

BOOK REVIEWS

Introduction to the Middle Way: Chandrakirti's Madhyamakavatara with Commentary by Jamgön Mipham. Translated by Padmakara Translation Group. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 2002. xiv, 409 pages, includes glossary. Hardcover, \$34.95; paperback, \$29.95.

The Svātantrika–Prāsaṅgika Distinction: What Difference Does a Difference Make? Edited by Georges B.J. Dreyfus and Sara L. McClintock. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003. 396 pages, includes bibliography and index. Paperback, \$34.95.

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The *Introduction to the Middle Way* (*Madhyamakāvātāra*) is a translation of one of the key works of medieval Indian Buddhist thought. Candrakirti is considered to be the founder of the Prāsaṅgika interpretation of Madhyamaka, which claims that the Madhyamaka should not make any claim, but rather only demonstrate that the arguments of his/her opponent are self-contradictory or lead to absurd conclusions. This is distinguished from the Svātantrika interpretation, which is considered to have been established by Bhāvaviveka, and which is described as allowing the Madhyamaka to assert claims of his/her own.

The *Madhyamakāvātāra* is central to understanding the origins of Prāsaṅgika perspective. Organized in terms of the ten stages (*bhūmi*) of the bodhisattva path, this work leads from the initial stages of practice to the full awakening of buddhahood. Of the eleven chapters, one for each of the ten stages and a concluding one on “the ultimate ground of buddhahood,” by far the greatest attention is given to the sixth—that devoted to the perfection of wisdom. Indeed, the discrepancy between the length of the sixth and the other chapters is so great as to make it clear that the ten grounds simply provide a vehicle for focusing on what is often presented as the most important of the perfections, that of wisdom.

The text of the *Madhyamakāvatāra* is itself relatively brief, being only fifty-four pages in this translation. In this work, however, the translators have also included a translation of Jamgön Mipham's commentary. This is a detailed and extensive commentary, covering two hundred thirty-nine pages in translation.

The translator's introduction provides a valuable placement of Candrakīrti and his thought in medieval Indian Buddhism. It should be noted that this introduction is informed both by the Tibetan scholastic understandings of the history of Buddhist thought, and by modern scholarship. Specifically, treating the distinction between Prasaṅgika and Svātantrika, and the identification of these two interpretations with Candrakīrti and Bhāvaviveka as their founders, is the kind of systematization that only comes about by later scholasticism. As the translators note:

It is important to realize that the Svatantrika–Prasangika distinction, as such, is the invention of Tibetan scholarship, created as a convenient method for cataloging the different viewpoints evident in Madhyamika authors subsequent to Chandrakīrti's critique of Bhāvaviveka. There is no evidence that these two terms were ever used by the ancient Indian Madhyamikas to refer either to themselves or to their opponents (p. 35).

There are other aspects of the introduction that are, however, philosophically more problematic. For example, from Śākyamuni Buddha's "rejection of futile theorizing," the translators assert that this means that there is "a truth that lies beyond the ordinary mind and becomes accessible precisely when theories are laid aside" and that there is "a reality that transcends ordinary thought processes but is nevertheless still knowable" (p. 9). To this reader at least, such an interpretation is not obvious. "Futile theorizing," "theorizing," and "ordinary mind" are not, after all, simply synonyms, and without further definition claims about a transcendent reality are vacuous. While the interpretation given certainly requires substantial additional justification, we should note that the introduction, like the translations themselves, is intended for the general readership.

There are two other translations of Candrakīrti's text. First, there is C.W. Huntington, Jr., with Geshé Namgyal Wangchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989). While the Padmakara translation is intended for the interested lay Buddhist, Huntington's is intended for the scholarly audience. The Padmakara translation is much smoother and easier to read, while Huntington's is more specific, detailed, and annotated. It is particularly informative to read the two translations in parallel, as each reveals different aspects of the original text. There is also a translation and commentary by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Ocean of Nectar*:

Wisdom and Compassion in Mahayana Buddhism (London: Tharpa Publications, 1995). While the Padmakara translation draws on both traditional, Tibetan scholastic interpretations and modern scholarship, Gyatso's is fully committed to the traditional scholastic understandings. This work provides a valuable insight into these understandings, but it should be noted that this is one particular, sectarian interpretation.

The collection by Dreyfus and McClintock provides a valuable historical examination of the creation and significance of the distinction between Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika, a distinction that is usually traced back to Candrakīrti. Comprising nine papers by leading contemporary scholars, this is an essential work for study of Candrakīrti's place in medieval Indian Buddhist thought and the ways in which the distinction he is considered to have established has been understood through the lens of Tibetan, particularly Tsong kha pa's, attempts to systematize the wealth of philosophic texts and issues inherited from India. This collection is of specific value in allowing the reader of the Padmakara translation of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* to evaluate its approach to the text as well as placing it and Candrakīrti's thought into a broader intellectual context.

The collection is divided into two parts. The first, of five papers, focuses on the Indian origins of the distinction. This includes essays by William L. Ames on Bhāvaviveka, C.W. Huntington, Jr., on Candrakīrti, Tom J.F. Tillemans on metaphysics, Sara L. McClintock on the "given," and Malcolm David Eckel on Tsong kha pa's understanding of Madhyamaka. The second part, of four papers, turns its attention to the Tibetan developments. This section includes essays by Helmut Tauscher on Phya pa chos kyi seng ge, Chizuko Yoshimizu on Tsong kha pa's understanding of Candrakīrti, José Ignacio Cabezón on fourteenth-century interpretations of the distinction, and Georges B.J. Dreyfus on 'Ju Mi pham.

While the distinction between Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika forms the unifying topic of the collection, the theme developed by the editors in their introduction is doxography, that is, the writing about beliefs. This is a critical dimension of all Buddhist thought, and was as much a central part of the development of Buddhism in East Asia as it was in Tibet. For this reason, the value of the collection extends far beyond the study of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism.

***Traité sur l'Inépuisable Lampe du Zen: Tōrei (1721–1792) et sa vision de l'éveil.* By Michel Mohr. Two volumes. *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, vol. XXVIII. Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1997. xxii, 867 pages (two volumes paginated consecutively). Index includes Chinese characters for entries.**

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This is a study of the most important work by one of the most important early modern Rinzai Zen teachers, Tōrei Enji. He was one of the leading disciples of the much more widely known Hakuin, and published his *Discourse on the Inexhaustible Lamp of Zen* (the “*Traité sur l'Inépuisable Lampe du Zen*” of this publication’s title) in 1800. Standing as it does at the turning point between the premodern and modern periods of Japanese religious history, this work is a key to understanding both the development of Rinzai Zen in the modern period and of modern Japanese Buddhism more generally.

Mohr’s work is an exemplary instance of a detailed textual study. The work is divided into three parts. The first part is a general introduction, the second part is the translation *per se*, together with notes to the translation, and the third part is appendices. (The first volume contains the introduction and the translation, while the second contains the notes and appendices.)

The introduction provides the reader with the information needed to understand the place of Tōrei and his work in Japanese religious history. The first chapter discusses the origin of the Rinzai school of Zen, which was constituted as an independent school in the middle of the Kamakura era, at the end to the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century. Mohr, however, goes back to introduce the precursors—such figures as Kakua and Dainichi Nōnin. Greater attention is paid to Myōan Yōsai, who has been raised to the status of founder of the Rinzai tradition in Japan. Yōsai travelled to China where he studied under a Linji master and received certification to teach the school when he returned to Japan. This is followed by an examination of major figures of the Rinzai school following Yōsai. Mohr then goes on to discuss the foundations of the early modern period of Japan, and the key role of Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa.

In this section Mohr introduces the political and social history of premodern Zen. He discusses issues of legitimacy and recognition by the *bakufu*, as well as the role of Buddhism in the conflict with Christianity. In the seventeenth century, various efforts toward reform were initiated,

including the conflict over use of *nembutsu* recitation by Ungo Kiyō.¹ This section closes with a discussion of Hakuin.

The next section opens with the biography of Tōrei himself. As was not uncommon in the premodern periods, Tōrei did not narrowly constrain his studies to one particular sectarian perspective. In addition to studying Zen under Ryōzan, he also studied esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*). He eventually became recognized as the successor to Hakuin, receiving a robe and certification (*inki*) in the beginning of 1750. In 1759 Hakuin appointed him to head a temple which had been neglected, Ryūtaku-ji at the foot of Mount Fuji. Tōrei was active there for about twenty years, during which time he both restored the temple and wrote works on the history of what is now known as Hakuin-Zen, making his master the founder of this lineage within Rinzai.

Mohr follows this with a discussion of the relation between Tōrei's Zen and the school of Shingaku, founded by Ishida Baigan (1685–1744), which developed on the basis of neo-Confucianism. Tōrei's lineage and his successors are next discussed, leading us right up to the beginnings of the twentieth century. Mohr then has an interesting discussion of the problem of the transmission of the Dharma. As he notes, transmission of the Dharma may have an institutional significance, "and does not necessarily reflect an actual confirmation of the awakening of the disciple" (p. 63).

The balance of the introduction focuses attention on the *Discourse* itself. Following an examination of the textual history, Mohr examines the contents of the text and its significance in understanding Tōrei's conceptions of Zen and its relation to Buddhism more generally.

The second part of this publication is a translation of the text of the *Discourse*. This is a very detailed and scholarly translation, and while this means that it is perhaps not a smooth read, the annotations provide such a wealth of information that one is well-rewarded for the effort involved. The only other Western-language translation of the text takes a very different tack. This is the *Discourse on the Inexhaustible Lamp of the Zen School*, translated by Yoko Okuda (Boston, Rutland, Vermont, and London: Charles E. Tuttle Co., and London: The Zen Centre, 1989), which includes a commentary on the text by Master Daibi originally produced in the 1930s. As is all-too-frequently the case with sectarian works of this kind, the work is presented in a very opaque fashion, due to the total absence of any scholarly paraphernalia such as explanatory notes, or characters for key terms, names, and texts. In addition, the work does not appear in its entirety—absent is the final chapter "in which Master Torei gives specific advice how this attitude in training may be practiced also by followers of the Pure Land school, by adherents of Shinto and of the Confucian way, etc. This seemed gratuitous and detracting rather than helpful to Western readers of today" (p. 6). The same attitude is found in the introduction to the section on Shingon, where the editor comments that this section of

Tōrei's text "seems at first glance somewhat irrelevant to us, the Shingon school not being part of our Western cultural inheritance" (p. 110). This evidences that the intent of this translation is not actually to present Tōrei's thought, but rather to propagate Zen by giving it a privileged position within contemporary Western culture. In other words, rather than informing the reader, the Zen Centre translation seeks to guide readers by means of its selectivity and opacity.

In contrast, the extensive annotations and scholarly paraphernalia presented by Mohr, particularly in the second volume, offer the interested reader the opportunity to seek to understand Tōrei's text on his or her own. This is the appropriate goal of scholarly work, and Mohr has attained that goal, and done so at the highest level of academic excellence.

Note

1. For further information on this conflict, see Richard M. Jaffe, "Ungo Kiyō's *Ōjōyōka* and Rinzai Zen Orthodoxy" in Richard K. Payne and Kenneth K. Tanaka, eds., *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitābha* (Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism, vol. 17. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), pp. 202–235.

***The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture.* By John Kieschnick. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003. 343 pages including text, index, and images. Hardcover, \$65.00; paperback, \$24.95.**

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Why do Chinese monks dress in sleeved robes? Why did members of the Qing court adorn themselves with Buddhist rosaries? How do bridge building and innovations in paper production and printing relate to Buddhism? What does the chair have to do with Buddhism in China? What about sugar? Tea? These questions guide the scope of this book. Kieschnick offers a collection of the histories of particular objects, considers the attitudes toward them, and the ways in which they were used over time that, taken together, reveal the complex and subtle ways in which Buddhism changed the material life of a civilization, in this case, China (p. 14). Buddhism altered the Chinese material world by introducing new sacred objects, new symbols, buildings, ritual implements, and a host of other objects, large and small, as well as new ways of thinking about and interacting with these objects (p. 1).

Kieschnick identifies the various schools of thought on material culture, some focusing on the objects themselves, others on their symbolic capital. His main focus, however, is on the *making* of the object, not in the object itself. He asks, "What negotiations were involved in *making* Buddhist objects? What were the objects used for? What were people's attitudes toward these objects?" (p. 16, emphasis added). Kieschnick places an importance on the origin of the object because it was of great significance in the way the object was used and treated (p. 18). Kieschnick notes that traditionally scholars of religions, in this particular case Buddhologists, have focused on texts and ideas, ignoring either accidentally or purposefully, how material objects may contradict scriptural pronouncements. This resulted in "convoluted explanations for the objects rather than [acceptance] that doctrines laid out in scriptures may not reflect the way Buddhism was practiced" (pp. 20–21). Furthermore, the preoccupation with text and ideas ignores the intimate relationship between religion and the material cultural world.

Material culture, as Kieschnick argues, will provide invaluable insights into the history of a religion. "A focus on material culture also reveals the extent of the impact of religious movements on culture" (p. 22). Kieschnick notes that China provides an abundance of data for the study of Buddhist material culture. There is a large body of artifacts and writings

about the artifacts from before the first century C.E. when Buddhism began to influence Chinese society, making “it possible in many cases to determine what came to China with Buddhism and what originated in China independently” (p. 23). Hence, the great challenge for Kieschnick and readers alike is the issue of data interpretation. His examination of material culture attempts to debunk the view that Indian Buddhism was more pure than its Chinese counterpart, but more importantly, reveals that they too struggled with the contradiction between meaning and language itself—just as the Chinese did. Instead, he stresses the “centuries of persistent contact” that were necessary for an object to take root in Chinese society (e.g., the chair over a period of seven centuries). He says, “More commonly, however, changes happened only very slowly under constant cultural pressure from Buddhist individuals and institutions. In other words, the persistent presence of Buddhist practices and ideas provided the resources as well as the vast stretches of time needed for the spread and development of particular forms of material culture” (p. 284). Furthermore, “material objects at once reflected a monastic identity that transcended the boundaries confining the behaviors and attitudes of other types of people, and at the same time gradually, persistently, introduced to outsiders new objects and new approaches to them” (p. 286).

In chapter one, Kieschnick explores the notion of sacred power in sacred objects, primarily in relics and icons. He notes that this notion was not new to China and existed prior to the entry of Buddhism. However, the types of objects associated with sacred power were new, in addition to the complex and vast apparatus used to produce and disseminate them (p. 29). This apparatus included monks, rich liturgical tradition, and a rapidly expanding lay following in the early centuries (p. 29). Buddhism introduced new icons into China, relics—bits of bone, teeth, and ash—imbued with sacred power. In China, relics were important for several reasons: relics were used as symbols for prestige and power, they had economic implications in that they attracted pilgrimage and patronage, and were of diplomatic value (pp. 37–43).

Kieschnick examines the impact of Buddhist icons on Chinese material culture. Monks used images for the confession of their faults and as tools for visualization. Soon after the introduction of Buddhism into China, “Buddhist images became an integral part of the devotional life of all Buddhists—monks and nuns, lay people, patrons rich and poor” (p. 55). The main question that Kieschnick explores on image worship is: “What was the nature of this sacred power, what function did it serve, and how did icons get it?” (p. 57). He continues by saying we can “at least assert that sacred icons were an important part of Buddhism at the time when Buddhism began to have a major impact on Chinese civilization” (pp. 57–58).

In chapter two Kieschnick examines the symbolism embedded in the images, which explains how Buddhism entered and permeated Chinese

material culture (p. 83). Kieschnick notes that early Buddhist iconography might not represent Buddhist symbolism at all, but rather, a vague association of the symbol with auspiciousness. Hence, during the early Han, “elephants, relics, and haloed figures may have been more lucky charms than indexes to episodes in the life of the Buddha and the doctrines inherent in the biography” (p. 84). However, by the Six Dynasties Period, there is firmer evidence of the self-conscious use of Buddhist symbolism on tombs. The author grapples with two main issues of iconography in this section: “the origins of symbols and the travails of their subsequent interpretation” (p. 84).

Kieschnick suggests that in discussing the emergence of Buddhist symbols in China, we need not confine ourselves to the symbolism in Buddhist arts (e.g., painting and sculpture) but should extend our examination to Buddhist objects of liturgy, as well as the personal articles of monks and nuns. He then focuses his discussion on a number of portable objects that were invested with symbolic significance: the monastic robe, the alms bowl, the rosary, the ring staff, and the *ruyi* scepter. The iconographic properties of these objects were never really fixed, nor were they fundamentally symbolic. “Yet, all are examples of objects whose symbolism was discussed at length over the course of the history of Buddhism in China and illustrate that symbolism was important for the way many Buddhist objects were understood” (p. 86). Furthermore, “the opportunity Buddhist symbols provide us for understanding this curious mechanism of interpretation and influence [is], I think, ultimately the most interesting aspect of the history of Buddhist symbols in China” (p. 86).

In chapter three Kieschnick explores the link between the production of Buddhist material culture and the theology of merit. He notes that the idea and system of merit-making and transfer was introduced into China with the entry of Buddhism. This discussion examines the underlying impact of the notion of merit in the production of Buddhist material objects in China (e.g., the book or *sutras*), in combination with the consequent innovations and developments in the production of the material itself (e.g., paper making and printing) (p. 167). Hence, the history of printing in China has many “Chinese firsts,” which almost always are related directly to Buddhism (p. 181). One impact of book-making and distribution for merit is seen in the genre known as “morality books (*shanshu*)” which continues today with the massive production of morality books in Taiwan and mainland China (p. 185).

In addition to book-making, monastery construction and support were important merit-making activities. Donations to monasteries were often recorded and made public, hence associated with social and class distinctions. More importantly, monastic donation was often set against the backdrop of the potential for prestige, philanthropy, and intricate social relations. Ultimately, these forces dictate the flourishing and fall of a

monastery (p. 198). Additionally, Kieschnick notes bridge making as another major merit-making activity that included multiple social relationships—local polity, monks as structural engineers and trustful donation collectors, and ultimately, the local inhabitants who will use the bridges.

Overall, Kieschnick argues that the theology of merit fueled the production and innovation of Chinese material culture: from the donation of silk for the sleeved monastic robes, to the constructions of stupas and icons, search and production of relics, support of monasteries, bridge-building, book production, and the paper-making and printing innovations. The main thesis of this chapter, which is successfully argued, is that there are multiple motivations for the production and innovation of Buddhist material artifacts in Chinese culture, primarily driven by the preoccupation with merit-making.

Chapter four explores objects that are tangentially religious and/or Buddhist, such as the chair, sugar, and tea. These may be traced back to Indian origins, although there is proof that tea already existed in China before the entry of Buddhism. In this section, Kieschnick examines the role monks played in the dissemination and propagation of these new objects in China. He illustrates how the “monastic community served as a conduit along which knowledge of how to manufacture and use these things spread” (p. 221).

Kieschnick begins his discussion on tea by stating that “unlike most of the objects seen to this point, the relationship between Buddhism and Chinese tea has little to do with India, despite the controversy that raged from the early nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth over the origins of the tea tree” (p. 262). He notes that although tea was not the preferred drink, most scholars now agree that tea manufacturing, the cultivation and harvesting and use of tealeaves, originated in China (p. 263). During the Six Dynasties Period, milk was the drink of choice in the north, while in the south, tea was the drink of preference, but only among the literati (p. 264). However, by the tenth century tea had become established as the national drink of China.

As with the consumption of sugar, the monastic community consumed tea in the afternoon to avoid the hunger from fasting in the evening. Tea was also used in meditation to assist the monks in staying alert (p. 267), and further, for medicinal purposes (p. 269). More importantly, Kieschnick makes a point that tea became commonplace through the network of routes taken by monks traveling from one monastery to another. He writes, “it is not surprising, then, that in their travels, monks who had acquired the habit of drinking tea in the south spread it to the north. Extending this hypothesis a step further, once tea was established in northern monasteries, it spread from monks to literati along the same paths of influence we have already examined with the spread of the chair and of sugar” (p. 269).

Interestingly, Kieschnick argues, “skeptics can reasonably argue that even had Buddhism never entered China, sooner or later tea would have become China’s national drink” (p. 274). One must wonder why Kieschnick would conclude that tea would inevitably conquer Chinese culture, but contends that the up-right chair would not? (p. 248). Since the tea that is known in China today first appeared during the twelfth century, we must wonder, What tea is Kieschnick referring to? Overall, Kieschnick’s argument is straightforward—monasteries and monks are key players in the transmission of the use of the chair, techniques for refining sugar, and the nationalization of tea in Chinese material culture.

In his concluding chapter Kieschnick acknowledges the shortcomings of his book: (1) He notes that he has not discussed nuns (p. 282); (2) he admits that Daoists have been overlooked (p. 282); (3) he admits to being preoccupied with India as the “sole source of foreign influence on Chinese material culture, as if Buddhism had leaped directly from a uniform, monolithic India to China without passing through Central or Southeast Asia” (pp. 282–283) and; (4) the issue of temporality and the use of the word “impact” which may suggest a sudden meeting of objects and subsequent transformation. Instead, he stresses the “centuries of persistent contact” that were necessary for an object to take hold in Chinese society (e.g., the chair over a period of seven centuries) (p. 283). Hence he says, “More commonly, however, changes happened only very slowly under constant cultural pressure from Buddhist individuals and institutions. In other words, the persistent presence of Buddhist practices and ideas provided the resources as well as the vast stretches of time needed for the spread and development of particular forms of material culture” (p. 284). Furthermore, “material objects at once reflected a monastic identity that transcended the boundaries confining the behaviors and attitudes of other types of people, and at the same time gradually, persistently, introduced to outsiders new objects and new approaches to them” (p. 286).

Kieschnick returns to the theological contradiction in the relationship between material culture and Buddhist teachings with its tendency to renounce the material world. He asks, “How did the doctrines of the evanescence and ultimate lack of inherent existence of the material world affect the way monks related to objects? And what of the austere ideal of restraint and renunciation?” (p. 287). Kieschnick suggests that the case studies he examined reveal that this tendency toward the material was not a stark sign of hypocrisy or bad faith because there is ample doctrinal support for the justification and use of all objects (p. 288).

In addition to his four critiques of his own work, I would add that not only did he overlook Daoists, but also Confucians. Plus, although he mentioned the role of the merchants in passing on page 33 in reference to the Silk Road, the role of the merchant in propagating and popularizing

Buddhism and its material culture into China must be more significant. While there are some minor editorial problems, the overall content was exciting—a model of multi-disciplinary, multi-methodological investigations of Buddhism—not only in China, but anywhere else Buddhism has been implanted. The book is recommended for general readers interested in Buddhism, historians of material culture, Buddhologists, sinologists, cultural anthropologists, and students and scholars of religious studies.