What Happened after Mañjuśrī Migrated to China?: The Sinification of the Mañjuśrī Faith and the Globalization of the Wutai Cult. Edited by Jinhua Chen, Guang Kuan, and Hu Fo. New York: Routledge, 2022. 316 pages. $170.00 (hardcover). Comprehensive index. Notes and bibliography follow each chapter. ISBN 9781032073491.

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When we write phrases like "the history of Buddhism," what in the world are we talking about? The very grandiosity of the phrase, which I've prattled off myself on many occasions, ought to be a clue that it is suspicious. In the face of such an abstract idea, the answer often seems to be texts—when was this text written, that one compiled, or this one translated, or yet another entombed in a cave?

Jinhua Chen and the other contributors to this collection provide alternative answers, different windows through which we can observe the history of Buddhism. These answers look to people and to cults, instead of texts. It is people who make history—doing things, such as performing rituals or engaging in devotional practices, and travelling places, such as going to Dunhuang and making pilgrimage to Wutai Shan. Of course, we know about this through one kind of text or another, but the questions being asked are not about the texts per se, but rather about what they can tell us about the people who do things and go places.

This collection brings together fourteen articles all originally published in the journal *Studies in Chinese Religions* (see pp. vii–ix for details regarding original publication). The essays are grouped into four sections, organized around roughly regional categories: "The Transmission of Wutai Cult from South Asia to China"; "The Spread of the Wutai Cult in China: Center and Margins"; "The Wutai Cult in

Japan"; and "The Wutai Cult in Tibet, Mongolia, Khotan and Korea." While these four might suggest a systematic development or progression, they instead serve as unifying rubrics for grouping the essays. The collection is rich in detailed information regarding the cults of Mañjuśrī and Mount Wutai, and specialists working on either of those topical areas will be rewarded by seeking out this volume. The essays are also of interest to more general readers for the methodological points made. For the sake of a broader readership, it is these methodological issues that will be highlighted in this review.

At the very opening of the collection, beginning at the first sentences of the first chapter, Jinhua Chen makes a theoretical point worth highlighting:

> The barriers that most significantly shape the way we imagine and examine the field of Asian Studies (*sic*) are those between modern nation states. Anachronistic projections of these borders into the past have separated the discipline into the subfields of Indian, Sri Lankan, Bengalese, Pakistan, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese studies. Applying these divisions in their own work, researchers often overlook substantial shifts and currents (byways or roads) that have long connected places and people across these regions. Modern nation states have blocked the scholarly view from the dynamic interconnections between these different regions on the one hand and on the other, the significant impact from the marginal regions to the "centers." (p. 3)

These paired presumptions—naturalizing nation states and privileging centers over peripheries—are so deeply rooted in contemporary scholarship as to require explicit challenge, as otherwise they structure thought without our conscious intent to think in those frameworks.

THE TRANSMISSION OF WUTAI CULT FROM SOUTH ASIA TO CHINA

The first essay by Chen examines the visit by a monk named Śākyamitra who in 667 went to Mount Wutai in search of a key ingredient in the elixir of immortality—saltpeter. Śākyamitra's personal story reveals the extent of the networks connecting the Buddhist cosmopolis. Originally from Sri Lanka (or perhaps the eastern coast of the Deccan), the records of his life include locations in Central India, Uḍḍiyāna, and Ch'ang an, as well as his visit to Wutai. Chen highlights Śākyamitra's

role in the exchange of medical knowledge between South and East Asia, noting that he was also a celebrated ascetic and a precept master.

Zijie Li's chapter is on the influence of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* on the thought of Fazang, a key figure in the widely influential Huayan (Kegon) school that is based on the *Avataṃsaka sūtra* (*Flower Garland Sutra*). Li's chapter focuses on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*'s role in the formation of Fazang's ideas regarding thusness (*tathatā*) and lineage/family (*gotra*). This exploration, however, points more generally to the important question of how broad scholarly attention needs to be in considering the history of ideas. There seems to be a certain style of religious scholarship that focuses exclusively on primary doctrinal texts of a lineage. In this case, Li shows that Fazang employed a variety of key texts, drawing out his interpretations of these key concepts from the Sanskrit of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and both earlier and later translations of important works, as well as the thought of other Buddhist thinkers. Beyond the issue of the sources for Fazang's terminology and ideas, there is a more general issue for scholars implicit here. That is the issue of how broadly we extend our conception of the context. When studying the thought of major figures, do we only look at the authoritative works defining a tradition, or do we also consider works from other contemporaneous thinkers and traditions?

The third essay, by Susan Andrews, turns again to the role of medicine in the history of Mount Wutai. Andrews finds that prior to the association of Wutai with Mañjuśrī, the site was famed for its powers of healing, of longevity, and of immortality. Examining collected stories of Mount Clear and Cool, Andrews notes several tropes familiar from similar stories of mysterious locales—wonderful sites that cannot be found again; meetings with hermits who may or may not be immortals or deities of the mountain; and profound regret at having failed to recognize a plant, a person, or a place for what it truly is and never being able to recover it. Economics played a role in the spread of the Mount's wondrous qualities, as locals gathered medicinals and traded them to communities outside the immediate area. Perhaps the miracle stories also played a role in promoting the value of such medicinals. Andrews notes that "Rather than displacing long-standing local visions of the mountain's significance as a place where aging and injured bodies might be restored and transcendence obtained, the understanding that Mount Wutai was home to the Bodhisattva worked in concert with preexisting portrayals of the territory enhancing the overall perception of

its potency locally and, by the seventh-century's end, throughout the Buddhist world" (pp. 45–46).

THE SPREAD OF THE WUTAI CULT IN CHINA: CENTER AND MARGINS

How many times have I passed by stone lanterns without questioning their significance? Huaiyu Chen looks at this element of material religious culture and uses it to uncover a great deal of important history about Buddhism in the Shanxi region during the early medieval period. Creating a multidimensional understanding, Chen takes three perspectives on one specific lantern. These are the lantern as marking a social and historical moment in the history of Buddhism at Mount Wutai, the use of the lantern to convey Buddhist teachings, and the location of the lantern in relation to other lanterns of the time and place. Chen convincingly argues that the Buddhist context is specifically the Avataṃsaka/Huayan cultic practices of particular import on Mount Wutai. One instance that Chen describes is an important challenge to the tendency to interpret religious practice as symbolic. That approach focuses on how an element of practice refers to, or symbolizes, something else—usually something hypostatized as transcendent, inconceivable, or ineffable. The element of practice is then reduced to "meaning" something other than itself. In contrast, as Chen notes, worshipping the lights emanating from the buddhas is the same as worshipping buddhas, and therefore "Visualizing and contemplating the stone lantern is the same as visualizing and contemplating the Buddhas" (p. 61).

T.H. Barrett adds an important complexity to the figure of Mount Wutai, which is its perception by those outside the Chinese cultural zone—peoples whose religious cultures led to different emphases. The specific perspective is that of the Northern Wei (a.k.a. Taugast or Tuoba, a "proto-Mongol" group). His introduction effectively problematizes the comparative project, indicating the importance of asking such questions as: How are these two things actually alike? What is the purpose of making the comparison? What qualities are being read onto something when it is compared to something else? An equally important methodological consideration is his explanation of the value of identifying what we do not know. "What we know, after all, conditions how we construct a narrative about Wutaishan, so that we lose interest in what lies outside that narrative, and tend only to look for elements

of further knowledge that can be inserted into what has already been constructed" (p. 78). Clearly this concern with the constraints of existing knowledge is not limited to the study of Mount Wutai.

The cult of Mount Wutai extended across much of Chinese religious culture, as is evidenced by its influence on Chan in southern China, that is, at a significant distance from the mountain itself in northern China. George A. Keyworth examines contrasting attitudes toward the mountain in the Linji sect. The founder, Linji (d. 866?), held a negative attitude of Mount Wutai, and this seems to have then been carried forth through much of the sect. However, some seven centuries later, during the Ming dynasty, other Chan masters began to resuscitate Mount Wutai as a key locale in the cultural geography of Chinese Buddhism. Two well-known figures involved in this resuscitation of Mount Wutai as an important locale were Daguan (1543–1603) and Hanshan (1546–1623), whose interests in the mountain reflected the concerns of Chan masters in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Central to Keyworth's discussion is the textual tradition of Chan. Mount Wutai was important as a resource for texts—contrary to the oft-repeated slogan about Chan being a "teaching outside the scriptures." In the earlier period Mount Wutai was thought of as a place where books with ritual significance, including *dhāraṇīs*, were studied and preserved (p. 91). Keyworth's essay contributes both to the history of Mount Wutai and also to understanding the Chan tradition as a textual tradition.

During the Republican era in China several lay Buddhist movements arose or became public, including one related to Mount Wutai, which was known as the Way of the Nine Palaces. Barend J. ter Haar examines this movement so as to understand its conceptual world, rather than for historical facts about the movement. As he says, "historically wrong information can be extremely revealing" of popular attitudes and beliefs (p. 114). The study of new religious movements in nineteenth and early twentieth century China is made difficult by the categories deployed by the government, which considered such movements "secret societies," and therefore potentially dangerous and destabilizing. This pejorative connotation proves to be an obstacle to the study of new religious movements. Ter Haar identifies another epistemic issue when he notes that "modern academic research generally discusses monastic Buddhism separately from new religious movements" (p. 114). Focusing on the life of the founder (or most prominent leader) of the Way of the Nine Palaces, Puji (b. 1850 or 1843), ter Haar

explores the belief system of adherents. Puji was an abbot of a monastery on Mount Wutai and was also considered to be an incarnation of the Buddha Maitreya—aspects of his life that point to the integration of monastic Buddhism and popular religion and reveal the Way of the Nine Palaces as a Buddhist messianic movement.

THE WUTAI CULT IN JAPAN

The next section of the collection moves to Japan, and the opening essay here, by David Quinter, looks at the mid-twelfth century monk Chōgen (1121–1206). As both a "Shingon monk and Amida devotee" Chōgen exemplifies the complexity of lived personal religiosity. This contrasts with the overly simplistic categorization of Buddhist lives into sectarian definitions. He was associated with Daigōji, a major Shingon temple on the outskirts of Kyoto, but is much better known for heading up the restoration of Tōdaiji temple in Nara along with its famous Buddha statue after it was burned in 1180. Chōgen's success in this role is in part attributable to his involvement with three interconnected cults—those of Mañjuśrī, Mount Wutai, and Gyōki (this latter figure was already legendary, a "saint," by Chōgen's time). Quinter makes an important point nuancing how cults were related to one another. On the one hand, there was a high degree of fluidity by which, for example, Mount Wutai becomes a metonym for Mañjuśrī. On the other, Quinter points out that despite this fluidity modern scholars need to avoid overemphasizing equivalencies or connections, and thus eliding the differences between cults. Equally important is Quinter's discovery of a "dark side" to Mañjuśrī, that is, the central role he plays in some rites of subjugation. While this aspect may not have been evident in China, Quinter argues that because "Mythological structures are resilient, and tend to re-inscribe themselves, with some variants in different contexts" (p. 166), this ambivalent quality was probably implicitly present in China as well.

Robert Borgen's chapter focuses on the imagery of Mount Wutai in the classical literature of Japan. Pilgrims to China brought back knowledge about Mount Wutai, as well as reports of their own experiences. Four mountains came to be closely identified with the mountains at Mount Wutai. "To this day, all four mountains remain familiar destinations for pilgrims, tourists, and hikers, both Japanese, and increasingly foreign" (p. 171). While Mañjuśrī and Mount Wutai figured significantly in medieval Japanese esoteric Buddhism, Borgen finds that

the literary references are relatively, and perhaps surprisingly, scant. His survey includes court literature in both Japanese vernacular texts and Chinese-language texts written in Japan, war tales that mention Mount Wutai, and poems by Japanese Zen writers. Wutai also figures in Noh and Kabuki theatre. In closing Borgen highlights the dialectic between written sources about Mount Wutai coming to Japan, which then encouraged Japanese monks to pilgrimage there, who upon returning added to the literary record, encouraging further pilgrimage, and so on.

THE WUTAI CULT IN TIBET, MONGOLIA, KHOTAN, AND KOREA

The construction of Tibetan and Mongolian architecture on Mount Wutai started in the seventeenth century and extended into the early twentieth. This is the topic studied by Isabelle Charleux in the next chapter. She notes the importance of floor plans as evidence of the "life of communities and the evolution of cults" (p. 214). In contemporary, popular Western culture, architectural practices seem to impose uniformity, living spaces being standardized and believed to be universal. However, Charleux asks how Tibetan monks lived in Chinese spaces. "Did they transform Chinese Buddhist architecture, or did they change their own organization, spatial practices and lifestyle to adapt to Chinese spatial arrangements?" (pp. 215–216). Though operating under the same rules of the order (*vinaya*), the practices of Tibetan and Chinese monasteries differ markedly. The disjunction between spatial organizations was evident on Mount Wutai when in the thirteenth century "several Tibetan Buddhist communities settled in ancient, damaged Chinese monasteries" (p. 249). Modern religious tourism to the mountain has continued processes of sinicization of facilities used by Tibetan communities, a trajectory started five centuries earlier. Charleux brings a highly detailed focus to specific temple complexes, creating an important study of the spatial organization of communities of practice.

Encounters between Christian missionaries and Buddhists has been an important resource for the historical study of several Buddhist traditions. (The extensive work of Urs App, most centrally his magisterial *The Birth of Orientalism*[1] but also the several ancillary studies

1. Urs App, *The Birth of Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

he has published, is evidence of the value of such sources.) And while Tibetan Buddhism is well-known for encounters with Christians, including the current Dalai Lama's efforts at dialogue, encounters between Mongolian Buddhism and Christian missionaries has received little attention. Temur Temule's contribution examines an important chapter in that history, the record left by a Scottish missionary, James Gilmour (1842–1891). Gilmour spent some two decades attempting to convert Mongols. He took the time to learn the language and lived in the Khalka region and also engaged the Mongol community while wintering in Beijing. His account of his visit to Mount Wutai provides Temule with historical information about Mongols on the mountain. The author points out that while Gilmour's engagements with Mongols constituted encounters, they did not constitute dialogues. That is, unlike the present-day project of Buddhist–Christian dialogue, Gilmour was interested in converting Mongols to Christianity, and not conversing with them. Temule notes that Gilmour's frame of reference was that of a rational Christianity and an irrational Buddhism, similar to the view promoted by Max Weber. Like so much of the project of "comparative religion," Gilmour decontextualizes the Buddhism of the Mongols. This allows for his own prejudgments to inform his presentation of the tradition he is critiquing, as well as for ignoring the context of his own tradition and the biases that imposed on his perceptions of Mongolian Buddhism.

"The Mañjuśrī Cult in Khotan" is the next chapter, in which the author Imre Hamar explores details of the Dunhuang representation of Mañjuśrī. His study establishes the existence of close connections between Khotan, Mount Wutai, and Dunhuang mediated by the cult of Mañjuśrī. Hamar emphasizes the importance of the central Asian Buddhist monks who transmitted Buddhism from India to China, a third factor he deems equally as important as the religious cultures of Indian Buddhism and China. In other words, Central Asian Buddhists were not passive conduits through which Buddhism flowed from India to China. Instead, they played an active role in selecting and interpreting the kinds of Buddhism and the ways it was understood to China. Of key importance to Khotan was the *Buddhāvataṃsaka sūtra*, and although not something that can be proven definitively, Hamar suggests that it may have been compiled in Khotan. He also suggests that it may have been there that the identification of Mañjuśrī as the ruling bodhisattva of "Clear and Cool Mountain," a name associated with Mount

Wutai, was made. Several other sutras exist in Khotanese translation that have importance for understanding the cult of Mañjuśrī. One of these, a chapter of the *Mahāratnakuta* predicting the attainment of buddhahood by Mañjuśrī, had "a direct influence on the Mañjuśrī cult on Wutaishan" (p. 285).

In keeping with the prejudices of modern religious studies scholarship, much of Japanese Buddhist historiography focuses on the limited number of founders. It is fortunate then that Pei-ying Lin chooses to focus on Ennin (793–864), one of the pivotal figures in medieval Japanese Buddhism. Lin employs the notion of networks to understand the transmission of important Lotus Sutra/Tiantai practices to Japan. Two of these are the Lotus Repentance practice and the Tendai Constant-Practice Samādhi. Ennin went to China in 838 and spent time on Mount Wutai (famously, where he learned the five-tone *nenbutsu*). For his trip to Mount Wutai, Ennin received a significant amount of assistance and encouragement from Sillan (Korean) monks and administrators, which Lin details with information from Ennin's diary.

The important contributions by Sillan figures have largely been obscured by the need to claim lineal connections to China, for the sake of legitimation (p. 288). Tiantai/Tendai teachings propagate a threefold truth (*sandi* 三諦), that is "ultimate" (*zhendi* 真諦), "conventional" (*sudi* 俗諦), and "center" (*zhongdi* 中諦). Lotus Samādhi involves meditating on these three truths, an extension of the more familiar Madhyamaka two truths. Lotus Repentance is a more elaborate, twenty-one–day ritual that originates with Zhiyi, the founder of Tiantai in China, but revised by Ennin in Japan. Lin explains that "Ennin's reformulation . . . is marked by the introduction of hymns and chanting. The musical and liturgical elements were reinforced, and this conforms to the characteristics of the Silla ceremonies he attended" (p. 298). As with the vast majority of the history of religion, the suggestive character of Lin's claims regarding Sillan influences on Ennin is the best we can expect. To restrict ourselves to only what is "well established in the historical record" is all too likely to warp our historiography due to sectarian efforts to obscure traces that do not conform to the dominant legitimating narrative.

Coming from a rather specialized academic journal, in this case *Studies in Chinese Religions*, means that the authors were originally writing to a very narrowly delineated audience. As given, the essays seem to have not been revised or edited for a more general audience,

as might have been useful when converting them into book form. In some cases, the writing assumes so much prior knowledge on the reader's part that "outsiders" may not find the contents very accessible. These considerations aside, the collection provides important insights into the history of Buddhism in East Asia as it developed in relation to Mount Wutai and the cult of Mañjuśrī.