophy of language found in the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*, attempts to answer the question: What does language do? Further, Garfield considers language as a form of skillful means (*upāya*) and its iteration as *fāngbiàn* 方便 in the Chinese tradition, as well as a form of tantra à la Robert Thurman's "Vajra Hermeneutics."

The ninth chapter, "Ethics," considers Buddhist perspectives on ethical theory. Garfield argues that Buddhist ethics is oriented not on issues of virtue, happiness, or duty but depends on a more fundamental value, namely, "our phenomenological orientation towards the world" (p. 278). This is to say, Garfield sees Buddhist ethics as a "moral phenomenology." Garfield examines the four immeasurables (*brahmavihāras*) and the six perfections (*pāramitās*) as means of ethical engagement. He then focuses on care (*karuṇā*) as the core moral value of Mahāyāna ethics and examines its use in the work of Thích Nhất Hạnh. This extends into a description of the moral phenomenology found in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, and further to a consideration of the rejection of rational egoism in Mahāyāna ethics. Garfield completes the chapter by comparing Buddhist ethical theory with the one developed in Hume's *Treatise*.

The methodological postscript discusses the nascent phenomenon of "doing Buddhist philosophy" (p. 320). Garfield reflects on what it

means to take Buddhist philosophy—its texts and its thinkers—seriously from our vantage point. He touches on philological and hermeneutical issues such as authorship, authorial intent, and how to read texts in good faith, as well as the issues of adopting new horizons and translating terms for philosophical thinking. Garfield then turns his attention to what he calls the "subject-object dichotomy" in Buddhist studies; that is, the problem of treating ourselves as sterile *subjects* who investigate a static *object*, namely the Buddhist tradition. Garfield concludes by urging future cross-cultural philosophers to maintain an awareness of their own cultural biases when conducting dialogues and to treat texts of varying cultural and temporal proximity with impartiality.

The sheer volume of philosophical views presented and issues covered in this volume makes it necessary reading for anyone interested in the dialogue between Buddhist and Western philosophy. The amount of care and attention given to the nuances of each thinker and school involved ensures that this work will be the touchstone for further engagement between the two traditions of philosophy. Whether one's interest lies in subjects more directly linked to analytic philosophy such as epistemology, logic, or philosophy of language, or in other arenas like consciousness studies, phenomenology, ethical theory, or the history of metaphysics, there is something for everyone in this work. That being said, this reader noticed a distinct lack of voices from contemporary Continental philosophy, such as those of Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek. Of course, no book can encapsulate the entirety of a tradition, and Garfield makes no claim that the work would be encyclopedic. Perhaps a justification for their absence here is the influence these thinkers take from Lacanian psychoanalysis, which is particularly abstruse even when not in dialogue with Hegel and Marx or Cantor's mathematical theories. Attempting to scope out the positions of these thinkers and their idiosyncratic terminologies may simply be too much for a volume already quite full.

That issue aside, Garfield's claim in this work is that Buddhist philosophy, due to its unique continuities and discontinuities with the Western tradition, ought to be respected as philosophy proper and taught alongside the Western tradition in equal esteem. This reader finds that Garfield makes the case deftly, with clarity and even, at points, with humor. This book is highly recommended by the reader; however, as it is not an introduction to either tradition, it is recommended to

those involved in the academic study of either tradition. Noteworthy here is that, at least in my reading, there is a tacit thesis in this book, particularly in the fifth and sixth chapters, a commentary on current trends in Buddhist studies. The tacit thesis is that Buddhist philosophy, not being a monolith, has a richness that is being ignored at present for the perspectives and doctrines which validate the suspicions of neuroscientists and advocates of secularized meditation regimes alike. As this reader sees it, Garfield urges his reader both to take Buddhist philosophy seriously and to do so without making it the handmaiden of the cognitive sciences.

A Comparative Study of Adjustments to Social Catastrophes in Christianity and Buddhism: The Black Death in Europe and the Kamakura Takeover in Japan as Causes of Religious Reform. By Kirk R. MacGregor. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011. 400 pages. Hardcover, $150.00.

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The theme of similarities or parallels between the European Christian Reformation and certain parts of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism originating in the Kamakura period is an old one, dating on the European side from the Jesuit missionaries of the sixteenth century (who were seconded by Christian missionaries after the Meiji period) and on the Japanese side at least from the historian Hara Katsurō (1871–1924) in the early twentieth century. Kirk MacGregor, the author of the fairly lengthy *A Comparative Study of Adjustments to Social Catastrophes in Christianity and Buddhism*, is a scholar rooted in Christian theological studies. Although not a Japan specialist, by working with English-language and secondary literature on Japan he has audaciously taken up the old theme. Staunchly defending the genre of comparative studies—in a magisterial voice of the pulpit that, it must be said, shows little evidence of self-doubt—and offering a text replete with a substantial set of references relating to relevant prior work, he aims to go

beyond the work of earlier comparativists in developing a theoretical model of religious reform adequate to cover both the European and Japanese cases.

An opening chapter provides some solid if rather conventional contextualization for the "reform eras" in question in both Europe and Japan. The Christian section provides a sharp review of medieval European cosmology, while the Buddhist section offers a survey of Chinese Pure Land doctrinal history identified as the wellsprings of Japanese religious change, using a simplified rendition of standard English sources. (As one example of such simplification, the treatment of Shantao avoids mentioning controversy about the actual role of *nembutsu* in that medieval Chinese thinker, as discussed, for example, by Julian Pas.)

The second chapter introduces the book's foundational theme of "Social Catastrophes and the Divine-Human Relationship." The parallel condition the author sees between late classical Japan and late medieval Europe was instability. Thus he tries roughly to match up certain Japanese phenomena with certain European phenomena by laying out the below descriptive sections in successive alternation: the shift to warrior rule in Japan, which is followed by the Black Death in Europe, which is followed by the emergence of *jiriki*-based soteriology in Japan, which is followed by the emergence of works-centered soteriology in Europe, which is followed by late classical Japanese attempts at religious reform, which is followed by late medieval European attempts at religious reform. The author's over-arching theory for all these changes is that both traditions, Japanese and European, inherited an anthropological optimism about human nature's ability to synergistically participate with the divine. In both civilizations, however, the conditions were actually fragile so that severe social change could shatter the harmony and produce paradigm shifts. The shifts in question, summarized as a "common Japanese and European theological trajectory," are proposed in four advancing steps: (1) a culture with an optimistic view of the divine-human relationship is hit with crises that suggest an alienation of humanity from the divine; (2) humans conclude that they can do nothing on their own strength to attain salvation; (3) humans labor to attract the sympathy of the divine, which begins to find their actions defective but meritorious; (4) but when effort-based systems of salvation only succeed in heightening anxiety,

people abandon them in favor of a simpler devotionalism in which the deity directly saves (pp. 139–142).

MacGregor's particularly strong interest lies in detailed comparisons of specific "theological" languages, so the two other central chapters consist of elaborated arguments about how Hōnen is pairable with Luther (pp. 143–237) and how Shinran is pairable with Calvin (pp. 239–312). The pairing of Shinran with Calvin (as opposed to the more conventional matching with Luther) is an innovation on MacGregor's part that extends a suggestion made by Jōdoshū scholar Sōhō Machida, a somewhat controversial modern apologist for Hōnen's teachings.

In the first case of Hōnen and Luther, a long chapter of ninety-six pages presents the key argument that "solafideist devotionalism represents a reflex movement or natural religious response to any seemingly impossible merit-based plan of salvation" (p. 145). Summarizing the concepts of Hōnen's teachings in accordance with certain primary English-language secondary works, the author considers such devotionalism a principle independent of any differences between Buddhist and Christian traditions. Of course, since Hōnen and his lines of followers except Shinran never stopped observing the monastic precepts, the consistency of the argument about Hōnen's rejection of *jiriki* is not entirely clear. In any case, the author concludes (p. 234) that Hōnen and Luther are matched as "first-generation reformers" who, despite all their doctrinal and historical differences, have a common "substance."

This leads to MacGregor's second match-up, according to which Shinran and Calvin are "second-generation codifiers" who both mark a transition from "faith alone" to "grace alone." The handling of this pair is significantly shorter, at seventy-four pages. In the structure of this argument, faith and grace are held to be somewhat different. Faith, represented by Hōnen and Luther, possesses to some degree a voluntaristic quality, which becomes totally dissolved by the more radicalized, wholly monergistic action of the deity that occurs under the circumstances of grace proper, as afterwards elucidated in the doctrines of Shinran and Calvin. The author develops the comparisons in some detail, albeit sustaining the caveat that a crucial difference consists in how Calvin's thought retained the conception of expectable spiritual failure (due to predestinarianism with its features of unconditional election or irresistible grace) whereas in contrast Shinran's thought (more like Luther's) was universalistic in outlook.

In the book's conclusion the author makes his umbrella theory extremely explicit: In both Europe and Japan, "one and the same theological trajectory" moved human soteriology along a trend line from works, to faith, to grace—in other words, from a synergism, in which the deity and humanity act in concert, to a full-on monergism, in which the deity acts alone (pp. 312–316). Luther's idea of *sola fide* parallels Hōnen's idea of *senju nembutsu*, while Calvin's elaboration of Protestant principles initially found in Luther is similar to Shinran's contribution.

> [W]hen adherents of radically different revealed religions face the collapse of faith-works syntheses, the natural religious reflex comprising the trajectory from works to faith to grace manifests itself among each set of adherents, regardless of their cultural, geographical and temporal separation. Though manifesting itself within the adherents' revealed religions, this trajectory exerts an external power on each revealed religion, shaping it in ways inexplicable from the internal logic of the revealed religion itself (p. 330).

MacGregor in short aims for a comprehensive theory of religious change under conditions of crisis, which typologizes a prophetic-mythic-faith stage (Hōnen-Luther) that universally advances to a theological-doctrinal-grace stage (Shinran-Calvin).

To preface following critical comments on the book, it should be stressed at the outset that the present book reviewer has a deep and fundamental heuristic sympathy for the "protestant comparison" in relation to Shin Buddhism. Similarity is an issue that has been intuited *somehow* by generation after generation of observers in both the West and Japan, and in spite of the Christian language used in the treatment at hand, *something* is going on that makes a schema like MacGregor's sound at least partially right, however loosely. Yet what to do more exactly and analytically with the ancient intuition of similarity has remained a problem for clarification for over a century. The comparison cannot involve with any precision a theological similarity nor a political similarity, and how to meaningfully pair the major Japanese figures (Hōnen, Shinran) with the major Reformation figures (Luther, Calvin) is entirely problematic. Unfortunately, when comparative attempts are carried out unpersuasively, or heavy-handedly, or with that uncertain quality of half-baked half-correctness that is so hard to either completely reject or completely accept, it tends to delegitimize the whole enterprise of comparison.

MacGregor falls into that category. Although he repeatedly states that he is aware of the deep differences between Christianity and Buddhism, all of the essential comparative structure derives from Christianity. In fact, in the end the whole book is devoted to pushing an artificial and narrow evangelical-Christian-based schematology of similarities that operates essentially at a superficial level of abstracted linguistic resemblances, rooted in an absolutist evangelical view based on historical evolutionism.

Doctrinal hangups begin even on the European side. The focus on an alleged shift from Luther's monergism emphasizing faith over to Calvin's monergism emphasizing grace seems to be induced by the schema of matching the Japanese and European religious figures. According to several standard reference works on the ordinary interpretations of Protestantism,[1] faith (the involuntary human response of the believer) and grace (the saving activity of God) always form a co-temporal pair, not a sequence. Furthermore, between Luther and Calvin no essential or significant difference existed in terms of their understanding of the monergistic involuntariness of the grace/faith dyad, despite the latter's elaborations of some aspects of the idea. Calvin's peculiar contribution was only a subsidiary development of the idea of God's *arbitrary* almighty power, which led to the characteristic Calvinist restrictive emphasis on predestination and limited atonement. And here can be noted only in passing the vastly complex, magisterial summary perspective on the Reformation provided by historians such as Diarmaid MacCulloch, according to which the Augustinian theological issues activated by Luther and Calvin had a long, long previous history of embedment in Christian thought, and diversification movements against medieval Christianity (e.g., the Hussite reformation) had already emerged centuries before the Lutheran moment.[2]

There are deeper hangups on the Japanese side. MacGregor manages to ignore the well-known view among historians that there was no clear consensus among Hōnen's followers about what Hōnen exactly

1. See entries on Faith and Grace in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012, online ed.); Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism,* 4 vols. (Abington, UK & New York: Routledge, 2004); Adrian Hastings et al., *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).
2. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin, 2003).

meant about *nembutsu* practice, as evidenced by the several interpretive lines stemming from Hōnen.[3] In any case the followers all (with the primary exception of Shinran) commonly understood the matter of *nembutsu* to be essentially a question about the minimal karmic action that could create deferral to enlightenment in the Pure Land. While Hōnen's was an argument about the necessity of such deferral under the conditions of *mappō*, the notion of such Pure Land deferral had a long history already within the Buddhist monastic institutions as well as without, and the idea would continue unproblematically in later Japanese and Chinese history as well. The high point of late Heian skepticism about *kairitsu* (precept-community) Buddhism was actually (outside of Shinshū) quite transitory in the long run of Japanese history up until the twentieth century, when only at length did Buddhist organization based on monastic precepts fall apart, and for other reasons. It was all hardly revolutionary.

The deeper core difficulty in the proposed pairings is that Hōnen and Shinran were not talking about the same religious experience. Hōnen's idea of Buddhist awareness deferred to a future cosmic realm following this biological life was psychologically quite different from Shinran's notion of deep Buddhist awareness given through the *present, this-life* involuntary process called the *hataraki* of Amida. Also, the voluntariness or involuntariness of *nembutsu* does not appear to have played any central role among Hōnen's interests. To assume then that Shinran was an extension of Hōnen in the same way that Calvin was an extension of Luther is a major error, causing the author to miss how the crucial transition found in Shinran as he transformed the traditional idea of deferral was a much more radical re-reading of the texts than moves made by either Luther or Calvin in a Christian context. Furthermore, the voluntariness versus involuntariness question does play, as in the Protestant "grace" theologies in Europe, a central role in Shinran's conception of present enlightenment, which supports the conventional comparative linking of Luther and Shinran that MacGregor wishes to revise or reject here.

MacGregor introduces a discussion called "Paradox between the Sovereignty of Divine Grace and the Decision of the Human Will" (pp. 218–233) that concerns free will. The acuteness of such an issue

3. See Mark Blum, *The Origins and Development of Pure Land Buddhism* (Oxford, UK & New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

crucially originates only in Christianity with its premise of an all-powerful creator. In a Buddhist context, in which consciousness is generated instead only by an unstable, hypercomplex stream of karma, there is undoubtedly an issue of balance between acts that can be construed as "consciously voluntary" and others that are construed as "involuntary" (this agency problem is the central issue of Shin teaching, though Buddhist traditions were historically ambiguous about the question and it is much understudied by scholarship). Yet in any case, absent a creator God, Buddhism lacks the bitter sense of predestinarian paradox that is intrinsic to the Christian theology. Amida may be *metaphorically* quasi-agentive but is not an agent in the way God is; and a creator God is not at all comparable to events occurring in a karmic stream of consciousness. The Christian assumptions to which MacGregor constantly subjects Buddhist terminology make him want to push Amida falsely toward the role of predestinarian God.

The above mentions only a sampling of the multiple problematic issues raised in this book. Overall it seems that the author's approach to parallelism via doctrine falls apart because it lacks any deep inward understanding of how similar-seeming Buddhist teaching works differently in its psychology and intuition. As is persistently the case in Western religious studies, schemata masquerading as "universal" are typically in reality universally applied Christian-based paradigms that tend semantically to eat up all their competitors. However, it might be recognized that a blatant performance such as MacGregor's is useful in helping call attention to the semantic sloppiness with which terms applied to Pure Land Buddhism such as "faith" have too frequently been utilized in English. Such terms ought not to be used without a full, highlighted clarification of how the histories of the available words in English involve hegemonic colonization by Christian interpretations at unconscious and conscious levels.

Besides such problems with doctrinal issues, the book inadequately treats socio-political contexts. Several of the author's comparative historical images are forced. It is unpersuasive that the Black Death in Europe (a massive biological event) and the arrival of the Kamakura shogunate (a redistribution of political power due to economic growth) were similar types of events. More broadly, the author's general perception of Japanese historical evolution is out of date. The author seems to have neglected available material even in English about the well-established Kuroda Toshio controversy in Japan that has questioned

the extent to which "Kamakura Buddhism" was in its own time a significantly transformative phenomenon at all. It is now recognized that the way the "Kamakura Reformation" was exaggerated in twentieth century historiography is itself an artifact of an early twentieth-century attempt by Japanese scholars to promote too simplistically an idea of European-style progressivism in their own tradition.[4] The accurate view is that the Heian-type Buddhist *ancien regime* was only gradually disrupted before the arrival of Nobunaga in the sixteenth century. Hōnen's ideas did not "sweep" Japan in the way Luther's did in Europe in the sixteenth century—there is simply no parallel with sixteenth-century Europe's white-hot religious violence, intense religious polemics fueled by the printing press and international information markets, reconsolidations of state authority around religion, or even the level of participation in complex institutional religion. Nor did Shinran send "profound reverberations" through the system of his time; he was practically invisible in his own day, and the sectarian processes of interpretation that attempted to clarify the core of Shinran's personal interiority evolved slowly for centuries, continuing through the 1800s. MacGregor also misses Rennyo and the subsequent *ikkō-ikki* of the sixteenth century, which really constituted the only seriously exciting elements of the Japanese story in terms of civil disorder.

If the author's lack of familiarity with research on the history of Japan may be somewhat comprehensible, less forgivable is his omission of thoroughly-established non-apologetic strains of European Reformation studies (e.g., Euan Cameron and Eamon Duffy among many others, not to mention MacCulloch mentioned above) that emphasize the subtlety, diversity, and fuzzy boundaries of the Reformation in many parts of that continent and the tenacity of Roman Catholic tradition. In both Japan and Europe, the most acute perceptions about the inadequacy and insufficiency of the earlier religious traditions were initially confined to a relatively few individualistic intellectual extremists, making even the explanations for such dissidence far from clear-cut when the entire surrounding contexts are considered. In *both* Japan and Europe then, certain surface chronological patterns depictable as Luther "followed" by Calvin, or Hōnen "followed" by Shinran, do *not* necessarily represent some kind of all-embracing supersessionist,

4. This material was quite available in English by the late 1990s. See e.g. Richard K. Payne, ed., *Re-Visioning "Kamakura" Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), especially the Introduction by Payne.

linear historical forward movement as indicated by MacGregor's notions of "first-generation" and "second-generation" reform. There also seems to be something rather backward-facing in the author's perspective, since his focus on disruption in the "human-divine synthesis" (p. xii) emphasizes the negative aspect of breakdown rather than the positive aspect of civilizational complexification in each setting.

Even the above list of complaints indicates only fragmentarily how many ideas in this book are offered in an elliptical or truncated fashion marking incomplete research. Other examples might include how the author misses a body of work on Luther and women that gives a much more complex picture than MacGregor's summary conclusions (p. 200); how the author takes his knowledge of Shinran's Rokkakudō dream from a single (debatable) source (p. 244); how the Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth century related specifically Shin Buddhism, not "Pure Land" in general, to Lutheran ideas (p. 234); how the author seems to regard Old Buddhism in Japan as a "merit-based" system that was not in the original vision of Buddhism when the Shakyamuni model was certainly part of the "original vision" of Buddhism (p. 234); or how Japanese Buddhism was no more committed to the idea of "soul" than any other Buddhist tradition (p. 183). Certain passages of the book demand paragraph-by-paragraph deconstruction. Because of this hit-and-miss quality, the reader often feels that MacGregor has gone on a fishing expedition in which he has saved only pieces of data that fit the preconceived paradigm that is essentially drawn from a quite particularistic American evangelical version of European Christian history.

It has to be noted that there is no indication that MacGregor has any background in the study of Japanese or Chinese. Nevertheless, some sixteen references to Japanese-language works are listed in the bibliography and in addition numerous footnotes pointing directly to Japanese works, including the *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* (*SSZ*), the standard Honganji reference for Shinran's texts, are offered on at least forty-six pages of the main text. MacGregor provides English versions of passages in these texts that suggest that they are his own translations (for example, pp. 250, 280–281, 287, and 288). Unfortunately, these "translations" appear to be cleverly rephrased versions of translations originally made by Alfred Bloom in his *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 1965) and James Dobbins in his *Jōdo Shinshū* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) without proper attribution (see Bloom, pp. 29, 66, 67, Dobbins 54, 55). So in a manner

unacceptable for a professional scholar, the author appears to have committed gratuitous quasi-plagiarisms or close paraphrases of other people's translations from Japanese. Also odd is that the author did not refer to the more or less standard English edition for Shinran's writings, *The Collected Works of Shinran* (Kyoto: Honganji, 1997).

Nevertheless: in spite of the severe flaws in this particular book, as previously noted there still seems to remain some bottom-line suggestiveness in the author's project. That is, in some unquestionably-felt but hard-to-clarify sense, intriguing echoes exist, willy-nilly recognized for centuries, in the ways European Christian and Japanese Buddhist religiosities gradually moved towards modalities of greater personal interiority and spiritual transformation that were in the end not construed as voluntarily or ritually controlled. MacGregor makes his valiant, if ideologically biased, attempt to push the historical comparisons to a new level of parallelism, but because of the above objections, his foray is largely unpersuasive. The historical questions still persist: *Why* did a palpable shift regarding these issues somehow occur in both European Christian and Japanese Buddhist religious experience? Why did it occur in roughly the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries? And how, given the different conditions of instability? So we are still back at the starting line, with an intuition of *some* similarity in the traditions, but one for which we do not yet really have a broad enough theoretical explanation upon which any consensus can settle.

Rather than abandoning the project, it cries out for newer conceptual methods. There is plenty of non-theological work on the European Reformation suggesting a possible interpretation in terms of systemic differentiation in the informational field (which is one major definition of "secularism" in sociology, meaning a pluralization or even fragmentation leading to greater definition of the individual self). Or perhaps a meaningful umbrella category of analysis for the inquiry could be found in the psychologically definable dialectic between voluntariness ("conscious" action) and involuntariness ("unconscious" action). Cognitive research on the impact of the unconscious on action is currently flourishing. It might even be possible to clarify how much premodern religious practice had not so much to do with "self-power" (if that means voluntarism interpreted in a modern sense) as with cosmologically based ritualism. Emphatically, however, it is necessary to produce a paradigm for comparing Japan and Europe that does not rely

on Christian theology.[5] Unfortunately, what we have instead in this book is an out-of-date argument based on English-language secondary literature, which reflects modern Christian evangelical apologetic interpretive concerns, which are influenced by globalized twentieth century Christian discourses that are widely influential even in twentieth-century Japan.

5. In my own work, which MacGregor curiously has not read, I have argued for the necessity to resort to a different, or higher, mode of generalization about the phenomenon, one in which both pluralization and involuntariness can be seen as common manifestations of a shift to a greater degree of psychological (not "theological") interiority having to do with information and literacy. However, to achieve an adequate cross-cultural perception of such a shift, one must also accept (in a blow to Eurocentrism) that profound shifts towards such interiority can work themselves out in significantly *divergent* ways in different political and philosophical environments, i.e., Europe vs. Japan. (See Galen Amstutz, "World Macrohistory and Shinran's Literacy," *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, 3rd ser., no. 11 [Fall 2009]: 229–272).