

VOLUME 2, SPRING 2017



**Journal of Asian
Humanities at
Kyushu University**



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Humanities at
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Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University

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We accept research articles, reviews (book, exhibition, film), short reports (conferences and other events) and state-of-the-field essays.

Potential contributors should request the JAH-Q Submission Guidelines.

If you have an article to submit or would like your book to be reviewed, please contact us at cjbogel@lit.kyushu-u.ac.jp and kokusai@lit.kyushu-u.ac.jp.

Contents

VOLUME 2, SPRING 2017

TOMOYUKI KUBO

Prefatory Note iv

CYNTHIA J. BOGEL

Editorial Foreword v

PAWEŁ PACHCIAREK

Kusama Yayoi in the Context of
Eastern and Western Thought 1

ELIZABETH TINSLEY

The Composition of Decomposition: The *Kusōzu*
Images of Matsui Fuyuko and Itō Seiū, and Buddhism
in Erotic Grotesque Modernity. 15

ANNE VINCENT-GOUBEAU

Chen Zhen and the Obviousness of the Object. . . 47

UGO DESSÌ

Recent Developments in the Japanese Debate
on Secularization. 57

EVA SEEGER

A Tibetan Stupa within the Flow of Cultural
Transformations: The Opportunities and
Challenges of Transplanting Buddhist Architecture
from Asia to Europe 67

ELISABETTA PORCU

Tenrikyō's Divine Model through the
Manga *Oyasama Monogatari* 85

HENNY VAN DER VEERE

The Importance of *Kōden* in the Establishment
of Identity: The Title of the *Dainichikyō* in the
Opening Sequence of the *Hizōki* 95

PETER KORNICKI WITH T. H. BARRETT

Buddhist Texts on Gold and Other Metals in East Asia:
Preliminary Observations 111

RADU LECA

Turning "Sites of Remembrance" into
"Sites of Imagination": The Case of Hideyoshi's
Great Buddha 125

Review

BOOK REVIEW BY BRYAN D. LOWE

Heather Blair. *Real and Imagined: The Peak
of Gold in Heian Japan*. Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University Asia Center, 2015. 137

Kyushu and Asia

TAKESHI SHIZUNAGA

Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Visit to Fukuoka and the History
of China-Japan Academic Cooperation at Kyushu
University. 143

Prefatory Note

TOMOYUKI KUBO

DEAN

SCHOOL OF LETTERS, GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF HUMANITIES, FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

THE Faculty of Letters (currently the School of Letters, Graduate School of Humanities, and Faculty of Humanities) of Kyushu University celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2014. In order to commemorate this anniversary and share our research and accomplishments with the global academic community, we decided to publish an international journal annually. This second volume represents our ongoing effort. I am confident that this journal will make a contribution to a greater understanding of the humanities and will continue to make its influence felt in the international academic world.

Thanks are due to all who have helped to make this journal possible. I would especially like to acknowledge the work done by professors Cynthea J. Bogel, journal editor, and Ellen Van Goethem; their creativity and efforts have been critical to realizing the journal.

I sincerely hope this journal will contribute to the vital history of Asian Humanities in the world.

Editorial Foreword

CYNTHIA J. BOGEL

WELCOME to Volume 2 of *JAH-Q*. In addition to nine essays on visual culture and religious studies subjects, this volume launches two new sections that we hope to include in every issue. The *Review* section will offer book, film, exhibition, conference, and event reviews. *Kyushu and Asia* will feature a short piece or research essay on some aspect of Kyushu in the context of Asian humanities. In this issue Bryan Lowe reviews Heather Blair's original study of Mt. Kinpusen, a nuanced exploration of real and imagined space(s) on a natural monument of sacred activity; for *Kyushu and Asia* we feature a thought-provoking piece by Takeshi Shizunaga detailing Sun Yat-sen's visit to Kyushu University in 1913.

The first three essays present contemporary art and its reception by multiple publics. In the first two, Pawel Pachciarek and Elizabeth Tinsley offer considerations of celebrated Japanese contemporary artists Kusama Yayoi and Matsui Fuyuko, respectively. Sexuality, Buddhism and philosophy, self-obliteration, and the artist's self-representation are shared themes. Pachciarek scrutinizes a long history of responses to eighty-eight-year-old Kusama's artistic output, focusing on her time in New York during the 1950s and '60s. He probes connections between "her distinct meditative approach to

painting" (Pachciarek) and performances that "obliterate nature and our bodies" (Kusama) to eastern and western philosophies—some of them set forth by Kusama, others suggested by the author. He contrasts with these the artist's not infrequent refutation of influence from any creed or context. Tinsley gives us a discerning study of forty-three-year-old Matsui's work, at once disturbing and beautiful, and its visual and conceptual sources. She introduces the post-WWII paintings of Itō Sei and the aesthetics of an erotic grotesque born of modernity—and all that it entails and derails. In doing so Tinsley situates the work of Matsui both within and beyond the Buddhist decomposition works for contemplation (*kusōzu*) that are usually cited as her primary inspiration. The third essay by Anne Vincent-Goubeau on the late French émigré Chinese artist Chen Zhen also explores art, religion, and the artist's perception of worldly objects. Chen's body of work, like that of the late Montien Boonma, was deeply affected by his serious illness and by Buddhism—in Chen's case his contact with Tibet and its people. Vincent-Goubeau focuses on the artist's installations, which she sees as predicated on "the self-evidence of mundane objects."

The fourth essay takes us away from art and artistic allusion to scholarly debates about secularization

(and post secularity) in Japan and theories of secularization within and outside Japan. Ugo Dessi's critical survey of the literature highlights certain mechanisms that inform scholars' resistance to Western methodologies, the "contested, misused, and misunderstood" discourses on the secular and secularization, and the implications of new Japanese models. Placed before essays by Eva Seegers, Elisabetta Porcu, and Henny van der Veere, Dessi's serves to remind us of relationships between secular society (or differently religious societies) and Buddhism or Buddhist icons, and of emic and etic viewpoints.

Seegers' study of a four-meter-high Tibetan stupa in Germany considers the migration and globalization of Buddhism on one hand and the cultural appropriation of Asian and Buddhist symbolism on the other. Crafted in Nepal and erected and consecrated in Germany by religious experts in 2003, it stands outside a science center within a famous rhododendron park in Bremen. Seegers traces the complex transformation of the symbolically charged sacred stupa amongst considerations of the Tibetan diaspora and the inevitable if unintended reinvention of the stupa. In her study of manga created by the Japanese new religion, Tenrikyō, Porcu's essay takes up religion and its representation on home territory, for use primarily by its members. A globalized commodity, manga, supports the naturalization of the Tenrikyō's foundress, "parent" Oyasama, within Japanese society and to her devotees. The presentation of Oyasama in the manga parallels a key Tenrikyō doctrinal text and at the same time cultivates intimacy with the foundress through familiar visual and narrative manga strategies.

Van der Veere's essay also examines religious praxis in Japan with a close reading of Shingon Esoteric Buddhist ritual training seminars. Lineage seminars often use the opening line of a critical text as key: "they introduce the topics of the commentators not only as historical precedents but also in order to distinguish the general Shingon thought from other groups." Despite the fact that the seminars vary for each ritual lineage, both Western scholarship and that of Shingon priests tend to favor points of similarity in their analyses of the seminars. For an understanding of the significance to ritual and lineage praxis and history, van der Veere favors an emic methodology over an etic one in his study of the lectures.

The final two essays feature premodern visual culture. Peter Kornicki, with T.H. Barrett, offers a study of

Buddhist sutras and sutra excerpts on gilded or plain metal plates from East Asia. Just as the use of the first line from a key Shingon text in van der Veere's study is understood to hold the true meaning of the whole, the textual passages on one or more metal plates serve as the embodiment of the sutra. Like the Buddhist stupa, the metal document with its text is understood as embodying the body of the Buddha. Also like the stupa, the plates sometimes travel far from their place of creation.

Radu Leca's contribution on Toyotomi Hideyoshi's late-sixteenth-century Great Buddha Hall at Hōkōji and its lost twenty-four-meter-high icon in the former capital of Kyoto uses visual archaeology to tease out the essentializing gaze of the outsider. Featured is the extant eighteenth-century drawing of the Great Buddha by Engelbert Kaempfer of the Dutch East India Company. Positing the repeated loss and replacement of the icon and hall as a "case study on cultural memory," and a hypothetical immersive phone app named Shinraku ("new capital") as the most recent stratum of "this site of remembrance," Leca skillfully weaves together reality and fiction.

Asked to establish this peer-reviewed journal, the two-person faculty of the International Master's Program (IMAP) and International Doctorate (IDOC) in Japanese Humanities have combined efforts to produce the first two volumes. My colleague and Editorial Board member Ellen Van Goethem has helped to assure a smooth process and high standards for the journal. *JAH-Q* is truly our shared pleasure. Lindsey E. DeWitt and Lisa Kochinski provided valuable assistance. Finally, we are very grateful to The Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Program in Buddhism and Contemporary Society, University of British Columbia, for financial support toward editing and production.

Please contact us about publishing your latest research or a review in following issues. The deadline for Volume 3 (March 2018) is September 1, 2017.

Article Contributors and Summaries

Kusama Yayoi in the Context of Eastern and Western Thought

PAWEL PACHCIAREK

ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY,
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
OSAKA UNIVERSITY, MEXT SCHOLARSHIP PHD
FELLOWSHIP

This essay engages an often-proposed inquiry into ties between the creative world of Kusama Yayoi and certain philosophical or religious systems. Although the artist frequently explains her actions as self-birthing and devoid of any context, we can nevertheless discern a distinctive closeness between Kusama's creativity and those philosophical and religious references. I explore the presence of such references in Kusama's works, first considering Kusama's artistic universe from the perspective of Western philosophy. Here, I tease out connections between ideas expressed by a Japanese artist coming to New York in the late 1950s, Anaximander's ancient Greek philosophy, and Nietzschean philosophy. Next, I shift focus to Kusama's more Eastern-related views, specifically on infinity and enlightenment, and explore potential Zen Buddhist influences in her un-

published play script "The Gorilla Lady" and her paintings. Finally, I discuss Kusama's works in the context of Japanese psychiatrist-collector Takahashi Ryūtarō's "Mindfulness!" exhibition series.

The Composition of Decomposition: The *Kusōzu* Images of Matsui Fuyuko and Itō Seiu, and Buddhism in Erotic Grotesque Modernity

ELIZABETH TINSLEY

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, ANDREW W.
MELLON ART HISTORY FELLOW
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, DOCTORAL CANDIDATE,
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

In Japanese culture, the corpse in nine phases of disintegration is presented in certain visual and textual contexts as a locus for Buddhist contemplation. In pictorial representations this is called *kusōzu*. This essay questions conventional interpretations of contemporary artist Matsui Fuyuko's paintings and sketches of *kusōzu* and related imagery as reworkings of premodern Buddhist depictions. It proposes an alternative cultural ge-

nealogy for her work and demonstrates that Matsui's influences are more readily situated in depictions of anatomical dissection, the nude, and notions and images of self-mutilation or suicide. Of pivotal significance is the art of Itō Seiu, who casts Buddhist motifs in the aesthetic of *eroguro* ("erotic grotesque"). Presentations of aestheticized dismemberment and the gaze(s) galvanized by them are part of both *kusōzu* and *eroguro* imagery. The grotesque was an inherent element of modernity in Japanese visual culture.

Chen Zhen and the Obviousness of the Object

ANNE VINCENT-GOUBEAU

UNIVERSITY OF ANGERS
PROFESSOR OF VISUAL ARTS
AND THEORY OF ARTS

This article focuses on paradoxical contemporary artwork, based on the self-evidence of mundane objects in *Prayer Wheel: "Money Makes the Mare Go" (Chinese Slang)*, created in New York in 1997 by Chen Zhen, a French-naturalized artist born in China. This installation was made using the personal experience of the artist following a trip to Tibet in 1983, which he made unwillingly. The time he spent with Tibetans changed his perspective to such a degree that he gave closer attention to everyday realities. The simplicity of this installation, firmly anchored in material triviality, requires going beyond appearances to better share its non-physical elements. Throughout his work, Chen built a genuine life project and thought pattern that he called "transexperience."

Recent Developments in the Japanese Debate on Secularization

UGO DESSI

UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN, HONORARY
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

Secularization theory was introduced to Japan in the 1970s but initial attempts to apply it to Japanese religions have not created a lasting trend. A skeptical attitude toward secularization is still dominant in Japan,

based on the claim that the secularization thesis is ultimately centered on western representations of Christianity. This does not mean, however, that discussions revolving around secularization have disappeared from the scholarly scene. In fact, the idea of secularization is used as a negative point of reference by several scholars, while others have attempted to apply it more positively to the Japanese context. Discussions on secularization in Japan since the 1980s are still in need of a critical examination, and this article aims to partially address this gap by focusing on the contributions by Japanese scholars in the last decade, in order to illustrate some of the major trends and issues in the current debate.

A Tibetan Stupa within the Flow of Cultural Transformations: The Opportunities and Challenges of Transplanting Buddhist Architecture from Asia to Europe

EVA SEEGER

UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG
RESEARCH FELLOW, THE NUMATA
CENTER FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES

Stupas are among the key visual representations of Buddhism, having developed from ancient reliquaries into complex structures with deep, multilayered symbolism. What happens when these outstanding pieces of Buddhist material culture travel to other continents, especially when non-Buddhists build them on public grounds? Do their spiritual values, symbolic meanings, and religious significance remain unchanged, or are altogether new levels of meaning added? This essay participates in ongoing debates over the transformation of art and architecture within cultural flows between Europe and Asia. Based on a case study of a Tibetan *byang chub mchod rten* (Enlightenment stupa) in a public park in Germany, it addresses some of the key issues and discussions that arise when an ancient tradition is emplaced in a new cultural context.

Tenrikyō's Divine Model through the Manga *Oyasama Monogatari*

ELISABETTA PORCU

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
SENIOR LECTURER IN ASIAN RELIGIONS

This paper focuses on the manga *Oyasama monogatari*, produced by the new religious movement Tenrikyō on the life of its foundress, Nakayama Miki, otherwise known as Oyasama. In particular, it draws attention to Nakayama's life as the Divine Model (*Hinagata*) to be followed, and how her figure as a divine being is represented in the manga in an attempt to create a closer connection between her and Tenrikyō's members. The paper analyzes the manga in relation to the group's doctrine as expounded in two of the group's major scriptures, the *Tenrikyō kyōten* (The Doctrine of Tenrikyō) and the *Ofudesaki* (Tip of the Divine Writing Brush).

The Importance of *Kōden* in the Establishment of Identity: The Title of the *Dainichikyō* in the Opening Sequence of the *Hizōki*

HENNY VAN DER VEERE

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY LECTURER

This article discusses seminars called *kōden* held for priests of the Shingon school and how their ritual roles and the way they identify with lineages hinges on formative influences received during such initiation-lectures. An investigation into the contents of these seminars leads to a more profound understanding of the roles and identities of these priests in present-day Japan. The first sentence of the *Hizōki*, the title of the *Dainichikyō*, appears in the *Hizōki kōden*; it serves here as an example of how various topics can be debated, how commentaries can be arranged, and how interpretations particular to lineages are developed. A combination of historical precedents with traditional (lineage) accents and modern-day investigations and discussions form the core of the seminars. The logic systems and tools introduced during these seminars can also be studied as a distinguishing feature among ritual lineages.

Buddhist Texts on Gold and Other Metals in East Asia: Preliminary Observations

PETER KORNICKI WITH T. H. BARRETT

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY
EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF JAPANESE

SOAS
EMERITUS PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT
OF RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES

This article focuses on a small number of Buddhist texts that have been produced on metal, including precious metals, in East Asia. This practice is known from documentary and scriptural references but also from finds in what are now Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Once the scriptural references had been translated into Chinese they became available to all parts of East Asia where the Chinese Buddhist canon was the norm. In Korea, the Khitan empire, Japan and elsewhere a few examples have been found of Buddhist texts on precious metals; for the most part it seems that these were buried in the foundations of stupas and pagodas. In most cases the texts were inscribed, but in a few cases they were created using the repoussé technique to produce a whole page at a time. In this article we give preliminary consideration to the production of Buddhist texts on metal in East Asia and ask why there is so much variation and why so many of the texts are incomplete.

Turning "Sites of Remembrance" into "Sites of Imagination": The Case of Hideyoshi's Great Buddha

RADU LECA

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIAN STUDIES
(IIAS), LEIDEN
AFFILIATED FELLOW

From the seventeenth until the nineteenth century, the Great Buddha Hall (Daibutsuden) of Hōkōji temple was one of the top attractions of a visit to the capital. The site has now almost disappeared, but its varied visual footprint testifies to the agency of its audiences, both local and foreign. The analysis of these visual sources yields information about the embodied experience of visiting the site and the strategies of dealing with its loss. These issues are relevant for present-day landscape

conservation policies in the context of the availability of digital technology. If developed with attention to the specificity of historical sources, immersive digital apps have the potential to insert a new layer of interaction at the intersection between memory and architecture, thereby enabling users to re-engage with historical sites.

REVIEW

Heather Blair. *Real and Imagined: The Peak of Gold in Heian Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015.

BOOK REVIEW BY BRYAN D. LOWE

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES,
RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF JAPAN AND KOREA

KYUSHU AND ASIA

Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Visit to Fukuoka and the History of China-Japan Academic Cooperation at Kyushu University

TAKESHI SHIZUNAGA

KYUSHU UNIVERSITY
PROFESSOR OF CHINESE LITERATURE

This brief essay discusses the circumstances surrounding Sun Yat-sen's visit to Kyushu University in 1913. Through the lens of a work of calligraphy he produced to commemorate that occasion, this piece explores not only Sun Yat-sen's activities, thoughts, and emotions during this visit but also the message he may have intended to convey to the numerous people who have visited the University's Central Library on Hakozaki Campus, where the framed plaque still hangs today.

Kusama Yayoi in the Context of Eastern and Western Thought

PAWEL PACHCIAREK

WRITINGS on the creative world of Kusama Yayoi (b. 1929) occasionally inquire into the possible ties between her art, the art of other artists, and certain philosophical or religious systems. It is difficult to reach an unambiguous resolution on such matters, as the artist herself frequently emphasizes the “self-birth” of her actions, viewing them as set outside any type of context.¹ That said, we can still discern a certain closeness between Kusama’s creativity and particular philosophical and religious references. This article explores the presence of such references in Kusama’s

works, which in a unique manner intertwine her private life, imagination, and experiences as an artist. The first part of the paper considers Kusama’s artistic universe from the perspective of Western philosophy, employing it as an interpretative tool to better understand certain aspects of specific art works. Kusama’s time living in America and visiting Western European countries marks some of her most prolific periods of artistic output, warranting a closer look at some of her works from a Western perspective. I tease out connections between ideas expressed by a Japanese artist coming to New York in the late 1950s (Kusama’s self-obliteration and the polka dot), Anaximander’s ancient Greek philosophy, and Nietzschean philosophy. Next, I shift focus to Kusama’s more Eastern-leaning views, specifically on infinity and enlightenment, and explore potential Zen Buddhist influences in her unpublished play script “The Gorilla Lady” and her distinct, meditative approach to painting. Finally, I discuss Kusama’s works in the context of Japanese psychiatrist-collector Takahashi Ryūtarō’s “Mindfulness!” exhibition series.

1. The *Arche* of Dots

Dots—transformed in a variety of forms and woven into an intricate and continuous symbiosis, figuratively

The author would like to thank Lindsey E. DeWitt for her insights and editorial assistance.

¹ Kusama may prefer that the viewer look at her works in a non-discursive manner, free of any context, but she nevertheless does not—in public statements, manifestos, or interviews—discount the influence of minimalism and pop art on her formative years. The artist admits ties to other artists and groups such as Zero Group, alongside of whom she occasionally showed. These connections were especially strong during her New York residency. Still, Kusama never joined any single artistic group nor did she aspire to, preferring rather to keep her artistic expression free from any restrictions and liberated from an overly contextualized world of fabricated histories. See Midori Yamamura’s comprehensive study on the historical and social-political contexts of Kusama’s actions during her time in the United States. Yamamura casts new light on many details of the artist’s life and works. Midori Yamamura, *Yayoi Kusama: Inventing the Singular* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015).

representing a phantasmic world of imagination—represent for Japanese artist Kusama something akin to what Greek philosophers perceived as the source, origin, or root cause. Kusama’s vision of the universe draws on the architectonic notion that singularity is already a message of multitude from its intrinsic concept. Dots (and even a single dot), it follows, can be said to represent the very fabric of life.²

Consider the basic, obsessive element of the artist’s fears in light of Greek philosopher Anaximander’s (c. 610–546 BCE) philosophical wanderings on origin (*arche*) and the infinite (*apeiron*): “all things come from single primal substance . . . it is infinity, eternal and ageless, and it encompasses all the worlds.”³ Significantly, infinity for Anaximander signifies the quality of *arche* but not its substance, unlike theories put forth by other Greek philosophers (e.g., water for Thales, fire for Heraclites, air for Anaximenes); nor does it single out quality as distinct from unity. The qualitative neutrality of *arche* is in fact a condition for the continuous existence of a certain (just) order of the cosmic universe. In this paradigm, everything is contained in infinity and everything also emerges from it. Infinity is simultaneously the beginning and the end—an endless potential, a cyclic and inexhaustible creation of objects. Anaximander’s universe, awakened by this infinite reason, continuously evolves. We can consider Kusama’s dots, which manifest in various forms in many of her artistic works, as representations of her infinity, in much the same way.

On the streets of New York in the second half of the 1960s, Kusama chose dots as her weapon of choice to address and attack what she viewed as an oppressive political and cultural establishment and also to inspire revolutionary social changes that would be rooted in love, peace, and tolerance. Kusama held a series of naked happenings that featured different colored dot designs being painted on the bodies of participants.⁴

This act, per the artist’s stated intentions, represented symbolically the path toward experiencing the quality of the infinite universe. By painting dots on the body, Kusama believed men and women could experience, return to, and be at one with the universe, and in so doing vanish from the multitude and become a potential force in subsequent transformations (figure 1). In 1968, she wrote:

Polka dots can’t stay alone, like communicative life of people, two and three and more polka dots become movement. Our earth is only one polka dot among a million stars in the cosmos. Polka dots are a way to infinity. When we obliterate nature and our bodies with polka dots, we become part of the unity of our environment. I become part of the eternal, and we obliterate ourselves in Love.⁵

Arche, a term that seems to be inseparably tied with the dot, for Kusama signifies a process of self-obliteration, a type of a spiritual enlightenment characterized by a renewed connection with infinity. The term is strongly tied to Kusama’s naked happenings of the 1960s, where polka dot patterns, painted on a body, were to cause self-obliteration. Self-obliteration paves the way to salvation by allowing humans to free themselves from the shackles that tie them to humanity, shackles such as history, ego, and imposed social roles. In self-obliteration, we see Kusama’s ponderings on some of the most significant slogans propagated in the American counterculture of the late 1960s: free love, anti-military social movements, and new (to America) streams of philosophical and religious thought, much of which were drawn from East Asian traditions. As noted by art historian Midori Yoshimoto:

In essence, Kusama’s Self-Obliteration is a creative hybrid of Buddhist thought inflected with New

2 “Dots might represent the circle of the earth, or the sun or moon, or whatever you like.” Yayoi Kusama, trans. Ralph McCarthy, *Infinity Net: The Autobiography of Yayoi Kusama* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011 [2002]), 102.

3 Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2006), 35.

4 Kusama used the term “Happening” (with a capital H) for most of her public performances from the 1960s and 1970s. I follow this style here, and refer to her other performances and events as “happenings” (with a lower-case h). Kusama borrowed the term “Happening” from artist Alan Kaprow, who first used it in 1959, but employed it more casually, as her performances did not have

as complete a script as Kaprow’s did but were focused rather on attracting instant attention from onlookers who could be brought into the performance. For more on the connection between Kaprow and Kusama, see Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese Women Artists in New York* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 69.

5 Kusama Yayoi, quoted in Jud Yalkut, “Polka Dot Way of Life (Conversations with Yayoi Kusama),” *New York Free Press* 1, no. 8 (1968): 9.



Figure 1. *Anatomic Explosion Happening*. August 11, 1968. Photography. Alice in Wonderland sculpture, Central Park. ©Yayoi Kusama.

Age spiritualism, the rhetoric of sexual liberation, and her semi-autobiographical narrative.⁶

Yoshimoto's likening of self-obliteration to Buddhist thought points to a specific context and moment in the artist's life. When Kusama arrived in New York in 1958, Eastern philosophy, and Zen Buddhism in particular, was already influencing prominent artists such as Mark Tobey (1890–1976), Merce Cunningham (1919–2009), and John Cage (1912–92). The voluminous writings in

English by Western-influenced Japanese philosopher Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966)—often viewed as the “founding father” of Zen in the West—contributed greatly in this regard. Kusama undoubtedly would have witnessed the popularity of and demand for Zen, especially among the younger generation of artists and intellectuals in New York.⁷ By explaining Kusama's self-obliteration as some sort of merged construct of various elements, however, Yoshimoto construes this concept as a product of “Beat Zen” or “Square Zen,” a Western quasi-Zen often criticized as a bastardized version of the actual East Asian traditions.⁸ For example, Ruth Fuller Sasaki (1892–1967), an American woman who became an abbess of Ryōsen'an 龍泉庵 (a

6 Midori Yoshimoto, “Kusama Saves the World through Self-Obliteration” (Self-published, 2011), 3, www.Academia.edu/2092612/Kusama_Saves_the_World_through_Self-Obliteration_English_version (accessed January 20, 2017).

7 See Helen Westgeest, *Zen in the Fifties* (Chicago: Reaktion Books, 1998).

8 See Alan Watts, *Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1959).

sub-temple of Daitokuji 大徳寺 in Kyoto), comments in the following manner on the Zen boom in the West:

Zen is invoked to substantiate the validity of the latest theories in psychology, psychotherapy, philosophy, semantics, mysticism, free-thinking, and what-have-you. It is the magic password at smart cocktail parties and bohemian get-togethers alike. . . . How far away all this is from the recluse Gautama sitting in intense meditation under the Bodhi-tree trying to find a solution to the problem of human suffering!⁹

As I hope to demonstrate below with the examples of Kusama's pumpkin contemplation and messianic mission, we should distance the artist from the "Zen flâneur" image found in the United States' counterculture of the 1950s and 1960s. After all, "Zen arts without Zen study is just cultural junk," one Zen master who gained prominence in the West remarked.¹⁰

Kusama has repeatedly emphasized in interviews and her writings that the self-obliteration concept should not be directly identified with any idea or a religious doctrine, however. Its foundation is anti-contextual, she claims, arising from her imagined vision of the world.¹¹ And yet, in attempting to comprehend the self-obliteration process, it is difficult to discount entirely the potential influences of external "contexts."¹² On more than one occasion and seemingly not as an intentional game with the viewer, the artist herself has noted multiple tracks of mythical (religious) or cultural thinking. In a 1994 interview, for instance, when asked about the meaning of self-obliteration, Kusama replied:

[Self] always revives and reemerges as in *eigō kaiki* 永劫回帰 (Eternal Recurrence). That is the meaning behind Self-Obliteration.¹³

The artist's words immediately recall Friedrich Nietzsche's (1813–49) concept of "eternal recurrence."¹⁴ Considering Kusama's explicit association of the "eternal recurrence" concept in light of the aforementioned immanent-to-nature principle (*arche*) propagated by the Ionic nature philosophers may lead to a fuller understanding of the artist's universe. Kusama's acceptance of "eternal recurrence" signifies that for her the entire universe is infinite, having no beginning and no end. It must therefore contain the forces that sustain its own existence. And if it is self-sufficient, then all forms of the phenomenal world can be found in its singularity. Here, a cycle of recurring returns and births replaces a linear notion of time (figure 2).

But we cannot totally reconcile Kusama's use of "eternal recurrence," and thus her vision of the world, with Western philosophical ideas. While Nietzsche speaks about the utterly physical character of "eternal recurrence," Kusama outlines a vision of the universe completely penetrated by a metaphysical, spiritual characteristic. This is most visibly expressed in her self-obliteration concept: "I want to see my life, which is but one dot. The dot—or rather, the single particle out of a million—is my life."¹⁵ Kusama, who has long struggled with her psychological sense of self, views herself as a being living on the border of two worlds: the real world and the unreal world. Struggling with depersonalization allowed Kusama to traverse between the two worlds and create from that space of liminality. The first signs of such a state can be traced back as early as 1950 with her painting *Accumulation of the Corpses (Prisoner Surrounded by the Curtain of Depersonalization)*, which she describes in her 2002 autobiography as drawing on experiences during her youth of depersonalization neurosis:

9 Gregory Levine, "Two (or More) Truths: Reconsidering Zen Art in the West," in *Awakenings: Zen Figure Paintings from Medieval Japan*, eds. Gregory Levine and Yukio Lippit (New York: Japan Society, 2007), 54–5.

10 Yasuda Joshu Dainen Roshi, "Zen and Culture," *Zenmai* 8, <http://wwzc.org/dharma-text/zen-and-culture> (accessed January 10, 2017).

11 For instance, Kusama wrote in the 1960s: "If there is any Zen in my work, I am unconscious of it." CICA/YK/6000.08. Kusama Archive. CICA codes were applied to Kusama's papers and interview tapes for Kusama's 1989 exhibition at the Center for International Contemporary Arts (CICA), New York.

12 American critic John Kroll described the *Infinity Nets* series as a "Zen vigil." Jack Kroll, "Reviews and Previews: Yayoi Kusama," *Art News* 60, no. 3 (May 1961): 15. Quoted in Claudia Ponton, "Between Death and Life: Trauma in the Art of Yayoi Kusama" (MA thesis, University of Oregon, 1999), 4.

13 Kusama Yayoi, "A torie hōmon Kusama Yayoi," *Co•La•Bo Art 2* (1994): 49.

14 This idea can be traced as far back as ancient Egypt, where images of scarabs, which are regarded as symbols of an unending cycle of rebirths, have been found in tombs and on amulets. See more about scarabs and their incorporation into Egyptian symbolism, religion, and art in Richard H. Wilkinson, *Egyptian Scarabs* (London: Shire Publications, 2008).

15 Ikai Hisashi, "Mizutama ni komereta imi o tokiakasu," in *Yappari suki da! Kusama Yayoi*, ed. Pen Henshūbu (Tokyo: Hankyū Komyunikēshonzu, 2011), 52.



Figure 2. Kusama Yayoi. *Accumulation of the Corpses (Prisoner Surrounded by Curtains of Depersonalization)*. 1950. H. 72.3cm, w. 91.5cm. Oil and enamel on seed sack. The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo. ©Yayoi Kusama.

I felt as if I am in a place where pleated, striped curtains enclose me, and finally I am in a place where pleated, striped curtains completely enclose me, and finally my soul separates from my body. Once that happens, I can take hold of a flower in the garden, for example without being able to feel it. Walking, it is as if I am on a cloud; I have no sense of my body as something real.¹⁶

¹⁶ Kusama, *Infinity Net*, 87.

A split world can never fully reflect “eternal recurrence,” however, at least not as Nietzsche articulated it in terms of the physical nature of existence. Dividing the physical world into more than one enduring dimension can only be possible if each next one is merely a reflection, a cyclic repetition drawn from the same physical properties. For Nietzsche, the universe is composed of a finite number of beings (and their transformations), which are infinitely reproduced in cycle after cycle. All things thus represent a repetition of existence in a cyclic time. This does not align with the constant and infinite transgression of matter and souls we find in Kusama’s world. The unstoppable transformation of one quality into another, stretched in boundless time, is precisely what constitutes the basis of eternal existence for Kusama. The dot, principle symbol of this process, may undergo countless transformations: “a polka dot has the form of the sun which is a symbol of the energy of the whole

world, and also the form of the moon which is calm.”¹⁷ Beyond “eternal recurrence” (*eigō kaiki* 永劫回帰), then, this process of constant movement and change seems to resonate strongly with the Buddhist notion of transmigration (*rinne tenshō* 輪廻転生).

2. Face to Face with a Pumpkin

Let us also consider more closely the latent (and obvious) connections between Kusama’s art and Zen Buddhism. In 1948, upon commencing studies at the Kyoto Municipal School of Arts and Crafts, Kusama rented a room and in it painted numerous representations of a pumpkin with a great dedication bordering on madness.¹⁸ This would, in later years, become an important and internationally recognizable motif. Kusama’s creative process involved, if not depended upon, specific rituals. Before dawn, she would lay out her painting tools on the carpet along with sheets of vellum paper; then, and before painting, she practiced Zen meditation.

When the sun came up over Mount Higashiyama, I would confront the spirit of the pumpkin, forgetting everything else and concentrating my mind entirely upon the form before me. Just as Bodhidharma spent ten years facing a stone wall, I spent as much as a month facing a single pumpkin. I regretted even having to take time to sleep.¹⁹

Kusama’s self-comparison with Bodhidharma (Jpn. Daruma 達磨), first patriarch of Zen Buddhism, sheds new light on the entire project. For Kusama, who “lives in the space between subjectivity and objectivity” betwixt the real and the unreal, painting represented a self-imposed mission, one she sought to accomplish through practically non-stop output of works.²⁰

Central to this “mission” is the message of bringing love and peace into the world. One of the most expressive examples of Kusama’s utopian vision can be found

in her Happenings, such as the one held in front of the main headquarters of New York’s Election Commission in November 1968. A week after stormy presidential elections, and in the shadow of the Vietnam war, Kusama arranged a public reading of a letter to Richard Nixon, victorious candidate of the Republican Party. In the letter, titled “An Open Letter to My Hero, Richard M. Nixon,” the artist expressed her radical, pacifist convictions. She prepared to give her body to the President so that he could tame his “male, battling spirit” and understand the “naked truth,” that violence is impossible to eradicate using violence.²¹ Spinning her own vision of a world free of hatred, Kusama writes:

Our earth is like one little polka dot, among millions of other celestial bodies, one orb full of hatred and strife amid the peaceful, silent spheres. Let’s you and I change all of the peaceful, silent spheres. Let’s you and I change all of that and make this world a new Garden of Eden.²²

Let us also consider the prophetic role of “World Savior” Kusama took upon herself in the “Kusama Polka Dot Church” (1968). In a spacious loft on Walker Avenue in SoHo, Kusama, the church’s self-appointed “High Priestess of Polka Dots,” set forth a simple dogma: to spread the ideas of love and reconciliation throughout the world. Her followers’ first sacrament—their baptism—consisted of being painted with dots all over their naked bodies as a means for them to “return to the root of their eternal soul.”²³ “It is the moment of joy and of inheriting the vitality of infinity.”²⁴ In November 1968, Kusama held another Happening called *Homosexual Wedding* (figure 3). The invitations and press announcement stated that Kusama, “The High Priestess of Polka Dots,” would conduct a marriage ceremony for a homosexual male couple. During the

17 Kusama, quoted in Jud Yalkut, “Polka Dot Way of Life,” 9.

18 Present-day Kyoto City University of Arts. At the time, Kusama lived on a mountain slope in a haiku poet’s house together with her family.

19 Kusama, *Infinity Net*, 76.

20 Takiguchi Shūzō, “Yōseiyo eien ni,” in *Manhattan jisatsu misui jōshūhan*, ed. Kusama Yayoi (Tokyo: Kadokawa Bunko, 1984), 348.

21 Yayoi Kusama, “Open Letter to My Hero, Richard M. Nixon,” November 11, 1968. Recalling again Anaximander’s *arche*, the stated first principle could not have a defined polarization, as it would draw others and at the same time engage with them in continuous battle. As Russell points out, “the primal substance could not be water, or any other known element. If one of these were primal, it would conquer the others. . . . the primal substance, therefore, must be neutral in this cosmic strife.” Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 36.

22 Kusama, “Open Letter to My Hero.”

23 Yayoi Kusama, “The Artist’s Voice Since 1981,” conversation with Turner Grady, *Bomb* (Winter 1999): 12.

24 Kusama, “Open Letter to My Hero.”

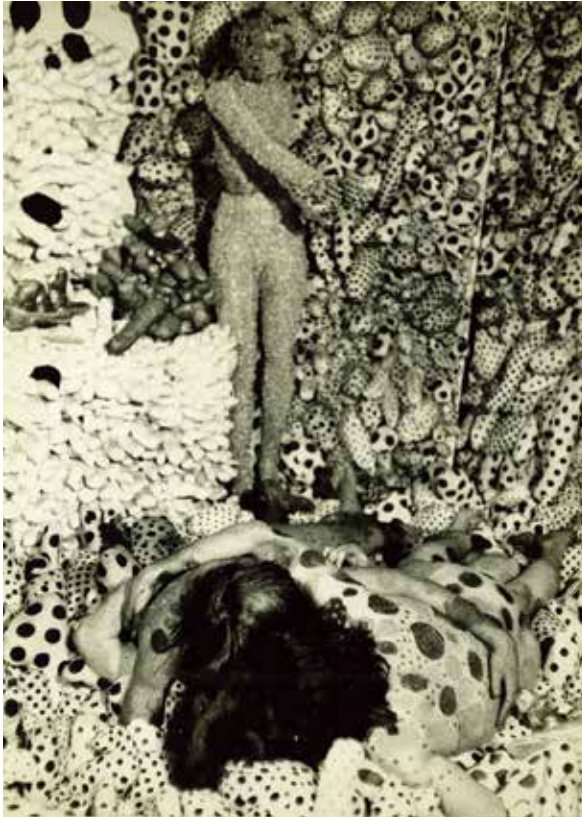


Figure 3. *Homosexual Happening*. 1968. Photography. Kusama's studio. ©Yayoi Kusama.

ceremony, the two grooms wore a one-piece orgy gown designed by Kusama especially for the occasion. It was one of many completed avant-garde fashion design projects that would soon be created by “The Kusama Fashion Company.”²⁵

25 As a young girl, Kusama wore clothes she designed herself and later, when in New York, she started a company to produce two types of designs: some we might consider as *haute couture*, such as an evening dress for \$1,200.00 with open cuts on the breasts, buttocks, and vagina; and cheaper clothes sold for as little as \$15.00 such as the “The Homo Dress,” which also featured cut-outs in the buttocks area. Designs from Kusama’s “See-Through” and “Way Out” brands became popular among the rich, jet-setting clientele for whom Kusama opened a luxury boutique on Fifth Avenue. “The best way of looking human is to go around completely nude, but if you must wear clothing and still want to look individual, wear hand-made things.” Kusama first tried her hand at sewing when she was a teenager during World War II. She was assigned to work on the production of parachutes in the Kuraha textile factory in Matsumoto. Designs consisting of a single piece of clothing worn at the same time by two or more

Establishing her own religious group was more than an attempt to preach ideas of free love and tolerance. Although rudimentary in form, Kusama’s church was a project that inquired into how the church, a social institution, could fight social inequality, hatred, and acts of violence against people with different skin color, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation. *Homosexual Wedding* stands as a proscription against oppressive and heteronormative discourse, something Kusama viewed the Church as transgressing. The artist becomes in this case an anti-priestess of the Church—her own vision of a savior wanting to rescue everyone, even (and especially) those who were excluded.

The purpose of this marriage is to bring out into the open what has hitherto been concealed... Love can now be free, but to make it completely free, it must be liberated from all sexual frustrations imposed by society. Homosexuality is a normal physical and psychological reaction, neither to be extolled nor decried. It is abnormal reaction of many people to homosexuality that makes homosexuality abnormal.²⁶

3. Infinity Nets

In 1958, Kusama created a series of works sourced from the hallucinatory experiences that conditioned her perspective on infinity:

Everything—I, others, the entire universe—would be obliterated by white nets of nothingness connecting astronomical accumulations of dots. White nets are enveloping the black dots of silent death against a pitch-dark background of nothingness.²⁷

In these works, we find a resemblance (reflected in the title, *Pacific Ocean*, given to some of the works in the series) to the surface of the Pacific Ocean as viewed

people and designs with cutouts in sensitive areas became for Kusama a way to promote free sexuality. Yayoi Kusama, “Nudist Queen Designs Clothes for Department Store,” Press release, Kusama Fashion Incorporated, April 1969.

26 Kusama, “Homosexual Wedding,” Press release, Kusama Polka Dot Church, November 25, 1968.

27 Kusama, *Infinity Net*, 23.

from an airplane: an unending string of dots, and the nets formed from them, which give the impression of continuous repetition and division as well as unstoppable movement through visible brush strokes and irregularities in the shapes of dense circles.²⁸ The oppressive monotony of the strain of creation is clearly visible, as the gesture and the creative process itself seems to become more important than the final result. The same motif appears in much later works from 2005 as well, for which the artist used canvases similar in size to the heroic period of her first *Infinity Nets* (figure 4).²⁹ Kusama describes her brush strokes as “repeated exactly in monotone, like the gear of a machine.”³⁰ Many video-recorded images show the artist, even today, immersed in a deep and meditative concentration while she creates. The dot represents for Kusama the unique basis for her imagined world. We might also think of it as a non-subjective method of seeing; a cleansing of the mind from figures and objects. A similar imagining of (non)thinking can be found in *zazen* meditation.

Kusama’s experience reveals itself as a reversal of the whole, built from the multitude philosophy of Greek philosopher and author of atomic theory, Democritus (ca. 460–370 BCE), into a state of continuous scattering, continuous movement of matter, and an unfinished number of nets and dots that is impossible to grasp. Her creativity, an unceasing gesture of repetition, includes in this fog of dots her ego (in accordance with the Western notion of ratio). A body covered with dots no longer has individual or personal qualities; it is no longer a self in the understanding of Descartes’ philosophy. It does not succumb, therefore, to the experience of a single unit or to the repression of the government. Self simply vanishes.

In Kusama’s performative acts of painting dots on

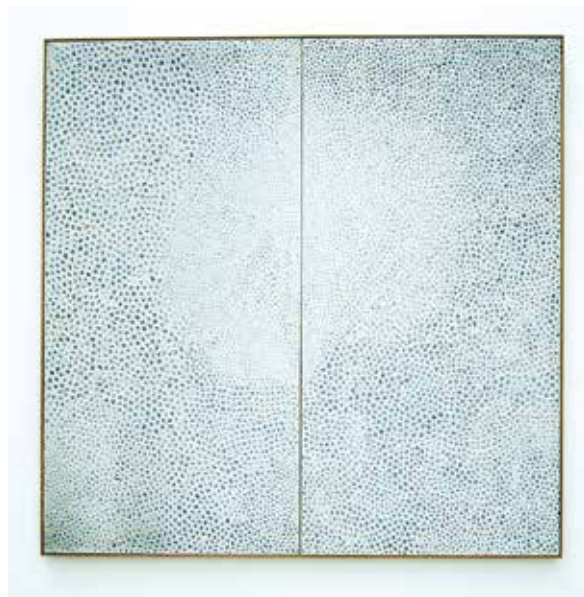


Figure 4. Kusama Yayoi. *Pacific Ocean*. 1960. H. 116.7cm, w. 91cm. Oil on canvas. ©Yayoi Kusama.

a naked body, too, we see the “obliteration of a given person and its return to the natural universe.”³¹ The dot acts as an empty symbol, unmarked. The dot is Kusama’s signature, and signature, for French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), marks a “trait of self.”³² In the context of Kusama’s creativity, however, the signature acts less as a “trait of self” than a means by which the artist can scatter her identity (and the identity of others). In the Zen Buddhist tradition, the notion of obliteration, conceived of as emptiness (*kū* 空), requires that one drop any sense of self and enter into a state of no-self.³³ The realization of emptiness

28 A few of the works from the *Infinity Nets* series were named “Pacific Ocean.” In 1958, when Kusama wrote from Seattle to a newspaper in Nagano about her trip to the United States, she recalled the details of her flight, in particular the moment she saw the Aleutian Islands while crossing the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean, when the ultramarine waters of the Pacific Ocean shone through the completely white clouds. Kusama noted that she finds a similar element of “illusion” in her own works. Kusama Yayoi, “Shiatoru tayori,” *Nanshin nichichi shinbun*, January 30, 1958.

29 The recent showing of Kusama’s *Infinity Nets* is less a simplistic repetition of its inaugural run half a century ago than a non-semantic marking of Kusama’s private world—the continuous repetition of certain elementary particles.

30 Louise Neri, ed., *Yayoi Kusama* (New York: Rizzoli, 2012), 62.

31 Kusama, *Infinity Net*. 102.

32 “By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer. . . . in order to function, that is, to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, utterable, imitable form; it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production.” Jacques Derrida, trans. Adam Dziadek and Pawel Janusz Margański, *Marges de la philosophie* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo KR, 2002), 402.

33 “*Kū* (emptiness) is not emptiness in a negative understanding of the word, where there is nothing (*mu*, nothingness), it is not static emptiness, unchanging and clotty. This is a positive emptiness, dynamic, filled with unmeasurable energy. Emptiness is complete power. . . . the state of *ku* is a perfect and complete preparedness,” Claude Durix, *Cent clés pour comprendre le zen* (Paris: Courrier du Livre, 1991), 213, my translation.

and the attainment of enlightenment in the Buddhist context ends with nirvana, the state of literally “blowing out” (obliterating?) the flame of emotional and psychological defilements and exiting the realm of re-birth. Unlike nirvana, however, Kusama’s obliteration is a never-ending process. She continues to paint as the atomic details leave the body, connecting and scattering simultaneously. For the artist, this stands as a metaphor for the continuous radiating out of the universe and the specific communion of bodies torn from the thinking ego. Perhaps Kusama’s notion of obliteration simply represents a form of meditation—being for the sake of being.

In Kusama’s works we can thus discern fragments of a Buddhist way of thinking, one based on the idea of freeing oneself from the shackles of determinism that limit and even define the individual and personal ego, which is intensified by her personal experiences and hallucinations and then represented in dot form. Dots may then serve as a post-modern artistic presentation of the no-self (*muga* 無我) stage of enlightenment, wherein one has achieved awareness of the lack of self, rejects the self, and does not even remember that one once had an ego or self.³⁴

4. Gorilla Lady

We find perhaps the clearest connection between Kusama’s art and Buddhism in her literary output. A direct reference can be found, for example, in a never-realized play titled “The Gorilla Lady Meets the Demons of Change: A Gen’ei/Zen Farce.”³⁵ The subtitle “Zen Farce” clearly points to Buddhist influences, but it is not clear how “Buddhist” Kusama’s initial ideas for the play were or how much they were shaped by her collaboration with friend and art critic Gordon Brown.³⁶ Neverthe-

less, certain Buddhist references are obvious: one character in the play is a Zen Master and the names of the three demons of change are Karma, Dharma, and Kannon. Despite their names, demons are evil entities who manipulate a three-meter-long vinyl snake that “winds and squirms down the aisle; he tickles the audience and plays tricks with them.”³⁷

“The Gorilla Lady Meets the Demons of Change,” set in Tokyo in 1947, was planned as a play in three acts. Kusama, who was also to appear in the play, is presented as “sexual virgin sacrifice to the Snake” or as the “Gorilla Lady.” In the last act, Kusama is eaten by a snake marionette.

ZEN MASTER (to Kusama): Your only escape from the sordid desires of this world lies in self-obliteration...endless nothingness...and infinite emptiness.

Kusama gives up the struggle and the snake swallows her. The warrior rushes in and cuts the snake in half. The two halves of the snake separate and Kusama is reborn as a child dressed in white, the color of innocence and purity (recall here Kusama’s mission as the savior, her self-sacrifice signifying the overcoming of dark forces). The two halves of the snake then chase each other around the stage and finally exit in different directions.³⁸ In this scene we find a direct correlation between the Buddhist path toward enlightenment and the self-obliteration process. The artist’s proclamation during the naked happenings, when she painted the bodies of participants with dots while enticing gawking passersby to join in on the mystical ritual, also bears noting here:

Forget yourself and become one with Nature. Lose yourself in the ever-advancing stream of eternity. Self-obliteration is the only way out. Kusama will cover your body with polka dots.³⁹

While self-obliteration held a primarily symbolic meaning in Kusama’s Happenings, realizing nirvana in the screenplay required actual destruction in the form of

34 Durix, *Cent clés pour comprendre le zen*, 79.

35 A letter to Kusama Productions from Kenneth Weissman of Weissman & Fox Inc., dated October 12, 1972, states that the screenplay was submitted to a Broadway theatre company but it was rejected because “(it) did not excite (them) enough to go further with it.” Yayoi Kusama Archive.

36 Kusama met Brown in 1963 during an interview. From that moment on, he became her close co-worker and assisted her in editing declarations as well as texts, which she prepared for the press and for exhibits in which she participated. See Midori Yamamura, “Re-Viewing Kusama 1950–1975: Biography of Things,” in *Yayoi Kusama Mirrored Years*, ed. Franck Gautherot (Dijon: Le Consortium, 2009), 68.

37 “The Gorilla Lady Meets the Demons of Change: A Gen’ei/ Zen Farce,” Unpublished typescript (Yayoi Kusama Archive), 1972.

38 Scene Two, Act III, Yayoi Kusama with Gordon Brown, “The Gorilla Lady Meets the Demons of Change: A Gen’ei/ Zen Farce.”

39 Manifesto from Anatomic Explosion (Happening staged in front of the George Washington statue across from the New York Stock Exchange, 1968).

bodily annihilation and a mental “surrendering to the state of nothingness and void.”⁴⁰ A similar description of the destruction of earthly existence appears in Kusama’s 1984 book *The Hustlers Grotto of Christopher Street*.⁴¹ Writer Ryū Murakami, reflecting on Kusama’s literary talents and comparing them to those of Jean Genet, notes that “both make filth shine.”⁴² The main character in *The Hustlers Grotto*, Henry, is a dark-skinned and drug-addicted male prostitute. He is a typical character from Kusama’s literary world, a social reject who cannot accept the surrounding reality and for whom the only way out (salvation) is a very physical self-obliteration—his transmutation into a new being. In the final scene of this book, Henry suddenly vanishes:

But the black figure of Henry is no longer there where it’s supposed to be, in the corner of the void. . . . His body has vanished from the space. . . . In the milk-colored mist a single black spot. Falling. The spot grows smaller and smaller, until it’s just a dark speck dissolving into the mist.⁴³

In 1967 Kusama, in collaboration with artist Jud Yalkut, produced, directed, and starred in the experimental film *Kusama’s Self-Obliteration*, which won awards in the United States and Europe, giving her international recognition under the name “Polka-Dot Princess” Kusama.⁴⁴ The film opens with a scene showing the artist painting dots as stick-ons and painting them on various elements in the landscape (e.g., a meadow, the surface of the pond). Note here an expanded notion of self-obliteration, signified by Kusama’s addition of nature itself to the process as both a tool and an object. In several scenes, the artist stops placing dots and covers the naked body of a reclining man and a cat with maple leaves. In the next scene, she first places white dots on her body but later she also covers a tree with

them, imparting the idea that she is to become one with it. We find the symbolic process of annihilation and destruction of earthly superficiality expanded here, encompassing the artist’s entire surrounding. Subsequent scenes portray dots succumbing to a continuous and relentless multiplication process, covering buildings, cities, and people, multiplying so fast that at the end they cover nearly everything and everyone.⁴⁵

We might also be able to “hear” Buddhism in the film. The soundtrack is generated by a self-playing music machine, created by an avant-garde musician Joe Jones of the group Fluxus, that sounds like a “chorus of almost 30 amplified frogs.”⁴⁶ Among the mysterious sounds are mantras reminiscent of chanting monks.

Participation in Happenings, which appear in the second part of the film, is encouraged in a special press notice: “Extermination, Emptiness, Nothingness, Infinity, [and] Endless.”⁴⁷ As noted by Yoshimoto, “These catchy words were used in the advertisement to attract the hippie generation who were drawn to eastern philosophies and mysticism.”⁴⁸

Kusama’s experimental movie not only extends the self-obliteration idea but also stands as a kind of retrospective of her works from the 1950s and 1960s. By including light show happenings, moreover, *Kusama’s Self-Obliteration* seems to foreshadow her most developed series of happenings, “Body Festival” (1967–70, figure 5).

5. Mindfulness

Let us lastly consider Kusama’s creativity in the context of psychotherapy and Zen Buddhism by looking at Takahashi Ryūtarō’s ongoing exhibition “Takahashi Collection: Mindfulness!” Takahashi, a Japanese psychiatrist and leading collector of modern art, owns over two thousand works of art created by Japanese artists, mainly young people whom he promoted domestically and internationally. Takahashi’s “Mindfulness!” series, held in Kagoshima at Kirishima’s Open-Air Museum

40 Yoshimoto, *Kusama Saves the World through Self-Obliteration*, 3.

41 In 1983, *The Hustlers Grotto on Christopher Street* won Japan’s prestigious Literary Award for New Writers given by the monthly magazine *Yasei jidai*.

42 Alexandra Munroe’s interview with Ryū Murakami, Tokyo, May 21, 1996. Quoted in Alexandra Munroe, “Between Heaven and Earth: The Literary Art of Yayoi Kusama,” in *Love Forever: Yayoi Kusama 1958–1968*, ed. Japan Foundation (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1998), 71.

43 Kusama, *The Hustlers Grotto of Christopher Street*, 64–5.

44 The film won awards at the 1968 Fourth International Short Film Festival in Belgium, the Second Ann Arbor Film Festival, and the Second Maryland Film Festival.

45 Earlier works of the artist and favorite motifs appear in short shots of the film, making the movie something of a small retrospective of Kusama’s creativity.

46 Kusama, quoted in Jud Yalkut, “Polka Dot Way of Life,” 9.

47 Yayoi Kusama, Press release for “Self-Obliteration,” held at The Gate Theater, New York, June 16–17, 1967.

48 Yoshimoto, “Kusama Saves the World through Self-Obliteration,” 7.



Figure 5. *Self-Obliteration Horse Play*. 1957. Photography. Performance. Woodstock, New York. ©Yayoi Kusama.

and in the Sapporo Art Park in 2013, Nagoya City Art Museum in 2014, and the Museum of Art, Kochi in 2016–17, was the collector’s second exhibition effort. His first exhibition, “Neoteny Japan,” staged in seven museums around the country, already showed this project’s potential. It attracted the attention of numerous visitors and critics, which resulted in the increased scale of the second exhibition. This second exhibition featured approximately one hundred works from his private collection by some forty artists. Fourteen works by Kusama took center stage; they ranged from watercolors and drawings from the 1950s to giant sculptures such as *Hi*, *Konnichiwa Yayoi-chan*.⁴⁹

When Takahashi first began to build his collection, he purchased works by Makoto Aida and Kusama. Takahashi recalled:

In 1997 I saw an exhibition of new work by Kusama. At about the same time, a show of new work by Makoto Aida was being held at Mizuma Art Gallery. So, in a short time I saw work by someone I thought was a star and also an important up-and-coming artist. That lit the spark within me.⁵⁰

49 Uchida Mayumi, “Takahashi korekushon no kiseki: ‘Neoteni’ kara ‘Mindofurunesu!’ e,” in *Takahashi korekushon: Mindofurunesu / Takahashi Collection Mindfulness!*, eds. Abe Ken’ichi and Oshigane Junshi (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 2013), 12.

50 Quoted in Edan Corkill, “Collector Steps into the Void: With Museums Gone AWOL, Ryutarō Takahashi Snapped up Amazing

Takahashi further reminisced about the great impression her works made on him in the 1960s, adding that for him and for the artistic environment of the time, which was swallowed by the spirit of the counter-culture, Kusama, a “singularly battling in New York woman,” was “someone of a muse.”⁵¹

Mindfulness, translated from the Pali *sati* (Jpn. *nen* 念), connotes Buddhist meditation practice and constitutes one of the vital seven factors of enlightenment (Skt. *sapta bodhyanga*).⁵² Mindfulness denotes a method of seeing things as they really are, without the participation of the Cartesian thinking ego. The thinking ego must be turned off (a form of self-obliteration) in order to make way for a newly expanded and mindful consciousness. Muhō Noelke, abbot of Antaiji 安泰寺, explains it in the following manner:

... we have to forget things like “I should be mindful of this or that”. If you are mindful, you are already creating a separation (“I - am - mindful - of -”). Don’t be mindful, please! When you walk, just walk. Let the walk, walk. Let the talk, talk (Dogen Zenji said: “When we open our mouth, it is filled with Dharma”). Let the eating eat, the sitting sit, the work, work. Let sleep sleep.⁵³

Takahashi’s exhibit similarly encouraged viewers to perceive the art as it is, to notice things here and now without the social and cultural entanglements such as assessments, contexts, or convictions.⁵⁴ In Takahashi’s words, “perhaps then, things which until now we acknowledged as art will be perceived by us completely differently. Or perhaps things which we perceived until

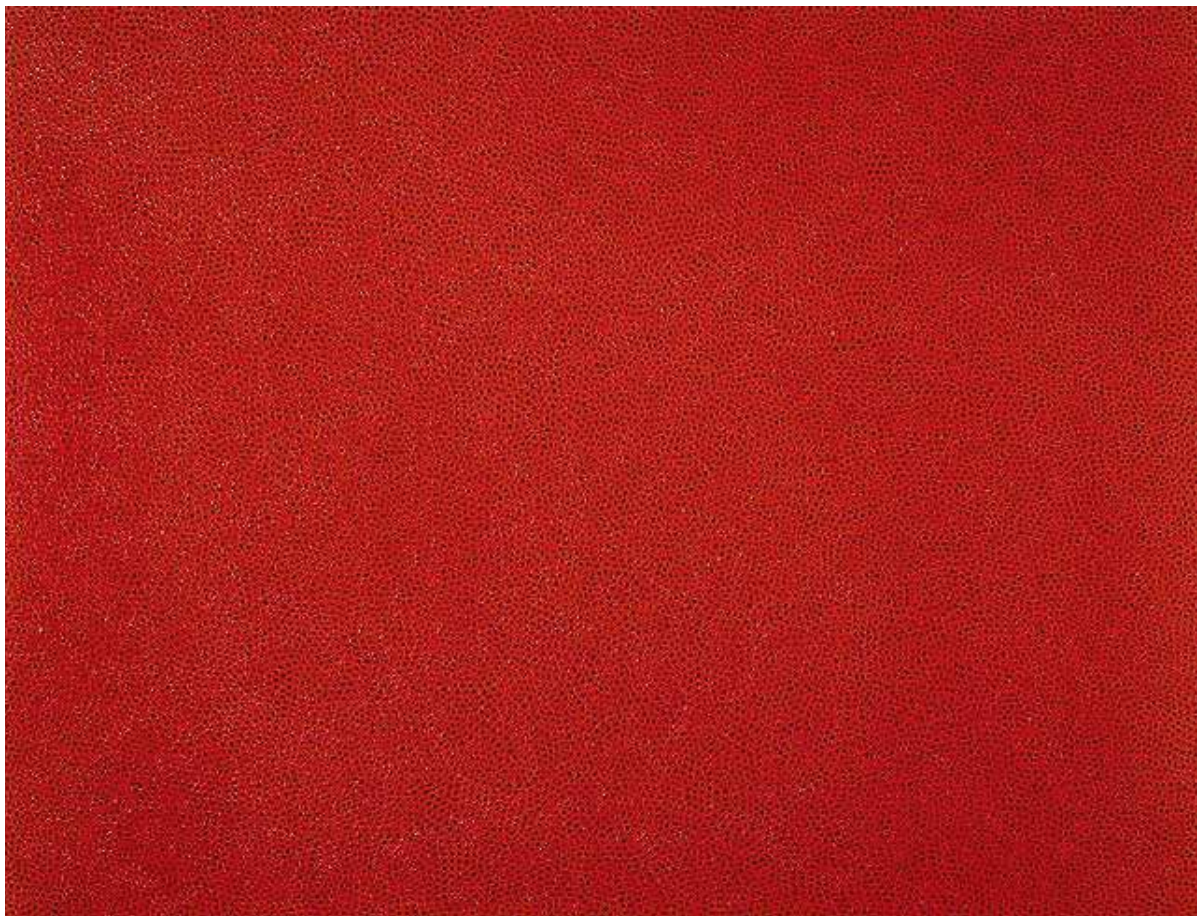
Artworks,” *Japan Times*, May 22, 2009, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2009/05/22/culture/collector-steps-into-the-void/> (accessed January 10, 2017).

51 Takahashi Ryūtarō and Aida Makoto, “Aida Makoto to Takahashi Ryūtarō: Āto no rekishi wa ‘kidzuki’ no rekishi. Sore ga ‘Mindofurunesu!’” in *Takahashi korekushon: Mindofurunesu / Takahashi Collection Mindfulness!*, eds. Abe and Oshigane, 133.

52 The other factors include investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. See Buddhaghosa, trans. Bhadantacariya and Bhikkhu Nānamoli, *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga* (Seattle, WA: BPE Pariyatti Editions, 1999).

53 Muhō Noelke, “Adult Practice: Part 18, Stop Being Mindful,” <http://antaiji.org/archives/eng/adult18.shtml> (accessed January 10, 2017).

54 Takahashi Ryūtarō, “‘Takahashi korekushonten no mindofurunesu!’ ni yosete,” in *Takahashi korekushon: Mindofurunesu / Takahashi Collection Mindfulness!*, eds. Abe and Oshigane, 7.



now as not [?] art will become art.”⁵⁵ For Takahashi, an art exhibit should be the site of an as-yet-unfulfilled meeting of various generations of artists, both youths still unknown to a wide public and “veterans” whose names appear in the programs of the most important galleries and museums in the world. “That is why all the more I would like to see their [the artists’] joint works in a freed state of mindfulness.”⁵⁶

Figure 6. Kusama Yayoi. *Infinity Nets (TOOTAAZ)*. 2008. H. 194cm, w. 259cm. Acrylic on canvas. ©Yayoi Kusama.

Takahashi’s vision of treatment through art is part of his “Mindfulness!” exhibit as well. Takahashi’s plan for his art collection also included a therapeutic dimension.⁵⁷ By placing artwork in medical centers and

55 This way of viewing art, unburdened by history and context, had already been discussed in Western and Japanese art history. In the twentieth century, for example, Marcel Duchamp introduced “ready-made” objects such as a urinal and called them works of art. In sixteenth-century Japan, tea master Sen no Rikyū’s 千利休 (1522–91) chamber pot was used as a flower vase during a Japanese traditional tea ceremony. In both cases, we see radical acts that draw on new and different ways of viewing familiar objects. Takahashi, “Takahashi korekushonten no maindofurunesu! ni yosete,” 7.

56 Ibid.

57 Jon Kabat-Zinn, professor in the Medical Department at the University of Massachusetts and the founder of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society, created a method of therapy called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. Kabat-Zinn’s therapy aims to free patients of automatic thoughts, feeling, and reactions that create stress, depression, and negative habits. Looking at one’s ailments from the “outside,” Kabat-Zinn argues, can be a means of overcoming our patterns of the mind and ridding patients of various ailments. Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment—and Your Life* (Louisville: Sounds True, 2012).

making them available for patients to enjoy, Takahashi conceived of art as playing a key role in psychological and psychiatric treatment.⁵⁸ Takahashi's view of art resonates well with Kusama's frequently repeated slogans about the need to nurture love and peace as well as free ourselves from the shackles imprisoning people (by surrendering to self-obliteration).

Today, many people take the path of gluttony, or lust, or greed, flailing and floundering as they vie for worldly fame. In such a society, seekers of truth find that their burden is great and the road steep and hard. But that is all the more reason for us to seek a rosier future for the soul.⁵⁹

6. Self-Obliteration = Enlightenment (?)

"But my paintings had nothing to do with Impressionism or with Zen Buddhism."⁶⁰ Kusama's statement, a reflection on her Infinity Nets (figure 6), unequivocally contradicts any overt connection to Buddhism. I have argued here, however, that conscious references nevertheless emanate from many of her artistic undertakings. The correspondence may not be exact in the above equation, but the ever-evolving world of Kusama Yayoi—a multitude of entrances, exits, and their subsequent perceptions—compels us to at least entertain the idea of an expanded observation.

I continue to fight with every fiber of my being.
This is my own peculiar karma and destiny in the world.⁶¹

58 This is not the first instance of a psychiatrist becoming fascinated with Kusama's art and attempting to frame her works in terms of psychiatric discourse. In 1952, Shihō Nishimaru 西丸四方 (1910–2002), one of the first professors of psychiatry at Shinshu University, presented Kusama's works during a conference of the Kantō Society of Psychiatry and Neurology in a presentation entitled: "The Genius of a Schizoid Female Patient." Shibusami Akira, "The Eternal Spirit Dancing in the Flower Garden," in *Yayoi Kusama: Eternity of Eternal Eternity*, ed. Masahiro Yasugi et al. (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbun, 2013), 154–55; Takahashi and Aida, "Aida Makoto to Takahashi Ryūtarō," 133.

59 Kusama, *Infinity Net*, 211.

60 Kusama, "Interview with Gordon Brown (extract) 1964," in *Yayoi Kusama*, eds. Laura Hoptman, Tatehata Akira, and Udo Kultermann (New York: Phaidon Press, 2011), 103.

61 Kusama, *Infinity Net*, 212.

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The Composition of Decomposition: The *Kusōzu* Images of Matsui Fuyuko and Itō Seiu, and Buddhism in Erotic Grotesque Modernity

ELIZABETH TINSLEY

“What looks like meaningful, divine suffering to one person often looks like brutal, preventable violence to another.”¹

1. Introduction

IN Buddhist culture, the young and beautiful female as corpse has often been presented as a sight of soteriological potential, a demonstration of the illusions of beauty, permanence, and identity coherence. A series of paintings² by Matsui Fuyuko 松井冬子 (b. 1974) is only the most recent example of the genre known as “*kusōzu*” 九相[想]図 (*Pictures of the Nine Stages [of a decaying corpse]*) (henceforth *kusōzu*),³ which depicts the subject. Some half-century earlier, Itō Seiu 伊藤晴雨 (1882–1961)⁴ had also produced a substantial corpus of *kusōzu*. This essay examines the ways in which these artists treat the theme and how the work of Seiu and the visual culture of his time are discernible in the art of Matsui. Matsui distinguishes her series from

the genre as it is generally understood by presenting the nine states of decomposition as the results of nine motives for suicide. This, in addition to a number of other aspects of her work, makes the series considerably different from its purported model, and links it to an alternative cultural genealogy. To show this, I will summarize the general understanding of *kusōzu* as it has been presented so far in scholarship, and will discuss the erotic and grotesque aspects of *kusōzu*, before introducing the works of Seiu, with a brief explanation of *eroguro* エログロ (“erotic-grotesque”). I will then consider interpretations of Matsui’s series based on a connection with premodern *kusōzu* and position it within modern Japanese visual culture. The somewhat extensive introduction serves to support my suggestion that Matsui’s visual influences, which I locate in the cultural history and images of anatomical dissection, the nude in Japanese art, and of self-mutilation/suicide, are all what we might call, if not Buddhist “corpse contemplations,” “dismemberment contemplations” of one kind or another. By reconceiving the genre within this broader category we can release it from a hermeneutics that confines it to a “religious” framework. Other works of her oeuvre support this, and help to shift interpretation of her *kusōzu* series away from the contention that

1 Maggie Nelson, *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 176.

2 At the time of writing, the series is still in progress.

3 The *kusōzu* is also called a *kusō mandara* 九相曼荼羅 (nine-stage mandala) and, as a pictorial representation of the human realm in the *rokudō-e* 六道絵 (picture of the six realms) genre, it is called *jindōfujōsōzu* 人道不浄相図 (picture of the aspect of the impure human realm).

4 Hereafter referred to as “Seiu,” his artist’s name.

it is a simplistic reworking of Buddhist imagery. The origins of this “contemplation of dismemberment” are to be found not only in Buddhist thought and practice, but in the aesthetic of the grotesque, which was properly developed in Japan, especially as *eroguro*, during the modern period and which engages all three visual influences—anatomical dissection, the nude in Japanese art, and self-mutilation/suicide—mentioned above. Thus, we find a convergence of Buddhist ideas and visual culture with those of the grotesque, a convergence that helps us to reappraise both. I additionally propose that even though the types of gazes prompted by the subjects of depictions of bodies of the dissected, of the nude, of suicide, and the grotesque (as a general visual aesthetic), and the functions of those gazes appear to be significantly different, they in fact present similarities with those ideally galvanized by the *kusōzu*. The main similarity is in the treatment of unstable boundaries and [dis]memberment. The types of gazes also present comparable anxieties concerning the act of looking.

Through examining Matsui’s paintings in the contexts of the western nude/classical body in Meiji-period Japanese academic art, anatomical dissection, suicide, and the aesthetics of the European grotesque and Japanese *eroguro*, I show that the strongest influence on her work is late nineteenth-century to mid-twentieth-century Japanese culture, particularly the “inter-war period” of the 1920s and ’30s, and the immediate post-war period, a period in which Seiū was active.⁵ The reason Matsui’s influences can be found here is because the period was one of development of new ways of viewing the body and death, which included interest in, and aestheticized, various types of dismemberment. Moreover, these interests and aesthetics are motifs of modernity in this period rather than those of a backlash against it, which complicates understandings of her art that present it as a harmonious fusion of east and west, tradition and modernity. Matsui’s work and its influences also provide an excellent demonstration

of Anthony Giddens’s suggestion that modernity is not a destruction of tradition but a negotiation between the two. It also coheres to some extent with John D. Szostak’s observations on “anti-*bijin*”⁶ 美人 *nihonga* 日本画 (“Japanese painting”) portraiture of the 1910s and ’20s in his study that also investigates “modern” versions of “traditional” subject matter and addresses the grotesque aesthetic identified in them.⁷

Appraisal of Matsui’s work can be divided into two types. On the one hand, her use of *nihonga* techniques and materials and of “traditional” Japanese subject matter is lauded by the art establishment and popular critics as a revival of these forms and contents. Her art is similarly celebrated for the way it mixes *nihonga* and *yōga* 洋画 (“Western painting”) techniques and themes. The ongoing promotion of art that achieves this combination (in specific ways) is evidence of the sustainment of the policy expressed in the compound term *wakon yōsai* 和魂洋才 (“Japanese spirit, western technology”) employed during the late nineteenth century. Matsui is regularly featured on educational programs made by NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) and her work has been exhibited at the Yokohama Museum of Art and San Francisco’s Asian Art Museum. Engaging with “traditional” figures, a collaboration saw motifs from her paintings used as patterns on kimono obi by the celebrated Yamaguchi Genbee 山口原兵衛 (b. 1948). On the other hand, her work is also situated within the modern *eroguro* and gothic genres, and is often exhibited alongside both Japanese and non-Japanese works that celebrate these aesthetics, for example at Gallery Naruyama, a Tokyo-based gallery that has represented her. Her work also features on websites of often unsettlingly violent materials that appeal to enthusiasts of S&M and other subcultural fetishes. Matsui’s art, then, appeals on two levels simultaneously since it is implicated both in a high culture that promotes officially sanctioned national identity and in subversive subcultures. Two additional levels her work occupies are the

5 This is not to disregard the connections to late twentieth-century art both Japanese and non-Japanese, such as works by Aida Makoto, Hans Bellmer, and Joel-Peter Witkin, that Matsui cites in her own doctoral dissertation and in interviews, but rather to draw to the surface a collection of submerged and largely overlooked influences. See Matsui Fuyuko, “Chikaku shinkei to shite no shikaku ni yotte kakusei sareru tsūkaku no fukahai” (PhD diss., Tokyo University of the Arts, 2007). There are also some significant links with postwar sado-masochistic images, but these will, for the most part, be put aside in this paper.

6 *Bijin* literally means “beautiful women” and pictures of them (*bijinga* 美人画) were portrayals of their appearances and customs. Szostak mentions Giddens in his introduction. My definition of “grotesque,” however, completely differs from Szostak’s. He employs the word as an adjective meaning “repulsive” in terms of marked divergence from beauty norms; mine is both broader and more specific, as explained below. John D. Szostak, “Fair is Foul, and Foul is Fair: Kyoto Nihonga, Anti-Bijin Portraiture and the Psychology of the Grotesque,” in *Rethinking Japanese Modernism*, ed. Roy Starrs (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2012), 362.

(ostensibly) religious and secular, which may be correlated to the high/low-culture dualism mentioned, a point to which I will return. Art historian Yamamoto Satomi's somewhat defensive insistence that "because of her command of the delicate sensitivity enabled by Nihonga techniques and materials, Matsui Fuyuko's works never strike the viewer as merely bizarre or in bad taste, regardless of what their motifs may be,"⁸ hints by its apparent necessity at the potential for charges that might be brought against the odd co-existence of the elements we find in her works. Furthermore, it upholds the divide between "high" and "low" cultures.⁹ The assumption underlying this paper is that the distinctions between religious and secular and between high and low culture are neither simply drawn nor self-evident, and that the grotesque, the essence of which is "the sense that things that should be kept apart are fused together,"¹⁰ can be a reminder of this.

2. Scriptural origins of the *kusōzu* genre and Japanese *kusōzu*

The liberating power of the female body viewed as a grotesque corpse may be traced to an episode in the biography of the Buddha. Upon renunciation of palace life, he views the sleeping women of his harem, and by perceiving them as bereft of beauty "unconscious, with their garments spread out unfastened . . . as if they were dead,"¹¹ he apprehends the deceptive nature of appearances. In canonical Buddhist texts the contemplation of the sight of real cadavers in the process of decomposition is prescribed by the *Satipatthāna Sutta* (The Foundations of Mindfulness Sutra) where "The Nine Charnel Ground Contemplations" are found.¹²

It is also presented in the *Āṅuttara Nikāya* (The Numerical Discourses)¹³ and in the *Mahāprajñā Pāramitā Sastra* (Discourses on the Greater Wisdom Sutra)¹⁴ by Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250) as a means to attain insight into the truth of impermanence. It is Tendai founder Zhiyi's 智顓 (538–97) *Mohe zhiguan* (Jp. *Maka shikan* 摩訶止觀, Discourse on Mahayana Meditation and Contemplation) of 594 that formulates the contemplation as a practice.¹⁵

No gender is specified for these morbid objects of meditation,¹⁶ but the explanation that a "pan-Indian tendency to hold women responsible for the arousal of desire," as given by Elizabeth Wilson, is persuasive enough.¹⁷ She holds that both Buddhist and non-Bud-

8 Satomi Yamamoto, "Beyond," in *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, ed. Fuyuko Matsui (Tokyo: Éditions Treville, 2013), 169.

9 Interestingly, here it is form, rather than content, that determines the affiliation of a work to one or other culture level. Here, as long as certain materials are used and certain techniques are executed well, the work cannot as a whole be in "bad taste."

10 Geoffrey Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 11.

11 Āśvaghosa, ed. and trans. Edward B. Cowell, *The Buddha-Karita, or, Life of the Buddha* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1977), Book 5, 58, 60.

12 Bikkhu Bodhi and Bikkhu Nanamoli, *Teachings of the Buddha: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 148–49.

13 Bikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Āṅuttara Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 891–92.

14 Jp. *Daichi doron* 大智度論, T.25, 1509.

15 T.1911, 46.121 12a–16a and 122 10a–13a. Xuanzang's 玄奘 (602–64) translation of *Abhidatsuma Daibibasharon* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 (The Great Abhidharma Discourse, 100–150 CE) also outlined the practice, and the Tendai monk Genshin's 源信 (942–1017) influential *Ōjō yōshū* 往生要集 (Essentials of Salvation, 985) drew upon this.

16 In the *Mahadukkhanda Sutta* (The Greater Discourse on the Mass of Suffering), however, a decomposing female corpse in a charnel ground is used as a method of demonstrating the removal of attachment to material form. Bikkhu Bodhi and Bikkhu Nanamoli, *Teachings of the Buddha*, 183–84.

17 Elizabeth Wilson, "The Female Body as a Source of Horror and Insight in Post-Ashokan Indian Buddhism," in *Religious Reflections on the Human Body*, ed. Jane Marie Law (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 83. See also Elizabeth Wilson, *Charming Cadavers: Horrific Figurations of the Feminine in Indian Buddhist Hagiographical Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For discussions in English of the doctrine and the literary and graphic portrayals of *fujōkan* 不淨觀, meditation on transience (*mujō* 無常) through contemplation of the impurity of the body, in Japan, see Rajyashree Pandey, "Desire and Disgust: Meditations on the Impure Body in Medieval Japanese Narratives," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no. 2 (2005): 195–234; Fusae Kanda, "Behind the Sensationalism: Images of a Decaying Corpse in Japanese Buddhist Art," *The Art Bulletin* 87, no. 1 (2005): 24–49; Gail Chin, "The Gender of Buddhist Truth: The Female Corpse in a Group of Japanese Paintings," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 25, no. 3–4 (1998): 277–317; Ikumi Kamishiro, "Dead Beautiful: Visualizing the Decaying Corpse in Nine Stages as Skillful Means of Buddhism," *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture: Blackwell Companions to Art History*, eds. Rebecca Brown and Deborah Hutton (Chichester, West Sussex, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 514–36; and Yamamoto Satomi, *Kusōzu o yomu: Kuchite yuku shitai no bijutsushi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2015). A collection of images with accompanying essays in Japanese is available in Yamamoto Satomi and Nishiyama Mika, *Kusōzu shiryō shūsei: Shitai no bijutsu to bungaku* (Tokyo: Iwata Shoin, 2009). Keisei's 慶政 (1189–1268) *Kankyo no tomo* 閑居友 (A Companion in Solitude, ca. 1222), discussed below, gives an account of a monk undertaking the practice.

dhist texts that describe women as corpse-like beings painted up to tempt and to deceive led to the female gendering and sexualizing of the corpse in many post-Ashokan narratives and images. As such, the service performed by the image of the female in these tales is ostensibly twofold. It functioned to evoke disgust and horror and thereby to nullify (hetero)sexual desire, reinforcing vows of celibacy. At the same time, it worked to wrest practitioners free of delusional attachments to the physical body that, according to Buddhist doctrine, is but a composition of aggregates, and can be seen more widely as a depiction of “the structures of the [Buddhist] renouncer’s moral world, especially its ephemeral and intrinsically dissatisfying nature.”¹⁸ In Matsui’s paintings of the disaggregated female corpse created in the early twenty-first century and modeled on earlier “Buddhist” presentations of the image, the *second* basic function remains operative, which accords with the artist’s intention. The former, probably just as prescriptive as the latter, is subverted by Matsui: that there is a gendered, eroticized, and titillating element to *kusōzu*, even or rather *central* to the images of the stages of decomposition and desecration, is fully acknowledged. Matsui’s renditions of *kusōzu* exploit the pornographic mechanism they share that turns on the exhibited process of beauty, exposure, degradation and ruin within a gendered hierarchy. It is my contention, however, that these functions, and many other key aesthetic and conceptual aspects of her images, emerge, as mentioned, within a surprising network of recent practices, artistic influences, and symbols. Before addressing these, I will discuss her initially more immediate inspiration and model, *kusōzu* in Japan. This description and discussion will help to show how she draws upon the model, and also how the model itself is already a fertile site for the grotesque and *eroguro* to evolve in part because it is already open to viewing and interpretation beyond what is prescribed.

Mentions of *fujōkan* 不浄観, meditation on transience (*mujō* 無常) through contemplation of the impurity of the body, appear in Buddhist sutras that had been imported from China to Japan, and in Japanese literature from around the ninth century. There is no direct evidence that *fujōkan* was practiced in Japan with real corpses, but textual descriptions and visual aids

survive as evidence of surrogate meditation tools.¹⁹ For example, the *Hokke gengi* 法華玄義 (Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra, a sixth-century Tendai treatise by Zhiyi who taught the previously mentioned *Maka shikan*) categorizes meditation on a corpse as a beneficial practice and prescribes “making a space [*bōsha* 房舎] or a painting *zuga* [図画]” for the purpose.²⁰ Zen monk Musō Soseki 無双漱石 (1275–1351) is reported to have made and meditated on a portrayal of the nine stages of corpse decomposition at the age of thirteen.²¹ In medieval Japanese Buddhist narratives, *fujōkan* was a potent literary theme as well, coming to denote the impermanence of romantic attachment,²² but in the extant visual representations (which far exceed the literary ones)²³ the corpse is almost always female, and the portrayal far from romantic. The following discussion is intended to foreground the key characteristics of *kusōzu* in Japan, including the gendered body in it, and to indicate the related instability of the divide between sacred and secular concerning the function of the image and the type of viewing it invites. This will lead us into the modes of viewing that become more prominent in certain areas of early twentieth-century culture, with which Matsui plays in her own versions.

3. Gender, Image Function, and Ways of Seeing

Kusōzu have maintained a grip on spectators for many centuries and exercise a persistent allure for recent scholars of art history and Buddhist culture. In Japan, the paintings appeared from the early thirteenth century onward in the form of hanging scrolls and handscrolls. Their subject spread widely in the form of woodblock printed books from around the seventeenth century, signifying a shift to a lay and popular audience. For images of transience, the marked longevity and, in printed form, relatively wide circulation they enjoyed is ironic. Like the practice of meditation on a corpse, they were ostensibly intended as meditation aids. However,

18 Wilson, “The Female Body as a Source of Horror and Insight in Post-Ashokan Indian Buddhism,” 93.

19 Such surrogate pictures are found elsewhere, such as in the Central Asian Toyuk grottoes.

20 T.1716, 33.727 26a–28a.

21 Kaminishi, “Dead Beautiful,” 521.

22 Pandey, “Desire and Disgust,” 197.

23 Its appearance as a literary trope in Japan is rare; in India it was employed far more often. Pandey, “Desire and Disgust,” 196.

Yamamoto notes that, at least during the Muromachi period (1392–1573), handscrolls of the theme seem to have been popular among the upper classes and that, while the careful record of their production dates indicates they were used for specific Buddhist rites, the combination of Chinese arts and Japanese poetry they showcase indicates that they may have been used on a “semi-secular, semi-religious occasion” like a Buddhist-related linked-verse meeting.²⁴ A citation in a seventeenth-century fan design by Tawaraya Sōtatsu 俵屋宗達 (*fl.* early seventeenth century) of one stage of corpse disintegration from a Kamakura-period (1185–1333) rendition also suggests that the content was not strictly confined to a monastic meditation context and that it may have been well known. Two dogs were copied from the *kusōzu*, likely for their lively poses.²⁵ The slide (or, rather, the false distinction) between religious and secular is already evident; we will find it again in the twentieth-century *kusōzu* renditions and their receptions. Kaminishi Ikumi also takes pains to avoid positing a stable function for the images and distinguishes between the ways in which Tendai, Zen, and Pure Land monks, as well as laypeople, all used the images. A multiplicity of functions emerge, including solitary meditation, group sermons focusing on impermanence and/or female impurity for the purpose of conversion, and broadly, as representations of the human realm. Kaminishi likens the process in which social and cultural factors produce interpretations of the nine-stage decomposition to a “whisper down the lane” game whereby the “original meaning” is replaced “with issues and problems concerning the female gender.”²⁶

Contemplation of the nine aspects of either a real or depicted corpse was called *kusōkan* 九相觀 or *fu-jōkan* (the broader category of the contemplation of impurity). The images displayed a single cadaver—almost always female—decomposing in nine stages (with occasionally a preceding, living state shown),

gorged on by wild dogs and crows, and finally reduced in the ninth stage, called “disjointing,” to skeletal dismemberment. The bodies are sexualized: aside from the gendering and exposure of the body, the parts revealed and consumed by the scavengers are the genitals, often the breasts, and sometimes the (exposed and culturally eroticized) neck. The Shōjūraigōji 聖衆來迎寺 painting, *Jindōfujōsōzu* 人道不淨相圖 (*Painting of the Impure Aspect of the Human Realm*)²⁷ from the late thirteenth century (figure 1), is the earliest example of a painted *kusōzu* and shows the decay of the gradually exposed body depicted in stages from distension to disintegration into dust, and surrounded by canine and avian predators.²⁸ The paintings do not necessarily accord precisely with textual precedents either in terms of imagery or the order in which the disintegration is shown, but the Kyushu National Museum’s *Kusōzukan* 九相圖卷 (*Picture Scroll of the Nine Stages*) from the early fourteenth century (the earliest extant standalone *kusōzu*) largely conforms to the description by Zhiyi in the *Maka shikan*.²⁹ Zhiyi’s stages are as follows: *chōsō* 腸相 (distention), *esō* 壞相 (tearing), *kechizusō* 血塗相 (bleeding), *nōransō* 膿爛相 (rotting), *shōosō* 青瘀相 (discoloration), *tansō* 噉相 (being scavenged and consumed), *sansō* 散相 (scattering), *kotsusō* 骨相 (white bones), and *shōsō* 燒相 (bones burnt to ash). An extra stage of newly dead is often added in the paintings.

Let us consider the issue of gender in these images since it is significant in understanding *kusōzu* as expressive of a grotesque aesthetic. As mentioned, post-Ashokan Indian Buddhist narratives gendered the corpse female, and a woman is depicted here even though the *Maka shikan* does not specify a female corpse. In Japan, the *setsuwa* 説話 tale genre too presented it unequivocally as female.³⁰ Even in *Six Realms* mandala paintings the human figure, switching sex as it passes over the “bridge through life,” is transformed into a woman in the depiction of the death stage, where

24 Satomi Yamamoto, “Death and Disease in Medieval Japanese Painting,” *Kinjō Gakuin Daigaku ronshū, jinbun kagaku hen* 6, no. 2 (2010): 94–5.

25 Sōtatsu’s motifs are drawn from the Kyushu National Museum *kuzōshi emaki* 九相詩繪卷 (*Picture Scroll of Poems on the Nine Stages*). The fan is part of a fan-decorated folding screen (*senmen haritsuke byōbu* 扇面貼付屏風) at Daigoji, Kyoto. See Yasumura Toshinobu, “Motifu: Katachi yokereba subete yoshi,” *Geijutsu shinchō*, April 2014, 31, 33.

26 Kaminishi, “Dead Beautiful,” 514, 521.

27 Hereafter referred to as “the Shōjūraigōji *kusōzu*.”

28 This is one of a set of paintings that depict the “*rokudō*” (six paths [of transmigration]) described in Genshin’s *Ōjō yōshū* where Zhiyi’s *Maka shikan* is mentioned. The set is said to have originally belonged to the imperial palace. See Nakano Genzō, *Rokudōe no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1989), 295–8.

29 See Yamamoto, *Kusōzu shiryō shūsei*, 15–20.

30 See, for example, the thirteenth-century collections *Hosshinshū* by Kamo no Chōmei 鴨長明 (1155–1216) and the *Kankyo no tomo*, mentioned above.



Figure 1. *Jindōfujōsōzu* 人道不浄相圖 (Painting of the Impure Aspect of the Human Realm), late 13th century. H. 155.5cm, w. 154.5cm. Hanging scroll. Color on silk. Shōjūraigōji, Shiga. Source: Izumi Takeo, Kasuya Makoto, and Yamamoto Satomi, eds., *Kokuhō: Rokudōe* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2007), 73, fig. 8. With permission of Shōjūraigōji, Shiga.

she appears in a wasteland as food for dogs and crows.³¹ This scene is the most affective of the *kusōzu* stages. I propose that this scene cannot ideologically accommodate a male body because the gendering and eroticization of the tool of enlightenment is aimed at a spectator seeking to experience the very opposite—closed and contained life—in their own body. If this were not so, a male body would be just as apt a subject in these images as a female one. Still, there are exceptions. A late-Edo-period series in five hanging scrolls kept at Saiganji 西岸寺 in Kyoto shows a male corpse.³² Nonetheless, the male corpse is presented together with a female one, and while the presence of the male is unusual, and therefore of interest, the immediate impression is that these are a couple. Since the image indicates a heterosexual connection it does not ultimately subvert the significance of gender in *kusōzu* as it has so far been discussed. This is not to say that the viewer was always a heterosexual male. Viewers of *etoki* 絵解 (“picture explanation” for the purposes of religious instruction) at temples during the Obon お盆 period were of both sexes, and an Edo-period printed picture book, *Ninin bikuni* 二人比丘尼 (Two Nuns), by Suzuki Shōzan 鈴木正三 (1579–1655) shows two nuns observing a corpse that is presented in decomposition stages in the style of *kusōzu*.³³ Yet they are mourning, in contrast to the non-monastic male figures in the tale, who also view a corpse. But these are exceptions to the rule.

In the 1651 *Butsudōji* 仏道寺 picture scroll, a male spectator appears—notably, an aristocrat rather than a monk. The “*kaimami* 垣間見” of this male figure is indicative of the slippage, which Yamamoto has noted,³⁴ between sacred and secular in *kusōzu*. *Kaimami* is a particular type of viewing—literally “through the fence peeping”—and it is a signature of the aristocratic, ro-

31 Examples can be seen in the many *Kumano kanjin jikkai mandara* 熊野観心十界曼荼羅 (Visualization of the Heart and Ten Worlds of Kumano) paintings. These were paintings related to pilgrimage at the sacred site of Kumano. They depicted the ten realms of rebirth as well as a bridge-like path along which a human figure progresses in age toward death.

32 These paintings have not yet been published. See Tanaka Takako, “Saiganji shozō ‘kusōzu’ etoki ‘saisei’ no kokoromi,” *Kasamashoin* online. http://kasamashoin.jp/2014/12/57_16.html (accessed January 4, 2017).

33 Suzuki Shōsan, *Shichinin bikuni. Ogura monogatari. Ninin bikuni. Ikkyū mizukagami. Ikkyū gaikotsu. Kusōshi* (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1973).

34 Yamamoto, “Death and Disease in Medieval Japanese Painting,” 95.

mantic exploits of well-known literary lovers like Genji and Fujiwara no Ariwara.³⁵ Here it functions to twice remove the *kusōzu* viewer from the corpse subject, but confirms the erotic nature of the gaze. The male spectator within the *kusōzu* seems to appear in paintings and prints of the Edo period but no earlier. Even if they have always been gendered in Japanese culture, it seems these works became more obviously eroticized as they proliferated into the less monastic spheres of reception. The Saiganji temple *kusōzu* is peopled with observing figures of all sexes, classes, and types: several meditating men in Chinese-style garments, a pair of well-dressed women, two male passers-by, a female deity, and a couple of monks observing the state of complete disintegration but (notably) not meditating. Subjects other than corpses that might include a curious spectator, in addition to the *kaimami* found in Genji-related paintings, are sideshows, kabuki and *bunraku* theatre, and erotica. The *kusōzu*, then, has become a kind of spectacle and, as such, implicit to it is a certain kind of viewing.

The posited function of *kusōzu* was to recognize oneself in the disintegrating body. But since the body is gendered, arguably the opposite may occur. That is, because the body is female-gendered, and the female is associated with death and permeability (a penetrable body), the observer or meditator becomes male-gendered (even if not male-sexed). This suggestion is further supported by the presence of the often non-monastic male observer who may also evoke tropes of the erotic gaze. To put it differently, it would be necessary for the body to be lacking gender (or for it to be viewed in an alternatively gendered society) in order for the viewer to identify her- or himself with it and realize their “true nature.” Let us look at how this is operating in another way: through the use of landscape in visual and literary iterations of the theme. The addition of a landscape, plants, and trees to the images of corpses, another Japanese development,³⁶ helps in the gendering and eroticization of the corpse. It also, as we will see,

makes it pointedly amenable to interpretation as a “grotesque” body. Kanda and others note that such landscape elements cannot be located in scriptural sources but rather draw on the eleventh-century *kusōshi* 九相詩 poem (mis)attributed to Kūkai.³⁷ This is relevant to the discussion since the nature of the landscape as well as its position in a territorial configuration of urban, wasteland, and mountainous elements are aspects that produce meaning for the *kusōzu* female body.

The type of landscape depicted in the paintings suggests the links between *fujōkan*, the femaleness of the corpse, and sexual desire. The arboreal landscape of all seasons in the late-thirteenth-century Shōju Raigōji *kusōzu* is, as Kanda describes, a metaphor for transience and attention to the mutability of the seasons, and their distinguishing characteristics are hardly unusual in Japanese art as a whole. Yet with its pervasively dark, dull coloring it serves also, she evocatively states, “to convey the gloomy atmosphere of these defiled domains tainted by violence, illness, torture, misery, and a zoo of evils.”³⁸ However, the addition of landscape should be noted not only in terms of content (the symbolism of trees, plants, and flowers) but also in terms of position. Both aspects are a means of signifying boundaries (or lack thereof): between unbounded nature (female, animal, flora, the viewed, the territorially peripheral/marginal) and bounded human (male, the viewer, territorially central). The previously mentioned *Kankyō no tomo*, a story of a monk who practices *fujōkan* on a corpse, relies for its narrative power on the description of places and their relative positions.³⁹ The monk vanishes from his mountain temple each night, returning dispiritedly in the mornings. Both his absence during the night and his forlorn expression are read by other monks as evidence that he is visiting, in the foothills, a woman from whom he is unhappy to be separated. However, upon being followed, it transpires that he is visiting the Rendaino 蓮台野 region (present-day Kita Ward, Kyoto), where many cemeteries were located, to contemplate an exposed corpse. In the assumptions of the monastic community, the locations of the moun-

35 Charlotte Eubanks notes this in her analysis of a tale about the contemplation of impurity in *Kankyō no tomo* and remarks on the presentation of the disintegrating female body as a spectacle. Charlotte Eubanks, *Miracles of the Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011), 107–8.

36 Kanda, “Behind the Sensationalism,” 34–5. The *setsuwa* tales may be supposed to have provided the landscape images as well, though these landscape elements also drew heavily on Chinese

and Japanese poems that described the nine stages with correlating landscape, plant, and animal images.

37 *Ibid.*, 31.

38 *Ibid.*

39 Koizumi Hiroshi et al., eds., *Hōbutsushū. Kankyō no tomo. Hirasano kojiri reitaku*, vol. 40 of *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993), 403–7.

taintop and its foot, day and night, life and death, are gendered sacred/male and profane/female.⁴⁰ Through this series of oppositions, sex with a woman is tied for the male to the trope of “visiting” a corpse. Although no landscape is described pictorially, designated sites and the distance between them are an effective means of transmitting meaning. There is an emphasis on a pure center and the distance from it. Likewise in the paintings and prints, the female corpse, rendered as increasingly and ultimately boundary-less (decomposing) and as merging with its marginal environment, contrasts with an outer (often implied) territory that is delineated by imposed and artificial borders: the territory of life, centrality, and health from which it has been cast. In threatening to join with it through physical transformation (disintegration), the female image also hints at the troubling potential unity of divisions, a threat to keep in mind as we work through the applicability of the notion of the grotesque to the *fujōkan* trope.

The aesthetic trope of “the unbounded” is of central importance to the Japanese literary and visual iterations of *fujōkan* and *kusōzu*, and later, as I show, to the “grotesque” in modernity. This is why *kusōzu* resonates with *eroguro*. As I have suggested above, “the unbounded” is expressed through the female, the landscape, and their iconography and positions. Identifying the trope of the unbounded helps to explain why these images have remained powerful: they are carriers of the grotesque—the conceptual and artistic aesthetic of the threat to boundaries. In the post-Ashokan literary narratives of female corpses as meditation objects as explored by Wilson, “grotesque figurations of the female body are instrumental to men who seek total closure [as a physical and mental ideal promoted by monastic training]. Such closure is out of the question for the body that serves as a *liberating spectacle*. It is, by nature, an elevated mass of wounds, an array of openings that will not close.”⁴¹ In this sense, again, apprehension of the disintegrating body is clearly not a lesson in the body as composition of aggregates lacking a locus of essential existence; it

is, on the contrary, and largely as a result of its sexed and gendered nature, an affirmation of one’s own “total closure.” Bernard Faure has noted that in some conceptions “the ideal body of the Buddhist practitioner was a closed body, without ‘outflows’ (a metaphorical designation for defilements),”⁴² and that the physicality of this sealed state was/is difficult or impossible for women.⁴³ The unclosed body in the Buddhist tradition is presented as both soteriological/enlightening, and as a “spectacle.” Indeed, by being exposed and viewed it is *ipso facto* a spectacle. We have already observed that the depiction of non-monastic viewers makes the image a spectacle. Connotations of titillation and low culture in the term “spectacle” are, as we will see, apposite too in *kusōzu* and in literary descriptions of *fujōkan* from the beginning of the twentieth century onward.

4. *Kusōzu* in Twentieth-Century Japanese Visual Culture, and in Itō Seiū’s Work

Given the persistence of the genre, the apparent absence of *kusōzu* from the Meiji period (1868–1912) onward seems anomalous, as Yamamoto has pointed out. It had enjoyed relatively consistent production from around the thirteenth century onward. Painters of the Kamakura period produced the works already mentioned, and the subject matter was taken up by the Edo-period lineage of Kanō painters, specifically, Kanō Einō 狩野永納 (1631–97), as well as by Kikuchi Yōsai 菊池容齋 (1788–1878) and Kawanabe Kyōsai 河鍋暁齋 (1831–89).⁴⁴ Yamamoto offers as possible reasons for the Meiji-period neglect of the subject the rapid modernization of Japan, which necessitated discarding as artistic subject matter certain subjects deemed inappropriate, and the increased quarantining of death itself from post-Meiji everyday life. Additionally, we can assume that, although Buddhism itself came under attack, the de-emphasis on *kusōzu* was a result of an alignment of Buddhist art with Greek and Roman art in the attempt to put Japanese art on a footing with Western art, as appropriate to a modern power (indeed, to push it into that new category). But clearly, only a

40 At this time, women were excluded from mountains, which had been made the sacred sites of Buddhist temple complexes and were homes of mountain gods. For a recent treatment of this and the scholarship that focuses on it, see Lindsey E. DeWitt, “A Mountain Set Apart: Female Exclusion, Buddhism, and Tradition at Modern Ōminesan, Japan” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2015). At some sites the ban remains today.

41 Wilson, “The Female Body as a Source of Horror and Insight in Post-Ashokan Indian Buddhism,” 92; my italics.

42 Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 61.

43 *Ibid.*, 58–62.

44 Yamamoto, “Matsui Fuyuko, Kyūshū de kusōzu o miru,” *Geijutsu shinchō*, October 2012, 115.

certain kind of Buddhist art became Japan's "classical."

The apparent disappearance of *kusōzu* then, appears to mark a sudden break between the premodern and modern—and this contributes, no doubt, to the common linkage of Matsui's work with the earliest premodern examples of the genre. On the other hand, however, Yamamoto does identify aspects of the works of novelists such as *eroguro* writer Yumeno Kyūsaku 夢野久作 (1889–1936) and Mishima Yukio 三島由紀夫 (1925–70) as *kusōzu*-inspired. She also introduces *nihonga* painter Nakamura Gakuryō 中村岳陵 (1890–1969) as proprietor of a fourteenth-century *kusōzu* painting. Upon his son's departure for the battlefield during the Pacific War he displayed it, informing the young Tanio that he would likely end up "like this" (but that this potential fate was nonetheless a thing of noble beauty).⁴⁵ This is the painted hand-scroll, mentioned above, that is kept at the Kyushu National Museum today, and the work upon which Matsui most closely bases her series. Yamamoto presents these instances of *kusōzu* "inspiration" as anomalies in a period from which the genre had largely disappeared. To the list may be added the work of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎潤一郎 (1886–1965), who details a *fujōkan* practice of corpse contemplation in his 1949 novella *Shōsho Shigemoto no haha* 少将滋幹の母 (Captain Shigemoto's Mother), and, more generally, the writings of Edogawa Rampo 江戸川乱歩 (1894–1965), both discussed below.

Yet there are also notable and unexamined variations of the *kusōzu* found in the art of Seiū which I present here as an essential aspect of the development of this genre. An illustrator, painter, theatre reviewer, and historian, Seiū was a significant figure in popular Tokyo culture of the early to mid-twentieth century. In many ways he represents a development of the *shunga* 春画 ("spring [erotic] pictures") and *yūreiga* 幽霊画 ("ghost pictures") genres after Tsukioka Yoshitoshi 月岡芳年 (1839–92), and produced work that represents a stage of the flow and development of these two genres into pictorial and photographic pornography in Japan. The work of those who took up these genres was a product of negotiation between the suppression of sexual material and changes in society, technology, and media (such as the growth of visual journalism). One among them, Seiū occupied a prominent position in the early stages of *eroguro*, and he remains popular today among

S&M enthusiasts with the dubious title of "father" of Japanese rope bondage (縛り/緊縛 *shibari/kinbaku*). He is known best as a *seme-eshi* 責め絵師 ("artist of [scenes of] torture"). The content of his work appealed to the earliest *eroguro* and pornographic magazines and he was employed as an illustrator by, among others, *Kitan Kurabu* 奇譚クラブ (Bizarre Stories Club), a post-war magazine publication that specialized in S&M. His output was vast and, along with newspaper illustrations, paintings, ink works, and theatrical stage props for entertainments in Asakusa (where he was born and lived), he produced illustrated books on Edo and Tokyo customs. He was a compulsive compiler of images and information about all kinds of objects from lampstands, kites, and tea-trays to street signs and children's games, and an enthusiastic recorder of the spectacles and sideshows (*misemono* 見世物) of the city. Visual technologies such as kaleidoscopes, zoetropes, shadow puppets, and cinema fascinated him. The larger and better-known part of his work, however, was his portrayal of women being tortured, usually rope-bound—for him a seemingly inexhaustible subject that he presented in *mitate-e* 見立て絵 or "intervisual" portrayals⁴⁶ of seasonal customs, scenes from popular theatre, and episodes from "history" and literature. The tortured women in his works were almost always presented as spectacles, with an audience depicted for the publically displayed bodies. When an audience is not provided by direct depiction, montage-like composition guides the viewer. Two pictures in his book *Rongo tsūkai* 論語通解 (Explanation of Text, 1930), for example, present the violation and consumption by dogs of women hauled from their graves juxtaposed with a parodic spectacle: a Buddhist priest conducts an *etoki* of a huge painting of a vagina to a congregation of phal-luses.⁴⁷ The scene of scavenging by dogs is a reference to *kusōzu* (and the depiction of animals aroused by viewing human "sexuality" recalls *shunga* motifs), while both pictures reference Buddhist practices. Seiū's more fully developed *kusōzu* paintings similarly present the disintegration of women's bodies as forms of spectacle and as sexual assaults, and his work is an important ex-

45 Yamamoto, "Matsui Fuyuko, Kyūshū de kusōzu o miru," 115.

46 I use Max Moerman's description of *mitate-e* as a form of intervisuality. D. Max Moerman, "Dying Like the Buddha: Intervisuality and the Cultic Image," *Impressions: The Journal of the Japanese Art Society of America* 29 (2007–08): 26.

47 Itō Seiū, *Yasuda Korekushon 5: Rongo tsūkai Jigoku no onna* (Tokyo: Ginza shokan, 1930), n.p.

ample of the way in which *kusōzu*, already associated with necrophilia,⁴⁸ merged with the violent, sexual imagery of *eroguro*.

Rakujō 落城 (Fallen Castle; hereafter *Fallen Castle*; figure 2) is a hanging-scroll painting of a sadistic scene of female torture, likely from around the 1950s.⁴⁹ It appears to parody a type of *Shuten dōji* 酒吞童子, a demon known for killing and eating noblewomen, painting that had begun around 1522 with the rendition of the theme by Kanō Motonobu 狩野元信 (1476–1559).⁵⁰ In this famous tale, Raikō 頼光 (Minamoto no Yorimitsu 源頼光, 948?–1021) and his warriors save kidnapped daughters of noble families from the eponymous cannibalistic demon. Keller Kimbrough has suggested that the charnel scene introduced in Motonobu's work was understood by its Edo-period audience as a kind of *kusōzu*.⁵¹ Seiu's painting shows five warriors and their leader in a rocky outcrop. A castle hovers in the misty background, and the middle ground is occupied by women in progressive states of undress, roped to trees and rocks. Instead of saving the women, the warriors are thrashing, stabbing, and sexually assaulting them (figure 3). In the lower register a bleeding and bloated corpse lies in the ravine, being consumed by dogs and observed by one of the warriors. Here, several of the most gruesome stages of *fujōkan* are combined, and the contemplator is a non-monastic. The explicit inclusion of the *kusōzu* scene in Seiu's apparent parody of *Shuten dōji* would support Kimbrough's proposal, but it also demonstrates the development of the reception of this genre: it has slipped into the genre of *eroguro*. In fact, *Fallen Castle* can in its entirety be considered a *mitate-e* rendering of *kusōzu*, where the gradual exposure of the living female bodies from their clothing replaces the disintegration of the dead body, where the males carry out a purposeful destruction that is presented as the inevitable work of nature in *kusōzu*, and where the contemplator of the (final) corpse is non-monastic, and



Figure 2. Itō Seiu. *Rakujō* 落城 (*Fallen Castle*). Ca. 1950. H. 129.5cm, w. 42.4cm. Hanging scroll. Ink and color on silk. Tarō Fukutomi Collection. Source: Yamakawa Midori, ed., *Geijutsu shinchō* (April 1995), 14. With permission of Tarō Fukutomi and *Geijutsu shinchō*.

48 See, for example, the tale of Rājadatta in the commentary to the *Theragāthā*. See Wilson's discussion in "The Female Body as a Source of Horror and Insight in Post-Ashokan Indian Buddhism," 86.

49 In the collection of Tarō Fukutomi. A photograph is published in *Geijutsu shinchō*, April 1995, 14, with a detail of it on page 15.

50 Kept in the Suntory Museum of Art in Tokyo.

51 Keller Kimbrough, "Sacred Charnel Visions: Painting the Dead in Illustrated Scrolls of The Demon Shuten Dōji," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Performance, Media, and Text*, eds. Kenji Kobayashi, Maori Saitō, and Haruo Shirane (Tokyo: National Institute of Japanese Literature, 2013), 38–40.



Figure 3. Itō Seiu. *Rakujō* (detail). Tarō Fukutomi Collection. Source: Yamakawa Midori, ed., *Geijutsu shinchō* (April 1995), 15. With permission of Tarō Fukutomi and *Geijutsu shinchō*.



Figure 4. Itō Seiu. *Kusōkan* 九相観 (View of the Nine Stages). 1932. H. 26cm. Source: National Diet Library Digital Collection, <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1177907> (last accessed February 28, 2017).

visibly as rapacious as the dogs that accompany him.

Seiu was plainly interested in *kusōzu*: a complete series appears on one page in *Bijin ranbu* 美人乱舞 (Beautiful Women Dancing Wildly), his 1932 collection (figure 4). The female figures are lightly sketched in ink and blue color, and summarily rendered in terms of iconography. A gradual bloating indicates the progression but no image of the rotting and opening of the body is included, and while a single crow stands for the consumption scene, instead of pecking at the fleshy body it perches by the totally disintegrated skeleton. Two passages that describe the meaning of the genre according to the cavalier artist are embedded into the sketch:

There is a [type of] picture called a *kusōkan* that depicts the appearance in death of Ono no Koma-

chi.⁵² It was the motive of Śākyamuni [Buddha] to awaken ordinary people to the skin-deep beauty of so-called beautiful women. But generally speaking, those (both stupid and intelligent) who look just want to XXXX those [beautiful] women. Hey, let's just live—since we can't guess the future!⁵³

The *kusōzu* scene of scavenging/consumption (*tansō* 噉相) appears in another painting (figure 5). It is my opinion that this painting is, in its entirety, *kusōzu mitate-e*, though it has never been classified as such. It is part of a set that was commissioned around 1951 by Matsui

52 The ninth-century poet famed for her beauty with whose identity the *kusōzu* figure came to be associated by the early thirteenth century. See Chin, "The Gender of Buddhist Truth," 296–306.

53 In the original text, two triangles appear to connote "intercourse," which I translate as four Xs.



Figure 5. Itō Seiu. *Shimabara no ran* 島原の乱 (*The Shimabara Rebellion*). Ca. 1950. Dimensions unknown. Hanging scroll. Ink and color on silk. Ryōsenji, Shimoda, Izu. With permission of Ryōsenji.

Daishū, then head priest of Nichiren-sect temple Ryōsenji 了仙寺, on the Izu peninsula. He had requested *mitate* pictures from Seiu, asking the artist to depict hell as “this world.”⁵⁴ Ryōsenji also keeps as *hibutsu* 秘仏 (secret Buddhist works) Seiu’s *jigoku-e* 地獄絵 (pictures of hell). *Jigoku-e* are a standard type of didactic Buddhist painting, but Seiu’s pictures specifically show scenes of torture of women. The text accompanying the work is a moral declaration on the depicted depravities that, it claims, occurred during the 1637–38 Shimabara

Rebellion. The painting bears the delicate liveliness of stroke that characterizes Seiu’s work, the skilled portrayal of contorted bodies, as well as attention to background detail. It is in the same vein as *Fallen Castle*: the scene is a craggy wasteland, it purports to be a depiction of a war atrocity, and women are shown hanging or fallen from trees, attacked by birds and dogs, and here, by snakes as well. A male is portrayed as the perpetrator of violence. There are nine female bodies in total, surely parodying the nine stages of disintegration. They are arranged as fully dressed in the upper right in gorgeous kimono with hair done up in the *shimadamage* 島田髷 Edo-period topknot style that Seiu favored, through stages of bondage to a tree branch in the mid-left section, to several prostrate states in partial or complete nakedness. One woman is subjected to a biting dog between her legs, echoing the depiction in *Fallen Castle* of forced cunnilingus by a warrior; both recall the Shōjūraigōji *kusōzu* as well as the consumption of female bodies in *Shuten dōji* by the unwary warriors, and the above-mentioned depiction of necrophilia. The line of women zigzags down the scroll ending at bottom left, where a corpse scavenged by crows and dogs lies. Seiu probably saw no contradiction in selecting parts of *kusōzu* to arrange into his works; however, he was clearly aware of the Buddhist connotations of the genre, as his *kusōkan* text shows, and since this is one of a set of ten paintings of women being tortured in different ways it seems highly probable that he conceived the set itself as a grand-scale *kusōzu*. One anomalous painting in the set, a rather simple picture of an *oiran* 花魁 courtesan, supports this suggestion. It likely opened the series, just as a living beauty sometimes began a *kusōzu* series, heightening by contrast the impending disintegration.

Although production of *kusōzu* indeed seems to have decreased, these examples may be considered evidence of the resilience rather than the withering of a subject that was officially discarded but survived in the subterranean domain of ephemeral and subversive media, including that of Buddhist temples, continuing to exert influence on the imagination. What does seem clear is that *kusōzu* were not being produced for ostensibly unequivocal “Buddhist” purposes (such as meditation or for conversion/edification narratives). The factors that Yamamoto proposed as related to *kusōzu* during and after the Meiji period are persuasive: the gothic/grotesque novelists, the beautification of (female) death, particularly suicide, and war experience. All three of these are concerned with

54 Matsui Daei, present head priest of Ryōsenji. Interview by author, Ryōsenji, Izu, August 3, 2014. Matsui had a personal connection with Seiu through his wife’s hometown temple parish in Chiba, and the relationship between the two is attested by a conversation between them in the 1951 inaugural issue of *Amatoria* アマトリア magazine, an *eroguro* publication.

notions and aesthetics of dismemberment that are contextually particular in Japanese modern visual culture. Other linked phenomena are at play here: the adoption of the western nude and the development of anatomical studies, inherent in which too are issues of dismemberment. Moving forward into the early twenty-first century, while painter Yamaguchi Akira 山口晃 (b. 1969), manga artist Masaki Hidehisa 正木秀尚 (b. 1964), and photographer Fujiwara Shinya 藤原新也 (b. 1944) have taken up the subject matter, Matsui's large-scale project occupies central place in what is seen as its revival. But as I have suggested, this is not a revival of medieval or even pre-modern work; it is largely that of the modern period, and it is a continuity.

5. The Nude, the Classical, and the Grotesque

Matsui's *kusōzu* bodies are profoundly different from their pre-modern predecessors: they are idealized Western-style nudes. She bases these on studies of herself, live models, and European waxwork anatomical dolls. As mentioned above, in the Meiji period, the classical body—the Western nude—was adopted by painters and sculptors in the Japanese academy. However, some of its connotations were apparently exorcised in the transition. Satō Dōshin notes that, for example, “the basic premise of Western art, which did not exist in Japan, was that a ‘human’ figure without a stitch of clothing on was also a ‘divine’ figure,” but he asserts that the genre of the nude was transplanted to Japan “without most of its original religious and humanistic baggage.”⁵⁵ Such painted nudes and sculptures were ideal, classical types. In fact, since some of the religious connotations of the “Western” naked body themselves changed when rendered as an anatomical model,⁵⁶ it may be argued that the classical nude in Japanese art had in some ways, by virtue of discarding the “divine,” something fundamentally more in common with these. In Japan, previous and contemporary endeavors at ren-

dering the unclothed human body were “in the realm of the particular and the sensual,” as Jaqueline Berndt puts it,⁵⁷ such as those, indeed, of anatomical illustrations and models, the sensationally revealed bodies of temple or street fair spectacles, and “living dolls” (*iki ningyō* 生き人形) (all three of which were often one and the same). The ideal nude was a rejection of the realistic flaws of the human body.

There are two principal ways in which the early Japanese nude is (counter-intuitively) connected with these two “lower” culture renderings, and in fact more fundamentally to the grotesque. One way is a result of the above-mentioned attempt to purge the “divine” aspects and the other is a result of some of the types of European influences in the works of Meiji- and Taishō-era sculptors and painters. What we see here, again, is that Matsui's work is not only or even predominantly a product of a combination of two distinct “Western” and “Japanese” cultures. It is a product of the early-twentieth-century formation of identity, the negotiations with European culture that this involved, and a subculture that was produced from it. Setting aside for a moment its cultural specificity, Mary Russo's comparison of the classical and the grotesque bodies in European culture is relevant here. She writes:⁵⁸

The images of the grotesque body are precisely those which are abjected from the bodily canons of classical aesthetics. The classical body is transcendent and monumental, closed, static, self-contained, symmetrical, and sleek; it is identified with the “high” or official culture of the Renaissance and later, with the rationality, individualism, and normalizing aspirations of the bourgeoisie. The grotesque body is open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple, and changing, and it is identified with non-official “low” culture.⁵⁹

The (official) fading out of the “*kusōzu* body,” if it can be so termed, is perhaps unsurprising then, because the

55 Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2011), 264–65. However, in later *eroguro*, especially in its postwar phase, the nude is imbued with religious meaning, particularly that of martyrdom and punishment.

56 The dead body could now be opened, observed, mapped, and had no supernatural element.

57 Jaqueline Berndt, “Nationally Naked? The Female Nude in Japanese Oil Painting and Posters 1890s–1920s,” in *Performing the Nation: Gender, Politics, and the Visual Arts of China and Japan 1880–1940*, ed. Doris Croissant et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 327.

58 It is also useful in comparing with the “closed” body of the viewer that is constituted by the “open” body of the *kusōzu* subject, which Wilson described.

59 Mary J. Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 8.

original “grotesque” is anti-classical and anti-ideal. The term itself originally derived from “grotto-esque” or “grottesco” and its origins are found in Nero’s Domus Aurea (“Golden Palace”), an imperial Roman villa and its rooms—(mis-)perceived as “grottoes” because underground—excavated in Rome during the fifteenth century. The structure was originally vast, labyrinthine, and filled with lavish manmade land- and waterscapes. “Grotesque” denoted, in the Renaissance, the style of Fabullus’s decorative wall and ceiling frescoes that were discovered there, a major feature of which was the fantastical, playful, and ornate fusion of human body parts with those of plants, birds, animals, fish, cameos, and architectural motifs, or hybrid entities such as hippogriffs and winged Victories. Such bodies contrasted with the classical, perfect, whole and bounded body. This “grottesco” appealed to Renaissance artists (and later to Neoclassicists of the late eighteenth century) and was mainly employed in architectural ornamentation, frescoes, framework, and illuminated manuscripts, its application indicating it was materially marginal, and borderline in form, content, and function, just as its place of origin was submerged and otherworldly.

The original palace and its decoration has seemingly little to do with the later uses of the term “grotesque”: Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, unbounded body, Kristeva’s abject, or Ruskin’s complex elaboration of the aesthetic (indeed, the term has come to umbrella a variety of expressive modalities). It may be suggested, however, that the grotesque as signifier of monstrosity is related as much to the unnatural fusions found in the “grotto” interiors as to the position of the grottos themselves. Grotesque monsters are, after all, inhabitants that emerge from dark, sinister, buried places. For example, both (Gothic) architectural ruin and grotto are related to the genre of horror, for they are architectural or natural bodies that contain buried objects and they stand in for broken or violated bodies, depending in large part for their atmospheric power on their evocation of a former lively and animated unity. *Kusōzu* are an exceptionally apposite example of the grotesque in their many mutually reinforcing ways, including the former animation their bodies indicate, and the open body that fuses with nature. Despite the reasonable assumption, however, that *kusōzu* bodies faded out with the introduction of the Western classical body and its accompanying ideals of rationality and modernity, it can be argued that in fact the grotesque came to be articulated by the classical. How is this so? In common with the grotesque,

the classical body itself with its perfect human bodily proportions, which had exerted a strong influence on Renaissance artists, depended upon objects that had been disinterred from various sites. It was in many ways known *through* the buried and the ruined. When these ideal bodies came up out of the ground they were often missing arms or a head; they might have been nothing but torsos. *Laocoön* and the *Belvedere Torso* are representative examples. But there is an important distinction between how Renaissance artists and nineteenth-century European artists treated them. The Renaissance artists, generally speaking, did not emulate and employ them *as* dismembered. They used them as parts that hinted at a whole that could be reconstructed: a whole that represented human bodily perfection. And that body was part of the city of ancient Rome that was also itself being studied and mentally reconstructed through scrutiny of its ruins by Renaissance artists and scholars. But the nineteenth-century artists celebrated the forms in their truncated and broken states, and it was the works of these, most notably of Rodin, from which a number of Japanese artists training in Western sculpture studied.⁶⁰ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Aristede Maillol (1861–1944), Antoine Bourdelle (1861–1929), and Vincenzo Ragusa (1841–1927), for example, provided inspiration to sculptors like Takamura Kōtarō 高村光太郎 (1883–1956), Ogiwara Morie 荻原守衛 (Rokuzan 碌山, 1879–1910), and Tobari Kogan 戸張孤雁 (1882–1927), who all produced torsos and headless or limbless female bodies. It can be suggested that, similarly, one reason the grotesque body returns (or can be re-identified) in Japanese Meiji and post-Meiji visual culture in its new classically influenced bodies is because when this classical body is introduced into Japanese art in the Meiji period⁶¹ it is already a period in Europe in which a broken body, especially a nude one, is fetishized.

To say that the fetishization of body parts was a dominant influence on modern Japanese sculptors would be a vast and simplistic overstatement. It can be suggested, however, that the concomitant emergence of *eroguro*, which I will address below, provided it a sub-

60 See Tanigawa Atsushi, *Haikyo no bigaku* (Tokyo: Shūseisha, 2003), 19–29.

61 The classical body in visual art and Western art had been available in Japan with varying levels of accessibility from the fifteenth century on. Here I am focusing on art that was officially supported in the Meiji academy.

cultural channel. If this is so, one can also suggest that in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Japan the classical, ideal body was itself, paradoxically, monstrous and grotesque. This means that Japan's grotesque differs significantly from its Western predecessor, and this was produced through a confluence of other literary, visual, and historical phenomena. Additionally, it was in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that a preoccupation with the female corpse in visual culture became evident in Europe in relation to developments in science and medicine.⁶² There is a bifurcation when it comes to how this visual vocabulary of the broken body developed: we find that the *kusōzu*, as part of a grotesque aesthetic, is articulated in a twilight language, while the dismembered body becomes *part of* official visual culture (as well as part of subculture). It is precisely these reappearances, and the double cultural positioning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that inform Matsui's work and to which she succeeds.

6. *Kusōzu* and the Erotic-Grotesque

Through visual analysis and elaboration of context these strands of influence can be teased out of Matsui's work. The binding theme of Matsui's *kuzōsu* series is suicide and it informs a number of her other paintings, such as those that depict Aokigahara 青木ヶ原, a real forest notorious as a site of suicide. Its role in her *kuzōsu* series is less obvious and we must turn to her own written commentaries to find the intended meaning: the series is illustrative of a series of suicides, each for a different reason. There are also motifs of pregnancy, anatomical dissection, artificial landscape, and Christian figures. These, along with the interest in suicide, differentiate her work from premodern *kuzōsu*, and contribute to a visual statement of boundary transgression that is at root grotesque.

Before giving specific examples, a summary of the development of this aesthetic is necessary. *Eroguro nansensu* エロゲロナンセンス (the "nansensu," or "nonsense," component has today been more or less discarded) is a term used to describe a mass-culture

decadent artistic and literary sensibility that originated around the late 1920s and early '30s in Japan, the "interwar period." Described as "the prewar, bourgeois cultural phenomenon that devoted itself to explorations of the deviant, the bizarre, and the ridiculous,"⁶³ its subject matter included the first Japanese forays into the genres of detective and mystery fiction, as well as pornography, news, graphic art often presented as montage, and articles on sexology and anthropology. Elements of these were often melded together. The word *gurotesuku* グロテスク held similarities to its western counterpart. In the first issue in 1929 of the popular magazine *Ryōki gahō* 猟奇画報 (Curiosity-Hunting Pictorial), which published this sort of material, the characters 好色的 (*kōshokuteki* or erotic) and 怪奇的 (*kaikiteki*, meaning difficult to explain or repulsive in appearance), and written as a compound, are glossed in katakana script as *eroch-ikku gurotesuku*.⁶⁴ *Ryōki* ("curiosity-hunting") itself is described in a 1931 dictionary of new slang as often used with erotic-grotesque connotations. As a term, *eroguro* was closely related to the *ryōki* sensibility: both focused on "trash" literature and art concerned with what was conceived of as perverse and improper desire, but mixed too with themes of detection and mystery. The work of author Edogawa Rampo exemplified the *eroguro*. Leftist intellectuals of the 1920s and '30s considered it an effect of urban modernity, providing ever-higher and stranger stimulation to the bored urban dweller/consumer. It is possible to trace the sensibility, though not the term that later describes it, back to the *muzan-e* 無残絵 ("pictures of cruelty") of Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, previously mentioned, and before him to Utagawa Kuniyoshi 歌川国芳 (1798–1861). Suzuki Sadami flags the origins somewhere between these designations, in the period immediately following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05.⁶⁵ Greg-

62 Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 98.

63 Jim Reichart, "Deviance and Social Darwinism in Edogawa Rampo's Erotic-Grotesque Thriller, *Kotō no oni*," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 27 (2001): 114. See Silverberg for the social and cultural background to this phenomenon in the 1920s and '30s. Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).

64 See Jeffrey Angles, "Seeking the Strange: Ryōki and the Navigation of Normality in Interwar Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 63, no. 1 (2008): 105.

65 Suzuki Sadami, "Ero, guro, nansensu no keifu," in *Rampo no jidai: Shōwa ero, guro, nansensu*, ed. Yonezawa Yoshihiro (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1995), 10.

ory Pflugfelder's definition of the three-part term is useful.⁶⁶

Each of the three elements implied a perversion, as it were, of conventional values. The celebration of the "erotic" (*ero*) in its myriad forms constituted a rejection of the Meiji dictum that sexuality was unsuited for public display or representation unless it conformed to the narrow standards of "civilized morality." The elevation of the "grotesque" (*guro*) betrayed a similar disregard for prevailing esthetic codes, with their focus on traditional canons of beauty and concealment of the seamier sides of existence. Finally, the valorization of the "nonsensical" (*nansensu*) signaled a discontent with the constraining nature of received moral and epistemological certitudes.⁶⁷

As *eroguro* developed away from a Taishō-period efflorescence, especially in its post-war manifestations, it grew dark, perverse, and increasingly centered on eroticized boundary violation, dismemberment, fusion with nature, and simulacra, and it was expressed in many ways in *nikutai bungaku* 肉体文学 ("flesh literature"). The latter, as Douglas Slaymaker and others have shown, was conceived in its time as an expression of (often sexual) bodily liberation in defiance of the *kokutai* 国体 (body politic) to which its proponents felt the Japanese (male) body had been sacrificed during the Pacific War. But it inevitably oppressed the female body in its own liberation.⁶⁸ In many ways the manifestation of *eroguro* in the post-war period was a resurgence of its earlier character, as Suzuki indicates, and its appearance in both periods was as resistance to an imposed morality.⁶⁹ In both periods, it was clearly an expression of resistance to bodily (particularly sexual) norms, but should not be considered an expression of the liberation of "natural" sexuality. Indeed, commentators, his-

torians included, who claim it to be so dehistoricize it and obscure the constructions commandeered by the genre. The present-day manifestation of *eroguro* as it has developed in Japan (and elsewhere) since the end of the Pacific War might be described in English by the compounds porn-horror or torture-porn.

A perfect example of the combination of suicide, classical body, and artificial landscape is found in Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's fake Nero palace in his short story *Konjiki no shi* 金色の死 (The Golden Death) of 1914. The story was based on *The Domain of Arnheim* (1847) by Edgar Allan Poe, whose gothic and grotesque work was an influence on Tanizaki, and both of which in turn fed into Edogawa Rampo's 1926 *Panoramatō kitan* パノラマ島奇談 (Strange Tale of Panorama Island). Rampo revered both writers. All three stories feature constructed landscapes that are at once astonishingly beautiful and horrifying; the aesthete inhabitants of those in Tanizaki and Rampo's works both die in glorious suicides, at the heights of ecstasy in their artificial paradises. These two tales seem to draw on the Domus Aurea as the constructed and palatial paradise *par excellence*; Rampo's paradise was partly populated by people fused surgically with animals: the Roman decorative fancies come to life.⁷⁰ Tanizaki's mansion is filled with replicas of famous works and monuments of Western culture, statues of nude women, centaurs, and at its center, Rodin's *Eternal Idol*.⁷¹

Tanizaki's production of sadomasochism-themed fiction makes him much a part of this evolving subculture. Tanizaki was also interested in *kusōzu*, and he depicted the corpse meditation in his novella, mentioned briefly above, *Shōsho Shigemoto no haha*, a 1949 work written in the Occupation period (1945–52) that explores a number of *eroguro* obsessions. Here, *fujōkan* is performed by a layman (again, the monastic figure, implied or explicit, is absent) who visits a "charnel ground on the edge of a moor,"⁷² the end point of a journey from the center of town through increasingly ruined residences to a peripheral wasteland that is described

66 Which, incidentally, maps quite well onto Bataille's definition of the "informe" that was an important part of his theories on disgust.

67 Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse 1600–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 290. Silverberg locates the "guro" in marginalized groups of the time such as Asakusa's vagrants. See Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*.

68 Douglas Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Fiction: Japanese Fiction after the War* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

69 Suzuki, "Ero, guro, nansensu no keifu," 10.

70 Maruo Suehiro, whose manga work epitomizes *eroguro* today, pictorialized Rampo's vision. Maruo Suehiro, *Panoramatō kidan* (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 2008).

71 Tanigawa Atsushi discusses this story, drawing attention to its links with Rampo, Mishima, the body, and suicide. Tanigawa, *Haikyo no bigaku*, 80–101.

72 Translated by Edward Seidensticker in Donald Keene, *Modern Japanese Literature: From 1868 to the Present Day* (New York: Grove Press, 1956), 395.

in sequential, detailed stages, making use of the distance that is conceptually and often visually or literally evoked by *kusōzu* and necessary to their power. Unlike those ideal monks of the past—the implied audience of *kusōzu* or practitioner of *fujōkan*—Tanizaki’s character eventually admits he finds no enlightenment, nor can he forget the woman he loved and whose memory he sought to erase through female-corpse contemplation. Before long he loses himself in wine instead of graveyards, and replaces his sutras with poetry. Here, we are once more far removed from the conventional or ideal *fujōkan*, and in the realm of dark sexual desire.

Exploration of the eroticized dismembered (military) body in Edogawa Rampo’s 1929 short story *Imomushi* 芋虫 (Caterpillar) is also exemplary of the *eroguro* aesthetic (the disintegrating military body in the short Edgar Allan Poe story, *The Man That Was Used Up* (1839), doubtless an influence). Reception of Rampo’s story during the Pacific War changed and it was banned by Japanese authorities in 1939 for its unpatriotic depiction of a quadriplegic veteran.⁷³ Matsui explores a question that occupies these two writers in her “*Yaya karui akkon wa kōsaku shite mōjō ni hashiru*” *no tame no shasei fuwakeupu: Shishi setsudan* 『ややかるい圧痕は交錯して網状に走る』のための写生腑分図：四肢切斷 (Sketch for *Light Indentations Mingle and Run in All Directions*, Anatomy Chart: All Four Limbs Cut Off, 2008):⁷⁴ where is humanity located in the body? The only sign of it in the remaining collection of organs is a section of nose. Toward the end of the Allied Occupation, and with changes in censorship laws, mutilated bodies and even fetishistic images of *seppuku* 切腹 (ritual self-disembowelment) were depicted in early S&M magazines, but the cast was an all-female one. One figure whose work features in early issues was Seiu, previously discussed. Seiu’s intense reworking of Yoshitoshi’s *Ōshū Adachigahara hitotsu no ie no zu* 奥州安達が原ひとつの家の図 (The Lonely House at Adachigahara in Ōshū)—a reworking that remains renowned as instrumental in the development of the visual culture of rope bondage and S&M, and to which I return below—is testament to his admiration. Rampo was a fan of Yoshitoshi too, and knew his and Seiu’s work. The Edo-era gothic horror expressed in the

works of Yoshitoshi was revived in the post-war period: films with supernatural themes like *Ugetsu monogatari* 雨月物語 (Tales of Moonlight and Rain, 1953) and *Yabu no naka no kuroneko* 藪の中の黒猫 (The Black Cat in the Grove, 1968) were implicit critiques of war and related gender issues. It may be that the literal ruination of much of Japan, particularly the structures and infrastructure of its urban spaces, as well as the historically military connotations of *seppuku* contributed to the darker *eroguro* of this period. Full exploration of this suggestion, however, is well beyond the parameters of this paper. More to my interest here is that Matsui’s work indicates a wide network of associations with *eroguro*, an aesthetic that resonates with *kusōzu* as a “Buddhist” genre, and through which the *kusōzu* of Seiu and Matsui find expression.

7. Matsui’s *Kusōzu* Series

The previous extended exploration into the history of *kusōzu*, the socio-historical position and literary examples of *eroguro*, and the introduction to Seiu’s times and his *kusōzu* were necessary for identifying Matsui’s precursors and her interaction with them. As mentioned, the fourteenth-century *Picture Scroll of the Nine Stages* is frequently cited as Matsui’s model. Spectators are notably absent, in contrast to some premodern versions we have considered and to Seiu’s *mitate-e*. Also in contrast to the latter’s proclivity to narrativize *kusōzu*, Matsui returns to the format of a lone body presented in distinct stages. I will draw out some of the ways in which her work resembles and diverges from the *Picture Scroll of the Nine Stages*, paying special attention to the siting and portrayal of the body, the flowers and animals depicted with it, the proposed audience, and the explanations provided by Matsui herself. I will use as supplementary material several other of her works that she does not include in her *kusōzu* series: *Shūkyoku ni aru itai no sanzai* 終極にある異体の散在 (Scattered Deformities in the End, 2007; figure 6),⁷⁵ *Kōsō* 構想 (Conception, 2009; figure 7),⁷⁶ and *Inkoku sareta shishi no saidan* 陰刻された四肢の祭壇 (Engraved Altar of Limbs, 2007; figure 8),⁷⁷ along with *Sakura no shita*

73 Wakamatsu Kōji’s 2010 *Kyatapirā* キャタピラー based on Rampo’s story was intended as an explicit antiwar statement. The story was made into a manga by Maruo Suehiro in 2009.

74 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 98.

75 *Ibid.*, 167.

76 *Ibid.*, 121.

77 *Ibid.*, 165.



Figure 6. Matsui Fuyuko. *Shūkyoku ni aru itai no sanzai* 終極にある異体の散在 (*Scattered Deformities in the End*). 2007. H. 124.3cm, w. 97.4cm. Hanging Scroll. Color on Silk. Private collection. Source: Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 166, fig. 102. With permission of Matsui Fuyuko and Éditions Treville.



Figure 7. Matsui Fuyuko. *Kōsō* 構想 (*Conception*). 2009. H. 53.1cm, w. 46.6cm. Pencil on paper. Collection of Hamamura Tatsuo. Source: Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 120, fig. 74. With permission of Matsui Fuyuko and Éditions Treville.

kyō onna no zu 桜下狂女図 (*Insane Woman Under a Cherry Tree*, 2005; figure 9).⁷⁸ Matsui's series is not depicted in a single painting; each stage of disintegration is a discrete piece and, as of December 2013, five have been produced, though not in order.⁷⁹ I discuss them in order of production. The earliest of the series, *Jōsō no jizoku* 浄相の持続 (*Keeping Up the Purity*, 2004; figure 10), while the resemblance is slight, appears to correspond to the sixth stage (*nōransō* 膿爛相) of the Kyushu National Museum scroll, mentioned previously. The naked subject is supine and locks milky eyes with

the viewer. A dark, smoky pool of black hair spills onto the ground around her head. A flower garden blooms around her jubilantly, an Ophelia-like floral grave. So far, so conventional. But strikingly, the body is sliced open from upper chest to lower abdomen, revealing a neatly stocked cabinet of innards: the unspooled caterpillar-like intestine and dislocated ovaries are positioned outside. Also on exhibit is a fetus, a display that Matsui states is representative of the contrast of “aggressive pride in the womb” and “revealing the source of self-harm,” or “a destructive action for the purpose of defense.”⁸⁰ In an interview she explains:

78 Ibid., 128.

79 Yamamoto, *Kusōzu o yomu*, 240. Matsui intends to complete the series with a tenth piece showing the subject prior to death (Naruyama Akimitsu, Gallery Naruyama. Interview with the author, Tokyo, July 12, 2015).

80 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 200.



Figure 8. Matsui Fuyuko. *Inkoku sareta shishi no saidan* 陰刻された四肢の祭壇 (*Engraved Altar of Limbs*). 2007. H. 222cm, w. 172cm. Hanging scroll. Color on silk. Tokyo University of the Arts. Source: Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 164, fig. 101. With permission of Matsui Fuyuko, Tokyo University of the Arts, and Éditions Treville.

According to anatomical reports, women are inferior to men when it comes to the development of organs other than the uterus . . . I decided that I wanted to depict a woman flaunting herself in the form of an objectively viewed, anatomical body.⁸¹

Yūko Hasegawa, the interviewer, explains that the figure is herself responsible for her cut-open stomach, that the work is also aimed at potential rapists, and that the fear and pain associated with femaleness as victimhood is now a source of strength. In sum, she is a powerfully masochistic figure, rather than the passive *kusōzu*

81 Yūko Hasegawa, "In the Realm of Hell," <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/realm-hell> (accessed January 20, 2017).



Figure 9. Matsui Fuyuko. *Sakura no shita kyōjo zu* 桜下狂女図 (*Insane Woman Under the Cherry Tree*). 2005. H. 131cm, w. 50.8cm. Hanging scroll. Color on silk. Private collection. Source: Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 128, fig. 81. With permission of Matsui Fuyuko and Éditions Treville.



Figure 10. Matsui Fuyuko. *Jōsō no jizoku* 浄相の持続 (*Keeping Up the Purity*). 2004. H. 29.5cm, w. 79.3cm. Hanging scroll. Color on silk. Permanent loan to the Hirano Museum of Art. With permission of Matsui Fuyuko and Éditions Treville.

corpse; she has taken her own life in a kind of *seppuku* in order to proudly display her biological difference and power. The immediate source for the central female figure here is Matsui's drawing of a life model,⁸² possibly combined with self-portrait. Both resemble, in terms of pose, the Kyushu corpse, but in other respects the body markedly differs from the stage of the *kusōzu* series to which it seems to conform, because the torso is cleanly cut, and is marked by an "exquisite precision" of the like that Edo-period "Dutch Studies" (*rangaku* 蘭学) enthusiast Sugita Genpaku 杉田玄白 (1733–1872) admired in the first western medical text he encountered.⁸³ The open body is less *seppuku* imagery and more anatomical model, specifically Clemente Susini's (1754–1814) *Anatomical Venuses*, and other gynecological waxworks popular in eighteenth-century Europe,⁸⁴ which displayed reproductive organs and fetuses. These in turn bring to mind the dissection drawings of Da

Vinci, a major stylistic and technical influence and inspiration for Matsui, as a cursory look at her work attests. The similarity with anatomical models abruptly shifts the viewer away from the *kusōzu* discarded female corpse as signifier of food for wild birds and beasts and tool of liberation for ascetic practitioners. It moves it instead toward a new signifier of body as tool of anatomical instruction connected to autopsy and dissection: a distinctly modern, western view of and function for the dead body. That Matsui draws on motifs of western art (the classical body, Ophelia, Venus) and of Renaissance art and modernity (Da Vinci, anatomical dissection) is coherent within her oeuvre as a whole and within the scheme of the grotesque she takes up and develops. Like the dismembered classical body, the opened, dissected body too is as grotesque as it is modern. Indeed, the original meaning and aesthetic of "the grotesque" is, at base, hybridity, and hybridity is made possible by cutting, dismembering, and rearranging (*fuwake* 腑分); this latter term was originally used in Japan to signify anatomical dissection. I will devote the remainder of the discussion to the boundary state that Matsui achieves through the opened bodies that she portrays, the significance of both European and Japanese anatomical models in the portrayals, and the way these models relate to *eroguro*, through discussion of the rest of her series.

In the second piece in Matsui's series, *Narihai no sakeme* 成灰の裂目 (*Crack in the Ashes*, 2006) the body we observed in the first piece is overturned and lies face down on the ground. Similarly spread out, her abundant hair dissipates like smoke into a corner of the

82 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 79.

83 Shigehisa Kuriyama, "Between Mind and Eye: Japanese Anatomy in the Eighteenth Century," in *Paths to Asian Medical Knowledge*, eds. Charles Leslie and Allen Young (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 29.

84 See Elizabeth Stephens, *Anatomy as Spectacle: Public Exhibitions of the Body from 1700 to the Present* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).



Figure 11. Matsui Fuyuko. *Ōsei wa karada o saranai* 應声は体を去らない (*The Parasite Will Not Leave the Body*). 2011. H. 30cm, w. 80cm. Color on silk. Hanging scroll. Collection of Matsui Fuyuko. With permission of Matsui Fuyuko and Éditions Treville.

painting. The flame-like petals of the orchids obscure her face; a listless hand rests palm upward. Her location and position have both changed, and the flesh on her legs seems to have been chipped away at. “The heart has died in resentment,” Matsui writes of this work. “The body is rigid, resembling a single column of smoke.”⁸⁵ In the third painting, *Ōsei wa karada o saranai* 應声は体を去らない (*The Parasite Will Not Leave the Body*, 2011; figure 11), we appear to be back at the original location, and the positioning of the body is almost identical to that depicted in *Keeping Up the Purenness*. The relocating and positioning of the corpse is in line with that of older *kusōzu* images, suggesting its deliberate pose and display as a spectacle. The seventh stage, in *Tenkan o tsunagiawaseru* 転換を繋ぎ合わせる (*Joining the Conversion*, 2011), is explained as a suicide driven by the desire to simply rest from an exhaustion caused by personal conflict with reality, and the eighth, *Shishi no tōitsu* 四肢の統一 (*Unification of the Four Limbs*, 2011), illustrates the complete casting off of humanity and fusion with the earth.⁸⁶

Translucent, periscope-like ghost flowers, irises, lil-

ies, and peaches: these flowers and fruits, and others portrayed in the series, evoke the floral renderings of Itō Jakuchū 伊藤若冲 (1716–1800) and other painters of the Japanese canon. Similar influences are seen in the later *The Parasite will Not Leave the Body*, where maggots that swarm over the body in the *shōosō* 青瘡相 stage of older models masquerade as impossible Jakuchū-like snowflakes, an unrealistic imagery when we clock the jarring of season, for the flowers tell us it is summer. Likewise, the flowers in Matsui’s series reveal a revolting side: all are fully opened, wholly ripened, and heavily sagging, on the verge of rotting indecently into a “garish withering,” as George Bataille describes such a state in his writing on “disgust.”⁸⁷ The lilies in *Keeping Up the Purenness* are shown in cross-section displaying their reproductive organs⁸⁸ like a representation of the anatomy through dissection, and as if in

87 Georges Bataille, “The Language of Flowers,” *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 12.

88 C.B. Liddell, “Pinpricks in the Darkness: The Beautiful and Disturbing Art of Fuyuko Matsui,” http://www.culturekiosque.com/art/interview/fuyuko_matsui.html (accessed December 14, 2016). Unlike the human, however, female lilies contain both male and female organs, and visibly display both stamen and pistil. Matsui’s rendering of flowers as genitalia is evident in some of her other works, such as her 2013 *Kōzatsu zu* 交雑図 (*Interbreeding*), and is acknowledged in the portrait painting of her by her contemporary Suwa Atsushi 諏訪敦 (b. 1967) in *Hana o taberu* 花を食べる (*Eating Flowers*, 2011), in which she holds a withering lily between her lips. Pictured in Fukuzumi Ren, “Suwa Atsushi intabyū,” *Bijutsu techō*, February 2012, 83. Lilies are often purposely displayed alongside her work when it is on display at Gallery Naruyama.

85 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 200.

86 Matsui Midori, “Rongu intabyū,” *Bijutsu techō*, February 2012, 49.

sympathetic resonance with the portrayed female, just like the small, igneous *shunran* 春蘭 orchids and festering chrysanthemums in *Crack in the Ashes*.⁸⁹ By way of these affinities, the flower and the woman each become a part of the other. Also, because she is pregnant, this fusion resembles the imaginary of the rural woman who, in departing her home for the mountains to hide an illegitimate pregnancy, was conceived of as having merged bodily with the site. This trope, suggested by Yanagida Kunio and discussed by Rebecca Copeland, cast the female body as “dangerous, ravenous, haunting the borders of society.”⁹⁰

In growing around the opened body of the human subject, the flowers cite the “grotesque” in its original aesthetic sense, its Bakhtinian “transgression” and merging, and the instability of boundaries. The weak boundary here—between body and plants (and earth)—is not the only unstable border the fully bloomed and wilting flowers convey. They also capture the instant just prior to falling, a moment of clinging to life before being separated from the plant. Hair, a recurring motif, is expressed in the same way. In *Unification of the Four Limbs*, under a full but wan moon the wind-swept strands of black hair caught in faintly brushed tree branches confirm the final separation from the body of the boundary site mentioned above. Matsui describes it as “a kind of boundary site:” “once it’s separated from the body it’s seen as something disgusting.”⁹¹

To the boundary states expressed by Matsui’s work we can add pregnancy itself, or the fetus as an ambiguous “dismember.” In *Insane Woman Under a Cherry Tree*, a ghostly figure holds a fetus to her mouth, seemingly either on the verge of consuming or having just vomited it. Matsui explains this image as an act of vomiting, and she widely regards the depiction of regurgitation of innards as a means of making inner, invisible pain an experience that others can share⁹² as well as a method of dispelling the other from inside oneself.⁹³ In *Engraved Altar of Limbs* the figure holds a similarly orb-enclosed fetus. The vomiting of a fetus seems an

uncannily direct illustration of the grotesque: Ruskin, bewailing the “grotesquerie” produced by Raphael, an artist quite capable of creating “superior” whole bodies rather than dismembered and re-membered ones, called it “an unnatural and monstrous abortion.” On the other hand, *Insane Woman* evokes *Beauty (Bijin zu 美人図)*, an eighteenth-century painting by Soga Shōhaku 曾我蕭白 (1730–81),⁹⁴ himself a forerunner to *eroguro*, that depicts a distraught woman consuming—perhaps—a love letter. The *mitate-e*-like intervisuality Matsui constructs creates a sophisticated dissonance for the viewer. For those familiar with the *eroguro* of Yoshitoshi and that of the later Seiū, along with certain folktales, plays, and motifs upon which their work is based, the dissonance is further pronounced. Both artists produced images of women consuming fetuses. In Yoshitoshi’s enduring *The Lonely House at Adachigahara in Ōshū*, the fetus inside the belly of a woman suspended upside-down is about to be extracted by the hag Onibaba 鬼婆 for use as an elixir. Seiū depicted this too, notoriously using his own pregnant wife as a model. He also produced a set of three paintings of women consuming fetuses.⁹⁵ Matsui’s expulsion of the fetus subverts these images of women, since it is an image intended to allow inner pain, and perhaps a “dismember” or “parasite” (recalling the title of one of her *kusōzu* paintings) a physical and visible form.

Vomiting is also a form of self-dismemberment. In contemporary *eroguro* manga, vomiting is a relatively popular motif. According to Bataille—and to Hans Menninghaus—in his study of disgust as an emotion, it is a kind of self-mutilation, an act that demonstrates an ambiguous boundary. In addition to the comparisons already drawn, Matsui’s *Insane Woman* bears compelling similarities to Kanō Hōgai’s 狩野芳崖 (1828–88) *Hibo Kannon zu* 悲母観音図 (Merciful Mother Kannon, 1888), in which the titular bodhisattva holds a fetus encased in a filmy uterus-like bubble that drops down toward the earth. This is echoed in the image of the womb-enclosed fetus dropping from the mouth of Matsui’s woman. It is not unlikely that she is drawing

89 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 200.

90 Rebecca Copeland, “Mythical Bad Girls: The Crone, the Corpse, and the Snake,” in *Bad Girls of Japan*, eds. Laura Miller and Jan Bardsley (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 21.

91 Matsui, “Rongu intabyū,” *Bijutsu techō*, February 2012, 43.

92 Nezu Yoshiaki, “Ima o kataru: Itami o kyoyu suru e o gugen ka suru Matsui Fuyuko shi (Gendai bijutsu ka),” *Shōkō janaru* 38, no. 7 (2012): 62.

93 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 198.

94 Kept at the Nara Prefectural Museum of Art. Matsui, however, cites Shōhaku’s *Yagishita kijo zu* 柳下鬼女図 (*Ogress Under a Willow Tree*, eighteenth century) as recipient of homage here. Matsui Fuyuko, *Matsui Fuyuko II* (Tokyo: Éditions Treville, 2008), n.p.

95 Untitled. Printed in *Geijutsu shinchō*, April 1995, 59. Collection of Fukutomi Tarō.

consciously on this famous work, just as her contemporary, photographer Yanagi Miwa やなぎみわ (b. 1967), draws on older works related to her by genre (for her, that of *bijin*) as well as academic heritage. And both Matsui and Yanagi are re-casting canonical works by artists connected to the prestigious schools they attended.⁹⁶ Here then, in a number of ways, Matsui produces an arrested moment of transition that is captured in both the picture and in the genre itself—a liminal status much more nuanced than the tradition-modern combination by which her work is often characterized, and is close to Bakhtin's grotesque as “body in the act of becoming.” The ultimate site of liminality is, of course, the corpse itself.

Returning to the flowers, Matsui remarks that these unnatural flowers represent “a paralysis caused by an overload of fake experiences of beauty”; the surfeit of simulacra can cause a fear that the fake will render the real inferior.⁹⁷ Like the (often unsymmetrical) mirror images that occupy much of Matsui's work, there is for her a monstrosity in perfect beauty.⁹⁸ Here too her work seems to draw on the “original” European grotesque, for the Domus Aurea itself was a lush yet artificial paradise, decorated with the intertwining of flora with the human body. But this artificial beauty, incongruous flower garden, and its suicide body have, as we have seen, more of the Japanese *eroguro* aesthetic in them. Although snakes are not normally a feature of *kusōzu* (certainly they play no part in the scripturally described practice or any premodern literature or art related to *kusōzu*), a snake slithers through the ribcage and eye sockets of the skeleton in Matsui's *Joining the Conversion*. Snakes are to be found as signifiers of female jealousy in premodern visual and literary culture, and in popular religious texts; in Edo-period depictions of female torture; in “freak shows” of the early to mid-twentieth century; and frequently in the S&M magazines of the postwar *kasutori* カストリ culture, a commercial, ephemeral subculture that flourished in the postwar period. The

snake winding through the eyes of the skull here recalls both *Dokuro to tokage* 髑髏と蜥蜴 (Skull and Lizard) by Kawanabe Kyōsai as well as an ink piece by Seiu of a snake winding through the eye of a skull, one of a series of ghost paintings, and probably inspired by Kyōsai.⁹⁹ The final stage of Seiu's *Shimabara Rebellion*, discussed above, features a snake slithering toward a ribcage, and he added the snake to the group of better-known scavengers, the dogs and birds. His own penchant for such an addition most likely derived from his interest in Edo-period torture and punishment, including “snake torture” (*hebizeme* 蛇責め).¹⁰⁰ What is perhaps the most arresting section of a *kusōzu* series in its conventional form, that of the body being consumed by dogs and birds, is conspicuously absent in Matsui's set (so far). But one might take *Scattered Deformities in the End* as a variation of this stage. A naked woman flees along a forest path, pursued by a bloodthirsty dog that tears hungrily at tendrils of flayed flesh ribboning behind her; birds of paradise peck viciously at her streaming hair. In motion even as her limbs are disintegrating, she is up and running toward (or perhaps, resistant, away from) her death. Haloed by a light that illuminates the green fronds of the trees, her translucent white skin is suffused as if shining out from some inner source. With her uplifted face and eyes set on something beyond the confines of the picture and invisible to the painting's viewer, she appears as a martyred saint whose spirit is dissociated from the trauma of the body, from its searing, widening wounds.

A number of key motifs of the *kusōzu* are present here: the isolated body of a naked female with long black tresses; parts of the flesh split open to expose sinew, muscle, and organ upon which dogs and birds feed; and the wild, natural environment.¹⁰¹ Yet it is different too, mainly in its presentation of the body as alive during this process, which makes the path of death not

96 *My Grandmothers* cites the subject of *Lip Rouge* by Okamoto Shinsō 岡本神草 (1894–1933). Yanagi graduated from Kyoto City University of Arts, as did Okamoto. Matsui is from the similarly highly regarded Tokyo University of the Arts. The university museum holds the Kanō painting in its collection. See Szostak, “Fair is Foul, and Foul is Fair,” 382–83.

97 Matsui, “Chikaku shinkei toshite no shikaku ni yotte kakusei sareru tsūkaku no fukahi,” 53

98 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 25, 143.

99 Seiu's work is in the collection of Kosan Yanagiya. See Mochizuki Aeka, “Kuronawa de musubareta Seiu to watashi,” *Geijutsu shinchō*, April 1995, 60.

100 Itō Seiu and Fujisawa Morihiko, *Nihon keibatsu fūzoku zushi* (Tokyo: Kokusho, 2010), 161–62.

101 The “sexual subculture language” of the period was of “painful flowers and whimpering obedient dogs,” as Mark Driscoll notes, and that this is used by Edogawa (Driscoll's mention is in relation to Edogawa's *Blind Beast*) as well as by Seiu indicates another way in which *kusōzu* resonated with *eroguro* aesthetics. Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895–1945* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 133.

one of gradual, natural decomposition as in the *kusōzu*, but a torturous ordeal. Her portrayal shares much with that of Seiū's. The attention to anatomical accuracy is also notable. The flayed areas of the body—strips of skin that become far more elaborate and even fabric-like in *Engraved Altar*, where the body is wrapped in a ragged flesh robe hemmed with intestines in a grotesque parody of the padded hem (*fukiwata* ふき綿) of a kimono—visually cite the anatomical illustrations by Jan van Calcar (ca. 1499–1546) for Andreas Vesalius' album *De humani corporis fabrica*. These showed classically proportioned corpses walking sturdily amid pastoral landscapes and ruins, trailing raggedy coats of skin, occasionally holding the torn strips apart like stage curtains to reveal the inner structure of their bodies. These, and other Western anatomical pictures of the period, are noted for their presentations of the subject as fully alive, and as showing their own internal organs without any pain. However, significantly, it is primarily males shown in this way, whereas the depiction of the female anatomy is limited to a recumbent corpse subject to dissection, womb exposed—such a figure shown prominently on the cover page of *De humani corporis fabrica*—and a torso. Likewise, later anatomical waxworks of females lie on their backs, and are covered in flesh (both of which contribute to what Jordanova recognizes as a “sleeping beauty” eroticism).¹⁰² Matsui uses these “anatomical Venuses” in *La Specola* for her studies. Males were not so, they are “upright muscle men” or “truncated male torsos.”¹⁰³ The subjects of Matsui's *Scattered Deformities* and *Engraved Altar* are subversive in this way too (in addition to the way they upturn the “consumption of fetus” model). Finally, the transcendental ecstasy and ethereality on the face of the female subject of the Matsui paintings, and the eye contact of subject with viewer in *Keeping up the Purity* hint at a kind of willing and joyful, even martyr-like submission, an impression reinforced by Matsui's description of the opened torso and abdomen as an act of “flaunting” through suicide. This apparent agency of the subject in Matsui's work is suggested by the mutually reinforcing confluence of conventions of anatomical depiction; expressions of religious ecstasy or martyrdom; and *kusōzu* ideas around exposure as salvation.¹⁰⁴

Although seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European anatomical models influence the figures portrayed in Matsui's *kusōzu* and many of her other works, the native interpretation, practice, and depiction of anatomy are also factors at play. Dissection and surgery were introduced into Japan by Dutch doctors in the Edo period. *Kanpō* 漢方 (Chinese medicine), widely used before this, did not require incision of the body for the purposes of healing, and it was in part because of this that both the popular and professional visual culture of anatomy caused much horror to its audience.¹⁰⁵ According to Timon Screech, dissection for the purpose of anatomical understanding was perceived by many as “a literal *shitai sarashi*”¹⁰⁶ 死体晒し, the public exposure and slicing of a criminal's body after death. In fact, criminals' corpses were used for medical inquiry. *Kusōzu* bodies might be compared to those of offenders, and via the connection with medicine both the *kusōzu* body and the criminal body can be associated with the anatomical body in Edo culture. *Kusōzu* pictures converge with both the visual language of anatomical representations and the aesthetic of the grotesque. First of all, in the premodern paintings the landscapes are lonely wastelands—sites where bodies were (in reality) discarded, often unburied. These bodies were especially those made impure not only by death itself, and by potentially contagious diseases, but were also marked by death of a certain kind (the social disgrace of an execution, for instance, or perhaps the isolated death of a person who lacked familial support). During the Edo period, if not earlier, the exposed corpse was by definition the criminal one.¹⁰⁷ It was considered permissible to posthumously punish a criminal's body through physical violence or exposure (for example, the previously mentioned *shitai shirashi*).¹⁰⁸ Perhaps a parallel with the exposed, mutilated criminal

exposed for the benefit of others, and a similar discourse existed in Japan, but the discussion this deserves is beyond the parameters of this paper. See, for example, Shufen Liu, “Death and Degeneration of Life: Exposure of the Corpse in Medieval Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 28 (2000): 1–30.

105 Timon Screech, “The Birth of the Anatomical Body,” *Births and Rebirths in Japanese Art: Essays Celebrating the Inauguration of the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures*, ed. Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere (Leiden: Hotei Press, 2001), 93–4.

106 *Ibid.*, 101

107 *Ibid.*, 101.

108 *Ibid.*, 100.

102 Jordanova, *Sexual Visions*, 50.

103 *Ibid.*, 45.

104 There is evidence of desire by some nuns and aristocratic women in medieval China of having their bodies posthumously

and that of the female of *kusōzu* can be found: already blameworthy for inciting male desire, she could then be further abused through exposure and then violation by animals, performing a similar role of distinguishing profane and sacred/social. Wilson has drawn attention to post-Ashokan texts that tell of practices of physically inscribing punishment on the offending body parts of women, and then displaying these for the edification of the monastic community.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, format indicates a link between *kusōzu* and the visual culture of anatomy. In its presentation as a series, the former is linked to early anatomical illustrations since these were most often formatted as handscrolls, and for the same reason as that which guided the serial formatting of the Buddhist image: to best lead the viewer through a sequence of stages of dismantlement.

These points should be kept in mind: Matsui's *kusōzu* corpses evoke motifs informed by a "modern" treatment of discarded, expedient corpses (which nonetheless induced horror in general perception), and their use in anatomical study and dissection. At the same time, however, we also find an explicit rendering of the *kusōzu* in the modern paintings by Seiu that connect it to male sexual desire and corporal punishment of the objects of that desire. Where these converge is in the idea and practice of the punishment of the criminal corpse.¹¹⁰ In fact, a convergence of the three is displayed in an early nineteenth-century illustration by Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国 (1769–1825; figure 12). This is of a medicine shop and a sign that shows what appears to be a *kusōzu*-like female corpse being operated upon (or cut up, or violated, depending on the visual culture through which one perceives) by "Dutch" doctors.¹¹¹ Toyokuni's illustration also shows an anatomical doll (*dō-ningyō* 銅人形, "copper doll"). As a figure that "flaunts" her anatomy, the figure in *Keeping Up the Purenness* resembles these anatomical models. They were produced from the mid-eighteenth century onward, and were figures holding their torsos open to expose their anatomy for the purposes of education—



Figure 12. Utagawa Toyokuni. Print illustration to Santō Kyōden's *Mukashi gatari inazuma byōshi* 昔語稲妻表紙 (An Ancient Tale with a Lightning Cover). 1806. H. ca. 23cm. Source: http://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/he13/he13_03150/ (last accessed February 28, 2017).

and spectacle. Seiu also made an illustration of a life-size female anatomical doll with an opened torso and abdomen.¹¹² Perhaps what is being produced in this period cannot strictly be called *eroguro*, which dates from the 1920s or so, except in the descriptive sense. But once in the realm of *eroguro*, again a confluence of these very same motifs is utilized in a story by Rampo. A medicine shop owner in Rampo's 1925 story, *Hakuchūmu* 白昼夢 (The Daydream), is revealed to have murdered his wife but to be getting away with the crime in broad daylight by presenting her body as a "wax mummy" in the

109 Wilson, "The Female Body as a Source of Horror and Insight in Post-Ashokan Indian Buddhism," 79–81.

110 This is something in which Seiu would have been interested, having authored a book between 1946 and 1952 on the history of criminal punishment in Japan, as mentioned above.

111 It appears in Santō Kyōden's 山東京伝 (1761–1816) 1806 *Mukashi gatari inazuma byōshi* 昔語稲妻表紙 (An Ancient Tale with a Lightning Cover). See Screech, "The Birth of the Anatomical Body," 117–18.

112 Pictured in *Geijutsu shinchō*, April 1995, 52. Name of owner not provided.

window of his pharmacy. Before an entire crowd the man confesses his crime in the guise of an entertaining story: he gives evidence transparently, yet simultaneously obscures it through his presentation of confession as fiction and victim as waxwork anatomical model. In these ways *Hakuchūmu* presents the essence of the grotesque by fusing what is normally distinct, and demonstrates the camouflage of the socially taboo by the socially acceptable: an entertaining yarn is the confession of a brutal murder and an anatomical model its material evidence. This both caters to and critiques the consumer's appetite for sensational *eroguro* material of the time, a dual effort discerned in other of Rampo's works, as Driscoll has pointed out.¹¹³ Similarly, in Rampo's *Mōjū* 盲獣 (Blind Beast), published six years after *Hakuchūmu*, department store managers admire shop window mannequins sold to them by a murderer who has assembled them from the dismembered parts of his victims. Murder and the grotesque in both cases produce "modernizing effects" (to paraphrase Driscoll),¹¹⁴ since the anatomical model that signified advanced western medicine denoted modernity in the Edo period, as the department store window display model did in the Taishō period, but both carried undertones of violence and the dismembered (female) body. Once again, the grotesque and the modern appear as flipsides of each other.

This Edo-period perception of penetration of the body's boundaries, the presentation of it using a female body, and the display of the exposed and opening female body in *kusōzu*, are assembled in Matsui's *kusōzu*. The opened abdomen of *Keeping up the Purenness* can now be read as *both* self-disembowelment (*seppuku*)—according to Matsui's explanation—and anatomical dissection. It only slightly resembles the stage of *kusōzu* in which the body is opened, but it is intended to function in a comparably soteriological way. Like other of her works, there is a self-exposure for the sake and salvation of the viewer, but the masochism of this is claimed as a last-resort demonstration of power as well as a way of communicating with "potential rapists." The

portrayal of female *seppuku* and of the resulting mound of viscera is a highly charged *eroguro* image today, exemplified in the extreme work of manga artist Uziga Waita 氏賀Y太 (b. 1970) and the zines and fetish-club shows of S&M performer Saotome Hiromi 早乙女宏美 (b. 1963). Matsui presents it rather more delicately in her pencil drawing *Conception* (fig. 7), which she developed into the 2013 painting *Ayatori jozu* 綾取女圖 (String Figuring [cat's cradle] Woman). A young naked woman sits comfortably on a chair casually unspooling her guts, perhaps parodying the triumphal completion of an ideal *seppuku*, in which a samurai would pull out his innards. Certainly the subject of *seppuku* as punishment, ideal or honorable military suicide, and its changing meanings, requires more attention here. But it is worth pointing out at least that the visual culture of female *seppuku* arose in postwar *eroguro* publications. As the image appears in present-day *eroguro* and S&M subculture, it is the latest manifestation of the confluence of *seppuku* with eroticized female self-sacrifice and exposure. Yet Matsui's suicides are not acts to be celebrated. She writes that "failed suicides are the result of a dissociated part of the self stepping in: if the greater part of the self is hatred . . . then the dissociated part will be at least a little warm and loving, and it is this part that comes in to prevent suicide."¹¹⁵ This psychological explanation of her work introduces the final issues I wish to address here: the significance of viewing and the function of visual representation.

8. Conclusion

Fuse Hideto's essay on Matsui's oeuvre indulges the potential for a catalogue of work at any time in its development to be arranged freely into a kind of story, much like a personal collection, regardless of the artist's intentions.¹¹⁶ And he creates (as I have) a narrative *kusōzu* by including paintings not stated as *kusōzu* stages by Matsui, as well as counting some works such as those of "dogs, snakes and flowers . . . as decorative elements in the periphery of the *Kusōzu*."¹¹⁷ Certainly her work in

113 Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque*, 216–21. The façade of entertainment conjured up by both the storyteller and Rampo himself is further adorned by the marching-band singing of soldiers stationed in Manchuria that parades by as the man reaches the climax of his confession; the resounding drums accompany his speech as they fade out. It may also have been an implicit critique of the imperial ambitions of Japan.

114 *Ibid.*, 138.

115 Matsui, "Chikaku shinkei to shite no shikaku ni yotte kakusei sareru tsūkaku no fukahi," 32.

116 Hideto Fuse, "The World of Matsui Fuyuko," in *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, ed. Fuyuko Matsui (Tokyo: Editions TREVILLE, 2013), 20–2.

117 *Ibid.*, 22.

its entirety can be said to be deeply informed by issues of boundaries and their dissolution, and we have come to identify this interest in premodern *kusōzu* as, in fact, invested in the modern aesthetics of *eroguro*, and the negotiations that *eroguro* operates with premodern imagery and modernity itself. Her own references to rape in connection to her *kusōzu* figures must be viewed in the context of the modern *kusōzu* discussed above that depict sexual assault. Matsui describes her paintings as talismans, and in this sense they may be considered extraordinarily compassionate works. They are meant to horrify and to dissuade, in part through, she says, a sharing of pain that is normally utterly confined to one's self and is thus inexpressible,¹¹⁸ as Elaine Scarry has discussed. The figures shown in her works can be seen as "surrogates" or "purifying agents," "enabling those who look at them to avoid actual injury to themselves," and to help the viewer, including the "potential rapist" to understand the (suicidal) agony of the other.¹¹⁹ "I want the audience to see my works in order to help them get rid of the evil from their bodies."¹²⁰

Yamamoto remarks that Matsui's portrayals of exposed human organs "show us our true power to look unflinchingly at the truth without turning a blind eye to suffering and agony,"¹²¹ and they do reflect a Ruskinian understanding of the "grotesque" image. Ruskin (as well as Wolfgang Kayser in his 1966 work) presented such portrayals as a way of engaging playfully with terror in order to exorcise it on both individual and cultural levels.¹²² In this sense again, though, Matsui's images share common ground with the ostensible function of early *kusōzu*: salvation of the one through the revelation/presentation of the grotesque reality of the other. This also reflects one side of the perennial conventional argument surrounding images of sex, violence, horror, and pornography,¹²³ an argument that has also attended *kusōzu*: do disturbing images offer transformation and liberation to the viewer (often this investiture of liber-

ation is extended to the portrayed subject as well), or do they legitimate and reinforce essentialistic understandings of the portrayed (and the viewing) body? The argument rests on opposing models of catharsis and articulation, both of which assume psychoanalytical ideas of 'the beast within,' ideas that,

... see repression as a constitutive feature of human development, the mechanism through which we are constrained to overcome the (anti-social) desires of infancy. The primary focus for this repression is sexuality, and horror, in a variety of ways, acts as a channel for expression of the repressed affect. In so doing *it sustains order, whether by cathartic release of otherwise threatening urges or by reinforcing acceptance of repressive taboos presumed to be essential to social survival.*¹²⁴

Kusōzu collapse the two sides of the question: the liberation of the viewer relies upon the essential grotesqueness of the female body. It may be proposed that the various frames of reference through which I have viewed Matsui's works prompt similar processes of gazing. Meditational practice related to *kusōzu* images (but not necessarily practically or in reality) aimed for a kind of "equilibrium" in the face of the disaggregated body (even if meditators ostensibly also sought recognition of the [Buddhist] self there). Philomena Horsley in her study of medical students of anatomical dissection, observes that their "challenge is to find, and keep their equilibrium amidst the mess of the dismantled body. . . . [I]mmersive factors [are] deemed necessary to disengage from any unsettling emotional and social associations of the corpse."¹²⁵ The images presented in the genre of body-punishing horror that find their roots (in Japan) in the *eroguro* aesthetic that Matsui shares¹²⁶ also aim at the closure of the (male) body through con-

118 Asian Art Museum, *Fuyuko Matsui on Her Work and the Supernatural*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-ExreP3NSQ>, 2012 (accessed December 14, 2016).

119 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 169.

120 C.B. Liddell, *Exhibition: The Bewitching Art of Fuyuko Matsui*, <http://travel.cnn.com/tokyo/visit/exhibition-bewitching-art-fuyuko-matsui-149215/>, 2012 (accessed December 14, 2016).

121 Matsui, *Becoming Friends with All the Children in the World*, 125.

122 In both *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice*. This is only one aspect of Ruskin's multivalent theory of the grotesque.

123 Arguably, these are not mutually exclusive.

124 Andrew Tudor, "Why Horror? The Peculiar Pleasures of a Popular Genre," *Cultural Studies* 11 (1997): 448. My italics.

125 Philomena Horsley, "Teaching the Anatomy of Death: A Dying Art?" *Medicine Studies* 2, no. 1 (June 2010): 11.

126 Matsui may not wish her work to be classed as pornography or of sharing in its aesthetic; in her doctoral dissertation she condemns the sexualized portrayal of women found in the work of Aida Makoto 会田誠 (b. 1965). See Matsui, "Chikaku shinkei toshite no shikaku ni yotte kakusei sareru tsūkaku no fukahi," 36-7. Although her art crosses many categories, it may occupy the category of contemporary *eroguro*, as I have indicated.

templation of (that is, contrast with)¹²⁷ the unbounded and ruptured (female) one. These three frames are not adversarial: they converge in what might be expressed as “*eroguro*-dissection-*kusōzu*,” making them, indeed, extraordinary sights that themselves offer to the present-day viewer and scholar too the challenge of maintaining equilibrium and retaining empathy and shock appropriate as ethical meter, but without taking on the burden of suffering as a martyr or an identification that psychologically scars. Elisabeth Bronfen presents a valuable discussion of this problem in *Over Her Dead Body*, observing the gender-divided responses to paintings of dead women, and pressing the choice scholars must make in their treatment of these and similar images.¹²⁸ The image is implicated in its own lack of boundaries, in that it remains potent over the centuries; in other words, it remains to be resolved. Here, the concept of the uncanny works to describe the process I have proposed, by which an image might survive even when not immediately recognizable, and also to capture the core commonality between the representational contexts in which it appears. Bronfen’s explanation of the uncanny, though made in reference to a quite different cultural sphere, is useful here. “The uncanny,” she writes, “always entails anxieties about fragmentation, about the disruption or destruction of any narcissistically informed sense of personal stability, body integrity, immortal individuality.”¹²⁹

Commentators and audiences tend to laud Matsui’s mastery of the traditional (subject matter as well as the *nihonga* style and technique), her earlier training in Western oil painting, and her reworking of the former in the contemporary Japanese art scene. This reading, however, unproblematically juxtaposes and presents a historical narrative and hermeneutics of influence that links tradition to (post-)modernity and results in an elision of key loci of influences situated in the late-nineteenth- and mid-twentieth-century marginalized visual

cultures of Japan. It also acquiesces with a dominant view of modern Japanese culture (which I think can be extended to apply to contemporary culture as well) as being “an interplay between external Western influence and a reactive ‘native’ consciousness, which in at least the better instances culminates in a turn back to the tradition.”¹³⁰ This misses the importance of counter-influence and the complexity of the way in which subjects, aesthetics, and so on are received into a culture primed to receive them in specific ways, and it runs the risk of reifying Japanese tradition in distinction to “Western” tradition. Without by any means discounting Matsui’s conscious use of the Buddhist model, I have disagreed with this approach, and it is the influence of a marginalized culture—*eroguro*—to which I have drawn attention in this essay. While Matsui’s work is lauded as a successful meeting of East and West in technique, style, and (sometimes) subject matter, it proves a disconcerting encounter to witness. The “Western” and “Eastern” allusions are both to violence and cruelty, and to the morbid aspects of Buddhism and Christianity (ecstasy or martyrdom). *Nihonga*, Japanese painting originally developed to present authentic Japanese identity in contrast to Western influences, is employed, rather, to depict “lower-class” fare (Bataille’s “base material”)—violence; death; the supernatural—and thus departs from sanctioned subject matter. There is an uneasiness evoked by Matsui’s subverted use of Meiji-era Japanese ledgers of Western modernity that simultaneously undermine the claim they make: anatomical records taken in a direction in their visual portrayal that is beyond any educational or medical purpose (and toward grotesque spectacle related to cadaver mutilation) or a classical body, *already* a dismembered and grotesque thing, born prematurely disfigured from excavations. Her combination of the Buddhist *kusōzu*, European renaissance art and its classical body, anatomical models, and the erotic-grotesque that began at the end of the nineteenth century and has flourished as a subculture up to the present day, is an accurate capture of the contradictions that attend, or are inherent in, the modernity that is incarnated in her work.

127 Barbara Creed writes that “viewing the horror film signifies the desire not only for perverse pleasure (confronting sickening, horrific images/being filled with terror/*desire for the undifferentiated*), but also a desire, once having been filled with perversity, taken pleasure in perversity, to throw up, throw out, eject the abject (from the safety of the spectator’s seat).” Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993), 10. My italics.

128 See, especially, Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 39–56.

129 Bronfen, *Over her Dead Body*, 113.

130 Alan Stephen Wolfe, *Suicidal Narrative in Modern Japan: The Case of Dazai Osamu* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 26–7.

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NOTE ON ABBREVIATION

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高久楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–35.

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Chen Zhen and the Obviousness of the Object

ANNE VINCENT-GOUBEAU

TRANSLATED BY PIERRE BOUILLON,
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, U.C.O. ANGERS

CHEN ZHEN 陈箴 (1955–2000), a French-naturalized artist born in China, left Shanghai in 1986¹ to lead a very precarious life in Paris,² where

1 Born in Shanghai in 1955, Chen Zhen grew up in a family of doctors speaking French and English, in the district of the former French concession in Shanghai, during the years of the Cultural Revolution. At that time, the only school of art in the city provided a traditional education where he learned painting, drawing, and sculpture. Curiously, this traditional pedagogy offered Chen his first contact with Western art. He became a painter and professor in Shanghai. At the age of twenty-five, he continued his studies at the art school with the Shanghai Theater Institute where he considered the question of the physical relation of art works with the spectator. In 1980, he discovered that he suffered from autoimmune hemolytic anemia, a rare and incurable disease. In 1986, when he was thirty-one, Chen arrived in Paris where he became a visiting pupil at the Beaux Arts, and abandoned painting to devote himself to installations. He studied at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Plastic Arts where he later taught from 1993 to 1995. Chen exhibited at numerous international institutions including The New Museum of Contemporary Art (New York, 1994), the Center for Contemporary Art (Kitakyushu, Japan, 1997), and the Venice Biennial (1999). He died on December 13, 2000.

2 "I worked very hard, day and night. It might be a period in my entire life during which I worked the most and my thoughts were most concentrated. Few people would understand this. At that time, my family did not come to Paris yet. I was alone, living an extremely simple life. I did not need much at that time. I rented

he was forcibly immersed in a foreign culture whose specific background and particular features he strove to make his own. Drawing on such radical experience, based on openness and interchange, he produced a powerful, generous body of work consisting mainly of artistic installations. Tensions existing between direct opposites were repeatedly played upon in his artwork, whose power lay in the implementation of a simple visual arts language in sober unaffected installations. Along with the growth of interest in expatriate Chinese artists beginning in the 1990s, commitments by museums to exhibit international artists, and the tireless work of Chen's widow, Xu Min, Chen was a highly visible international art figure. His work derives from his

a small servant room about seven square meters in size on the outskirts of Paris, 'hiding in a small attic, oblivious of all four seasons.' I lived like that for four years! Sometimes, I did not make any phone calls to anybody for a whole month, and nobody had any correspondence with me. Do you know what kind of life that was? A life in which you really felt you were a heavenly steed soaring across the skies and doing whatever you truly wanted! I had the rarest type of quietness and deep thinking in life!" Quoted from *Transexperiences: A Conversation between Chen Zhen and Zhu Xian*, ADAC (Association Des Amis de Chen Zhen, <https://www.chenzhen.org> (consulted January 7, 2017).

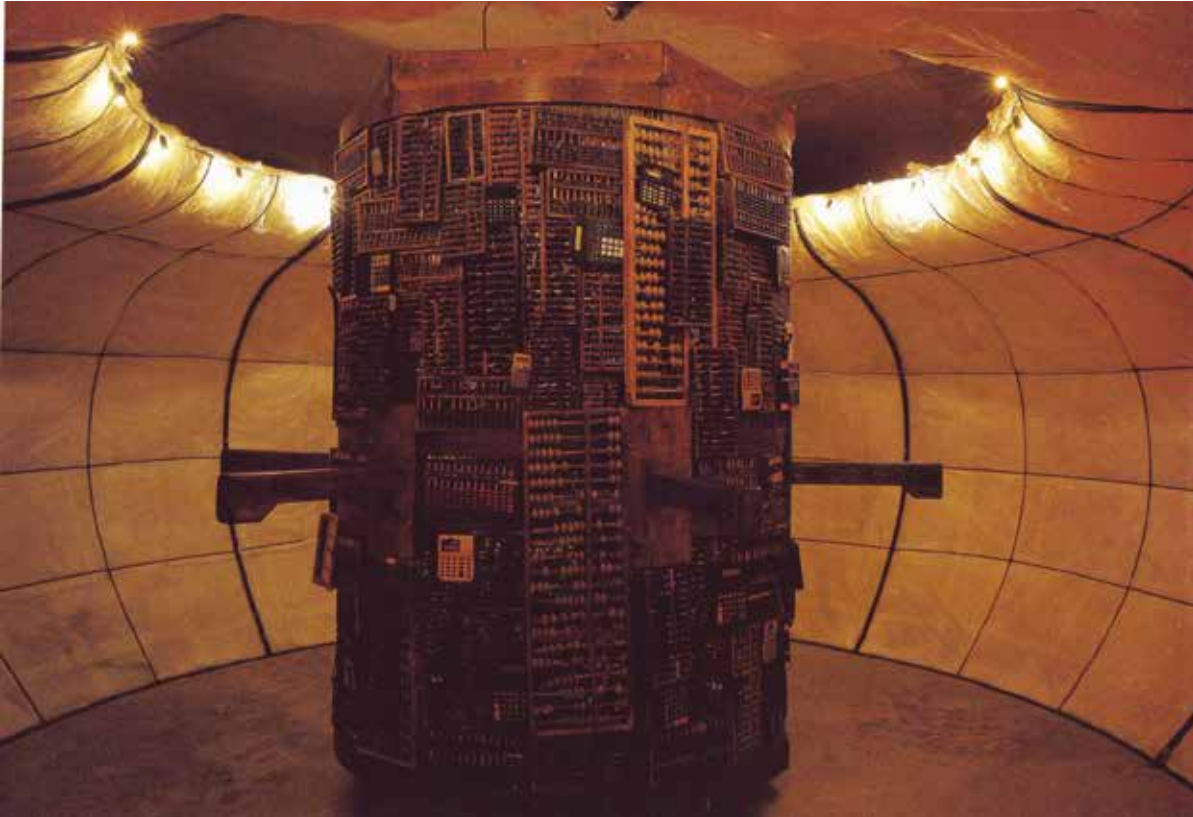


Figure 1. Chen Zhen. *Prayer Wheel—“Money Makes the Mare Go”* (*Chinese Slang*). 1997. Whole: H. 260cm, l. 700cm, w. 280cm. Wheel: D. 240cm, h. 250cm. Chinese abacus, calculators, cash registers, metal, wood, sound system. Source: David Rosenberg and Xu Min, *Chen Zhen. Invocation of Washing Fire*, 235.

personal experience of migrating and working across different continents and cultures. The artist drew inspiration from his own life experience, travelling between Paris and his native city of Shanghai, responding to and engaging with contemporary social issues across different cultures.

This essay will emphasize the importance of the time Chen spent in Tibet in 1983³ to his development as an artist. There, the need he felt for interiority,⁴ closely

linked with Buddhism, grew alongside his desire for “a body of work that touches profoundly on human preoccupations whilst keeping a very personal visual vocabulary and way of thinking.”⁵ Everyday objects were at the very core of his site-specific installations. Chen took such objects out of their original environment and dematerialized and transformed them, thus imparting a new metaphorical role to them.

This paper will examine Chen Zhen’s wish to go beyond the first apparent interpretation of an object by fitting it into a specific environment that more often than not will question the viewers’ convictions. One

3 Responding to an order from the Communist Party, Chen made a forced trip to Tibet in 1983; it would be a turning point in his life. He discovered the importance of prayer and spirituality. The account of this three-month experience expresses his work based on what he calls “cultural shortcuts.” The fascination that Tibet, and by extension Tibetan Buddhism, holds over the artistic and personal inspirations of mainland Chinese artists is an important and controversial trope that is not limited to Chen Zhen. Other examples include Ai Weiwei (b. 1957 in Beijing), Huang Yong Ping (b. 1954 in Xiamen) and Zhang Huan (b. 1965 in An Yang).

4 The interiority, the quality of what is interior, refers to what is presented as an experience of subjectivity. In this context, the interiority is spiritual, of the domain of personal intimacy, and sensitive to the requirements of transcendence.

5 Jérôme Sans, *Chen Zhen: The Discussions* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, Domaine Ecrits d’artistes, 2003), 195.

example of this is *Prayer Wheel*—“*Money Makes the Mare Go*” (*Chinese Slang*) (figure 1), an artwork created in New York in 1997. This installation is executed with trivial objects within a device belonging to the religious domain. It draws directly on his three-month stay in Tibet shortly before he left for Europe. In 1986, after Deng Xiaoping’s reforms, Chen immigrated to Paris and studied at the Ecole des Beaux-arts and the Institut des Hautes Etudes en Arts Plastiques, where he would eventually teach from 1993 to 1995. He would later also teach at the Ecole des Beaux-arts in Nancy. He did not go to Tibet on his own accord, but his time there decisively influenced his art while also shaping his personal life and philosophical outlook on humanity. Chen’s artwork cannot be separated from his life—the way he looked at the world and considered creation. From a spiritual point of view, Tibet opened his eyes. He was impressed with the simplicity that characterized people’s everyday lives. It seemed to him that they led lives of endless rituals. He said:

Tibetans face extremely harsh natural conditions and their physical life is closely tied to their religious and spiritual beliefs. This results in outstanding stamina and quietness, a way of life impervious to the attraction of material things.⁶

He was seriously ill at the time and recalled spending three months “cleansing” and “purifying” himself. Every day he would perform a most important task: spinning a prayer wheel. This is how he described the experience:

It filled me with very strange feelings, and extraordinary mental illuminations. I managed to get into a Tibetan temple usually closed to the public, where I heard the monks reciting prayers. Facing my body with an ‘immaterial environment’ was a unique experience. That confrontation was beneficial both physically and spiritually. That experience still nurtures me today and gives me both inspiration and energy for my work.⁷

Chen’s thinking is closely linked with Buddhist spiri-

6 Eleanor Heartney, “Chen Zhen, ‘entre’ les cultures,” *Artpress* 260 (2000), 25.

7 David Rosenberg and Xu Min, *Chen Zhen. Invocation of Washing Fire* (Prato-Sienne: Editions Gli ori, 2003), 40.

tuality, which, for him, should never be turned into a doctrine. He read extensively in Tibetan Buddhist texts, including the *Bardo Thodol* (Book of the Tibetan Dead)⁸ and *The Hundred Thousand Songs* of Milarepa (1040–1123), a renowned master of Tibetan Buddhism. The time he spent mixing with Tibetans changed his perspective and made him pay closer attention to everyday realities. At the core of his thinking was the link between man, nature, and consumerism. The human being and Chen’s environment were at the center of his preoccupations and his artistic approach. For him, everything was a matter of looking within a world that he discovered and experienced. Entering a Tibetan temple, he could hear a monk launching into a prayer but eventually understood that the voice in reality came from a tape deck, which surprised him. He was then touched by the sight of a clay statue of Buddha that sat on top of the appliance and that bathed in a beam of light similar to a spiritual halo. He remarked, however:

The monks had the same serenity and piety as if they were following the real voice of their spiritual father! Whereas with a western eye one could see a living bi-cultural installation, an oriental Lavier!⁹

The reference to Bertrand Lavier is an interesting one, since this French contemporary visual artist challenges and freely associates categories, codes, genres, and materials so as to disconcert the viewer. He brings together objects belonging to different worlds and times as in the installation *Husqvarna/Art Déco* (2012, figure 2), in which a high-tech leafblower hovers over an art

8 This book was discovered in the fifteenth century and appeared in the West in 1927. The source of this text comes from Padma-sambhava (*fl.* eighth century), an Indian sage who introduced Buddhism to Tibet. *Bardo* means “intermediate state,” more precisely the states of consciousness after death, which are three in number: the state of the moment of death, the state of the supreme reality, and the state of becoming, which appears in the phase of preparation for rebirth. This book had a certain influence on the true meaning of life, how to accept death, and how to help the dying.

9 Bertrand Lavier (born in 1949 in Châtillon-sur-Seine, France) lives and works in Paris. In the 1980s and 1990s, Bertrand Lavier was known for his readymades, created by covering everyday industrial objects such as refrigerators, tables, pianos, and furniture with an impasto layer of paint. He appropriates ubiquitous objects and images in order to reposition them as elements in a strategic critique of consumerism, deeply entrenched visual habits, and art institutions.



Figure 2. Bertrand Lavier. *Husqvarna / Art Déco*. 2012. H. 132cm, l. 124cm, w. 45cm. Leaf blower, piece of Art Déco furniture. Photograph used with permission of Radio France, www.franceinter.fr/info/le-jour-ou-husqvarna-embrassa-art-deco.

deco piece of furniture from the 1930s. The impossible encounter between these two objects on a wall highlights the temporal, functional, and aesthetic disparity between them, offering an unusual and unexpected dialogue. Chen plays with objects in a similar way, juxtaposing cultures: Western and Asian, traditional and contemporary.

Chen's artwork is based on the self-evidence of mundane objects. He sees objects both as keepers of ancient memories and as witnesses of a society undergoing a process of radical transformation. The potential hidden in each object is what he is truly interested in. The object in itself and its relationship to human life are both of the essence, as is the way that it can shift from one cultural context to another. *Prayer Wheel—“Money Makes the Mare Go” (Chinese Slang)* invites observers to enter a cozy, confined space, an igloo made of crumpled tissue paper suffused with a subdued reddish glow. When visitors encounter a huge cylinder whose sur-

face is coated with a hundred or so Chinese shields, the mystery remains unsolved, and they are at once puzzled and curious. The handles attached to the wheel, moreover, incite them to set it in motion. As a consequence, visitors find themselves involved by setting off the sound of cash registers and calculating machines stuck between the shields. They thus become responsible for triggering an unstoppable materialistic spiral.

The viewer cannot help feeling unsettled because a prayer wheel (Tib. *mani korlo*) is normally a cylinder filled with mantras. It is traditionally believed in Tibet that spinning such a wheel is the spiritual equivalent of reciting the mantra. The prayer is thought to disperse into the air as if it had really been spoken. Spinning the cylinder sets in motion the energy of the prayers it contains. Such cultural hybridization between two very different worlds is astounding since a Buddhist religious object is, here, associated with iconic artifacts of a consumer society. Paradoxically, the artist confronts the occidental viewer with the cult of capitalism by asking him to set in motion a huge object.

The sounds of cash registers combine with the sounds of a collection of ancient and modern calculating machines. The use of the Chinese abacus (Ch. *suan pan* 算盘) is relatively unknown to people in the West, even though it was used ubiquitously across Asia. It has existed in China for over eight centuries, and is used for all basic operations: additions, subtractions, multiplications, and divisions. It is, for example, still quite common to see shopkeepers first use a calculating machine and then check the results with an abacus. If operated by expert hands the abacus is a most powerful tool and is even considered an art exemplifying order, cleverness, mental concentration, and the rational mind. In 1946, a contest paired a Japanese accountant and his abacus (Jp. *soroban* そろばん) and an operator using an electronic calculator (Matsuzaki versus Wood).¹⁰

The prayer that the viewer expected is replaced by an aggressive blare of contemporary sounds. Here Chen has turned a huge Tibetan prayer wheel into a kind of Wheel of Fortune, adopting a Buddhist saying accord-

¹⁰ On November 12, 1946, a speed contest was organized in Tokyo between the abacus manipulated by Kiyoshi Matsuzaki and an electronic calculator used by US Army soldier Thomas Nathan Wood, selected for his mastery of the tool. The tests were based on the four basic operations, as well as a problem that combined them all. The *soroban* prevailed by four to one, losing only on multiplication.



ing to which “Money makes the mare move forward.”¹¹ By doing this he looks ironically at human greed, which has made the chase for money a new world religion. Within a disturbing installation, the wheel takes on a fresh metaphorical meaning. Although it seemed about to give observers a taste of Buddhist meditation, each observer spins it as if in the hope of striking it rich. This is a violent intrusion of the values of a society that has, by Chen’s implication, made money its only god. The artist enacts the tensions at work between the sacred and the profane, the material and the spiritual, the individual and the community.

11 In fact, it is a traditional English nursery rhyme (conserved in a 1609 manuscript in the British Museum):

Wilt thou lend me thy mare to ride but a mile?
No, she’s lame going over a stile.
but if thou wilt her to me spare,
thou shalt have money for thy mare.
ho ho say you soe
mony shall make my mare to goe.

The phrase means that if you are prepared to pay enough, most people will be willing to do something that at first they said they would not or could not do. Chen Zhen uses this source in a humorous way by describing it as Chinese slang.

Figure 3. Chen Zhen. *Daily Incantations*. 1996. H. 230cm, l. 700cm, w. 350cm. Wood, metal, Chinese chamber pots, electric wires, residues of electrical and electronic objects, sound system. Photograph used with permission of art wiki, <http://www.artwiki.fr/wakka.php?wiki=ChenZhen>.

By mixing the sounds of cash registers and Chinese abacuses into a sort of contemporary piece of music or prayer, Chen wanted to move beyond those noises by creating a religious atmosphere bathed in the subdued light reminiscent of a temple so as to draw observers into the meaning of its artistic installation. For him, “Sound allows for creating an extension of looking, a sort of trap for the spectators. Sound becomes the release mechanism for questions and interrogation in relation to the work itself.”¹² In the earlier installation, *Daily Incantations* (1996, figure 3), he created a *bianzhong* 编钟, a set of royal Chinese bells associated with sacred places, but he replaced the bells with chamber pots. He added sounds of the pots being washed to snatches of political mumbo jumbo suggestive of read-

12 Sans, *Chen Zhen*, 265.

ings of Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book*. In fact, the recordings were political speeches from TV and radio programs in three different languages (English, French, and Chinese). Thus, those daily incantations were given a new contemporary dimension by creating a dialogue between contradictory energies.

Chen gives new meaning to ordinary everyday objects and re-interprets them. Although this is akin to a contemporary approach tending to dignify objects of the mundane world, he transforms such objects by drawing on their specific properties. This dematerialization process is sustained by the hitherto unsuspected physical and phenomenal properties of those "unworthy" objects that the artist brings to light using a complex strategy. The misappropriation and transformation of mundane items into bells or prayer wheels offer a semantic reversal. The artist questions the relationship between the Buddhist tradition, nature, and the proliferation of relatively short-lived objects. Bringing together objects not intended to be found in the same context is at the heart of Chen's methods. For him, "It's about contrast, contradiction and confrontation."¹³ He does not consider art as having a mission. Art is rather about creating a space, bringing about the "the opportunity to create a misunderstanding,"¹⁴ so that observers will seriously question what they thought they were sure of. He said to Eleanor Heathney:

I'm not playing with the misunderstanding. I am trying to create it. This is my way of thinking. I want to make things more complicated.¹⁵

In *Daily Incantations* the controversial reception brings out a key element of Zhen's creative process, namely the misunderstanding that he considered a means of communication allowing singular mental reactions akin to his own experience. The materials used for his installations may indeed lead to misunderstandings. In 1996, when Chen and his friends collected 101 chamber pots manufactured in Shanghai for the *Daily Incantations* installation at the Jeffrey Deitch Gallery in New York, so as to create a set of bells reminiscent of a *bianzhong*, their action amounted to transgression. The artwork decontextualizes through chamber pots a famous Chi-

nese archaeological discovery: the set of bronze bells from the tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng, dated to around 433 and discovered in 1977. Hung in a wooden frame and played melodically by striking them with a mallet, the bells produce magnificent music that is almost unique in the world's cultural history. The bells have an usual two-tone quality; each bell gives two different tones depending on where it is struck. The smallest one weighed 2.4 kg while the biggest weighed 203.6 kg. Altogether, the instrument weighed over four tons. No other set of musical instruments on such a scale that can sound a complete twelve-tone scale has ever been found in China. Here the artist brings together two realities that bear no relation to each other: the mundaneness of street life where women wash the dirt off pots and the elegance of a palace or a temple. The pleasant sounds of the bells that would normally be heard are erased in favor of the percussive sounds.

Chen wished to avoid any systematic interpretations. The tension between visual components belonging to unconnected worlds is fruitful. The 101 traditional chamber pots that a western mind will instinctively appreciate for their aesthetic beauty—before becoming aware of their hygienic function—are hung in wooden frames. They encircle a very large globe filled with old radios, TV sets, telephones, and other debris of electronic communication. While we are initially attracted to the imposing and majestic shape of the "chime," we are startled when we discover the heap of waste. Chen brings face to face the ancestral vibrant memory of the traditional pots and that of ubiquitous present-day computers, displayed here as electronic waste. These juxtaposed life cycles are dissimilar: pots are looked after, cleaned, and potentially transformed into musical instruments, whereas electronic waste is piling up and suffocating the planet. The artist thus questions the objects and their role as a medium and "invader" in the globalization process.

Chen enjoys generating misunderstandings and has had to face numerous controversies about his artwork that the mundane character of his installation *Daily Incantations* underlines: the commonplace objects he uses are indeed initially meant for the collection of human excrement. He has turned banal everyday objects associated with our intimate lives into bells to create a colossal musical instrument from which emanate surprising sounds.

In 2000, the year Chen died, the Chinese embassy in Paris opposed the fact that *Daily Incantations* was fea-

13 Ibid., 65.

14 Ibid., 66.

15 Ibid., 63.

tured in the exhibition *La Voix du Dragon* at the Cité de la musique.¹⁶ The fact that the artist created a traditional set of bells using chamber pots to replace the bronze bells was simply unacceptable. Mrs Hou Xianghua, then Cultural Advisor at the Chinese embassy in Paris, declared: “I am shocked, Chinese people find this irreverent,” before adding rather less diplomatically: “These chamber pots . . . are just crap.”¹⁷

This scatological description stresses the triviality of the object, thus referring to the paradoxical nature of Chen’s artwork, which plays on the double nature of an object. For most people in China, a chamber pot is an ordinary ugly, everyday object. The artist said: “In New York, Chinese visitors reacted by saying that it was horrible. To them the pots smelled foul and it was a shame to display them in an art gallery.”¹⁸ Likewise many Western visitors, after perceiving the chamber pots as ancient beautiful Chinese objects, changed their minds when they became aware of their original intended function. However, to certain Chinese, the chamber pot is also emblematic of the renewal of generations. We can see that misunderstandings do indeed foster transcultural exchanges within which differences come alive.

For Chen, the use of found objects is not merely an aesthetic issue. The many layers of the objects’ history as well as their political, economic, social, and cultural connotations are other aspects in which he is interested. The object is closely linked to the concepts of “Western world” and “modernization” and to the principle of “the old being replaced by the new.” The nature of an object and the experience people have had with it are essential, as well as its transfer into different cultural contexts. Chen is filled with enthusiasm for “this extraordinary abundance behind each everyday ob-

ject”¹⁹ and confronts it with different contexts in order to provoke what he calls “the electrical short-circuit experience.”²⁰ As he put it:

Two opposite electrodes meet: they are not related but are from the same electrical circuit. What I am really interested in is the “shocking” and “destructive” power triggered by a “short circuit.” That is creation. That is the most stimulating moment.²¹

The context that contributes to this phenomenon is directly linked to the physical location of the installation. The artwork is born from a confrontation and a dialogue within a particular context. In Chen’s words,

I therefore feel that half of creation comes from the artist, his energy, his ideas, but that the other half comes from the context, from the other side, from the short-circuit. Two things that normally should not be connected, but when they are, they cause destruction and, at the same time, are releasing energy.²²

The tensions at work in the creative process highlight this reality in all of Chen’s installations, “the same approach of the contradictions present in the cultural, economic, spiritual and material world and toward all the conflicts brought about by the globalization of the capitalist system in various cultural environments.”²³

Capturing meaningful moments of everyday life urges Chen to ponder on the nature of objects and to encourage thinking by creating metaphoric tensions. All the objects that are altered and used in his installations belong to our everyday reality. The “quotidian,” from the Latin word *quotidie*, meaning “every day,” points to what is diurnal; “what happens every day and recurs every day,” Georges Perec wrote, “the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the habitual.”²⁴ Like Chen, Perec has stressed the importance of banal things and urged us to question “that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us, and that we usually fail to put into words.” For him, the point is to try to understand

16 “La voix du dragon. Trésors archéologiques et art campanaire de la Chine ancienne,” exhibition held from November 21, 2000 to February 25, 2001, Cité de la musique (La Villette, Paris).

17 *Le Journal des Arts* 116 (December 1, 2000): 10–12. Chen was not welcomed by the Chinese embassy in Paris. Meant as a contemporary counterpoint to *La Voix du Dragon*, Chen’s installation, *Daily Incantations*, was relocated to the other side of the Grande Halle de la Villette (Cité de la musique). “The Chinese embassy in Paris was shocked by Chen Zhen’s creation of a traditional set of bells in which bronze bells had been replaced by wooden chamber pots,” explained Emma Lavigne, curator of the Cité de la Villette, Musée de la musique. She added: “We had to relocate the installation or the exhibition would have been canceled.”

18 Sans, *Chen Zhen*, 63.

19 *Ibid.*, 83.

20 *Ibid.*, 85.

21 *Ibid.*, 120.

22 *Ibid.*, 244.

23 *Ibid.*, 98.

24 Georges Perec, *L’Infra-ordinaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 11.

“what is underneath, the infraordinary, the background noise, our quotidian existence, each and every instant of it.”²⁵

The concept of “post object” is recurrent in Chen’s work. He gives new life to everyday objects that are not reprocessed and therefore keep their original aspect. Whereas an object is normally produced, consumed, thrown away, salvaged, displayed, preserved, or cast off, it is here offered a new destiny and reintroduced into new life cycles through an artistic process. In *Prayer wheel—“Money Makes the Mare Go”* (*Chinese Slang*), transforming abacuses and calculators into a huge prayer wheel introduces a new life cycle, even as that may seem paradoxical. For Chen, “These objects are there to purify a life after the use of the things, to sublimate a latent spirit after the death of the consumable circle of the products, to trigger a new destiny on the fatal conclusion of the objects.”²⁶ Recycling is not only about transforming a given material into another, or one item into something new. The sheer simplicity of the inanimate, unused object moves him, and urges him to give it a new life. He sees it as a shift from one life into another life. He goes on to say:

I think of this dimension of recycling as a turning back to the original point. It’s a question of a re-birth, it’s a question of birth, experience, death and rebirth. It’s a circle of life.²⁷

Chen’s art opens up new horizons beyond the reality of things. He “loves all sorts of transformations, not only because they directly concern some aspects of reality, but also because they give us the opportunity to reveal, either indirectly or through metaphors, the essence of what is beyond objective reality.”²⁸ He has succeeded in transforming ordinary material so as to question and shake up our relationship with images, with consumer society, and with objects.

There is no human representation in Chen’s work, but his installations always include evocative objects such as tools, household or electronic appliances, clothes, furnishings (chamber pots, chairs, beds, and tables), newspapers, etc. The human body is clearly the

pivotal element of Chen’s work and is closely connected with his personal experience.

As mentioned before, Chen suffered from autoimmune hemolytic anemia for twenty years; this rare and incurable disease finally caused his death in 2000 at the age of forty-five. As early as 1992, he wanted to become a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine because his condition both fostered and hampered his projects. The progression of his disease prompted him to make an issue and a philosophy of his life experience in order to turn it into an open, ever-active work. He strove to depict the conflicts between humans, nature, and consumer society within a wider perspective. Chen regarded the artist as a therapist, and declared that he was “concerned with the diagnosis of the world’s diseases” and wanted “to reconcile man and the world.”²⁹ His approach aimed at spiritually bringing to life objects that both testify to and suffer from the society we live in.

Chen’s works constantly question the world, following a cross-cultural way of thinking that links spirituality and technology, the material and immaterial dimensions. Central to his artistic work is the sharing of knowledge and skills in the fields of art, medicine, ecology, politics, and cultural identity between the two worlds to which he belonged. From a very early age, Chen, who grew up in a family of doctors, showed an interest in the relationships between traditional Chinese philosophy, which was forbidden in China in those days, and Western culture. In 1986, he chose exile in Paris. Chen was a genuine world citizen who could work equally well in New York, Shanghai, or Paris, his city of adoption.

Sharing one’s culture and experience with others nurtured Chen’s artistic projects. He spotlighted an “in-between” interval in which the relationships between contemporary art and life could find a fresh start. The concept of “in-between” is essential to his creative process. His strategy was driven by a wish to generate a dialogue and the sharing of experience between two cultures, two worlds, or two places, a pristine space that allows new opportunities to develop bonds, connections, and encounters.

Chen’s artistic installations reveal the gap between the world and ourselves. Here is an artist who wished to work in the space between things, in this apparent void in which, when seen from another viewpoint, turns out

25 Georges Perec, “Entretien avec Jean-Marie Le Sidaner,” *L’Arc* 76 (1979): 4.

26 Sans, *Chen Zhen*, 11.

27 *Ibid.*, 150.

28 *Ibid.*, 151.

29 *Ibid.*, 8.

to be an interval of plenitude and harmony. He questioned representation by creating a distance between image and object, between the object that is commonly used and the object as he recreated it. The artist remained faithful to the philosophical sources that enrich his work; he was aware that what occurs in images is what lies in the interval, in the space between things, in what lies “in-between” and eludes us. Taking a Taoist perspective, he considers that the genuine energy of our Universe does not reside in elements but rather in relationships. He says:

When I say relationships I really mean what is invisible, intangible, and immaterial: movements, shifts, exchanges and transformations that result in a dynamic process of change and evolution.³⁰

Just as the Tibetan ritual wheel's prayers are scattered by movement, the work of art remains an inexhaustible entity within which any established form would come under threat of inertia if it were not constantly transformed by a creative energy that gives it life. The concept of incompleteness is a fundamental principle of any creative process. The work of art is a space open to change and new opportunities. Nothing is fixed. “Nothing is accomplished.”³¹ Movement appears continuous and unfinished.

Chen's artistic strategy was driven, as was his life, by a constant wish to gather artists and the communities in which they live, in order to make them work together and better understand the differences and similarities between them. Chen believed in the ability of art to filter into all spheres of daily life and to find relevant connections with human concerns. Throughout his work, Chen built a genuine life project and thought pattern that he called “transexperience.” This concept bears no relation to the experience of travelling, accessible to anyone who travels throughout the world, but which for him is “ultimately superficial and banal.”³²

“Transexperience” consists of “spiritual loneliness and internalization of successive life experiences.”³³ The

point is to adapt oneself, to multiply experiences and pay close attention to what is happening. This concept can be experienced by immersing oneself in life, mixing with other people, and identifying oneself with them. The purpose is to “become a kind of cultural homeless, belonging to nobody but possessing everything. This type of experience is a world in its own right.”³⁴ To be constantly on the move is of the essence, as expressed in this Chinese proverb quoted by Chen: “Mobility offers people chances to survive, while trees will die if moved to another place.”³⁵ This is a mode of thinking and artistic creation that cross-fertilizes one's own experience and that of others. We must “dive into life, adapt to whatever circumstances we meet, mix and blend with others... Exactly how water does. Transparent, ever-changing, undulating and pervading everything; it gathers up all experiences, continents, men.”³⁶

Chen emancipates mundane objects from their everyday constraints by displaying them in a place where time seems to stand still, so that a most ordinary reality expands, so to speak, to give rise to an infinite number of possibilities. Such installations as *Daily Incantations* or *Prayer Wheel* beckon to us so that we can converse with the world. Like the artist at work, observers do not see what they are looking at, but rather, “the way a thing looked at is co-present with them and the way they are co-present with this thing.”³⁷

Appearances are not misleading, and on the contrary invite the observer to look beyond. The word “appearance” reveals its complexity. It no longer refers here to an illusion, to something that conceals and mystifies, but rather harks back to its Latin origin, where *apparare* meant “presence.” Presence refers to what exists here and now and can be perceived through our senses.³⁸ It is a strength that deeply affects observers and invites them to share in a tangible experience.

In Chen's art everything invites us to have confidence in what is at hand here before us. The simplicity of an installation firmly anchored in material triviality requires going beyond appearances and better sharing the invisible elements. Catherine Francklin's remark

30 Ibid., 70.

31 John Cage, *Manifesto* (1952), 12: “Nothing is accomplished by writing a piece of music nothing is accomplished by hearing a piece of music nothing is accomplished by playing a piece of music our ears are now in excellent condition.”

32 Chen Zhen, interview. ADAC (Association Des Amis de Chen Zhen).

33 Ibid.

34 Sans, *Chen Zhen*, 67.

35 Ibid., 150.

36 Rosenberg and Min, *Chen Zhen*, 5.

37 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'œil et l'esprit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 30.

38 The word *Praesens* as used by Emile Benveniste in *Problèmes de linguistique générale I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 135.

about the often controversial works of Wim Delvoye is relevant when she notes that “the more a work appeals to the physical world, the stronger its metaphysical shock wave.”³⁹

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39 Catherine Francblin, “Wim Delvoye le diabolique,” *Artpress* 277 (2002): 16.

Recent Developments in the Japanese Debate on Secularization

UGO DESSÌ

1. Introduction

Secular Buddhism is a positive movement founded on a sincere wish to practice a contemporary Buddhism that is both encompassing of all lifestyles and true to the early intentions and insights of the Buddha. However, Secular Buddhism does raise questions about the authority granted to scriptures, and lineages, and the applicability or relevance of historic cultural accretions to contemporary practice.¹

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¹ The Triple Gem Buddhist Foundation, "Questions and Answers about Secular Buddhism," <http://www.triplegem.com/secular-buddhism/questions-and-answers-about-secular-buddhism> (last accessed December 24, 2016).

Is "Secular Buddhism" a religion? And is it possible to be secular and Buddhist at the same time? As is also suggested by this short citation, perhaps few concepts in today's popular and academic discourses are more contested, misused, and misunderstood than "secular" and "secularization."

The etymology of these two words derives from the Latin *saeculum*, which initially indicated a long span of time and the present world (as opposed to the next one), while later on, in the Middle Ages, *saecularizatio* came to refer to "a monk's renunciation of the rule of his order."² It was only in modern times, through the mediation of the Enlightenment and the work of some influential western scholars (e.g. Max Weber and Émile Durkheim), that secular/secularization took rather different meanings related to the decline of religion in modern society, low church attendance, the privatization of religious beliefs, the weakening of religious institutions, and, for some, the inevitable demise of religion.

Starting in the 1960s, scholars such as Peter Berger,

² Philip S. Gorski and Ateş Altınordu, "After Secularization?," *Annual Review of Sociology* 34, no. 1 (2008): 60.

Thomas Luckmann, and Bryan Wilson elaborated different versions of the secularization theory, but since as early as the 1980s their scholarly work and the very idea of secularization came to be criticized by other scholars, especially in the United States.³ For these critics, the phenomenon of religious resurgence in various parts of the world and the persistence of religious belief in North America do not only contradict the core of secularization theory, but also expose its status as a modern myth ultimately based on European history.⁴ As a consequence, secularization theory is nowadays on the defensive not only in North America but also, to some extent, in Europe.

This also applies to other parts of the world, including Japan. Secularization theory (*sezokuka-ron* 世俗化論) was introduced to Japan in the 1970s especially through scholarly exchanges promoted within the International Conference for the Sociology of Religion, the work of Jan Swyngedouw (1935–2012), a Belgian Catholic priest and scholar who spent most of his life in Japan, and, notably, that of Ikado Fujio 井門富二夫 (1924–2016). Ikado, a University of Tokyo graduate who spent five years at the University of Chicago before becoming a professor at Tsukuba University, wrote extensively on this topic and firmly denied that secularization means a general decline of religion. Rather, he understood this phenomenon as a process of functional differentiation of politics, law, economics, and other “social elements” from religion, which can account for the simultaneous booming of new religious movements, and the use of religious elements as customs and ideologies within other secular domains.⁵

Ikado’s attempt to fully apply western categories to the study of religious change in Japan was not fated to create a lasting trend. As already noted by Swyngedouw in the late 1970s, the secularization thesis had “not evoked a very enthusiastic response” in Japan, and had “not led to an in-depth debate of the theoretical issues

involved.”⁶ From the beginning, most Japanese scholars were rather more interested in exposing cultural, historical, and religious differences between the European and Japanese contexts. Among these, Yanagawa Keiichi 柳川啓一 (1926–1990) and Abe Yoshiya 阿部美哉 (1937–2003) have been widely acknowledged as key players in these early discussions. Their main thesis was that conceptual frameworks developed in western culture and based on the concept of “church” are not useful to explain the peculiar role played by religion in Japan. In their view, the core of Japanese religious life has always been the “household” (*ie* 家), which when one explores modern and contemporary Japanese religions should be taken as the counterpart to the role of the church in western societies.⁷

Some Japanese scholars of religion have also tried to explain the reasons of this unwillingness to apply secularization theories to Japan. According to Hayashi Makoto 林淳 (b. 1953), there are basically three reasons underlying this critical attitude. First, both Buddhism and Shintō have been traditionally subordinated to political power and can be defined as being “originally secular.” Second, in Japan there was no such thing as the “sacred canopy” provided by Christianity in medieval Europe. And finally, he observes, it is generally believed that the “rush hour of the gods” in the postwar years and the emergence of new religious movements cannot be explained in terms of secularization.⁸

Another prominent Japanese scholar, Yamanaka Hiroshi 山中弘 (b. 1953), has proposed a more articulated and detailed list of underlying reasons for the lack of support for the attribution of secularization theories, summarized in six points: 1) at the general level there is among Japanese scholars an awareness that secularization theory is not “compatible” with the Japanese context, which does not make this theory very appealing to them; 2) young scholars who studied the Japanese new religious movements in the 1970s came to understand this phenomenon as a proof of the inadequacy of secularization theory; 3) there is among Japanese scholars a general feeling of competition with Western Europe and

3 See David Yamane, “Secularization on Trial: In Defense of a Neosecularization Paradigm,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 1 (1997): 109–22.

4 See Gorski and Altinordu, “After Secularization?,” 61.

5 Fujio Ikado, “The Search for a Definition of Secularization: Toward a General Theory,” in *Cultural Identity and Modernization in Asian Countries: Proceedings of Kokugakuin University Centennial Symposium* (Tokyo: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, 1983), 51–2.

6 Jan Swyngedouw, “Reflections on the Secularization Thesis in the Sociology of Religion in Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6, no. 1–2 (1979): 70.

7 See Keiichi Yanagawa and Yoshiya Abe, “Some Observations on the Sociology of Religion in Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 5, no. 1 (1978): 5–27.

8 Hayashi Makoto, “Kindai Nihon no ‘shinkyō no jiyū’: Sezokuka dewanaku raishizeishon,” *Zen kenkyūsho kiyō* 44 (2015): 57–8.

their own attempt to develop an original theory for the Japanese context, which makes them rather indifferent to secularization theory; 4) Japanese sociology of religion is inclined to empirical research and is suspicious of general theories such as those dealing with secularization; 5) unlike the European and American context, secularization theory in Japan has not become a key topic in sociology, but has been discussed by scholars of religion, who somewhat lacked an appropriate theoretical apparatus and were inclined to give emphasis to phenomena of re-sacralization; and 6) Japan lacked a generation of new scholars to replace those who introduced secularization theory in the 1970s.⁹

As Hayashi, Yamanaka, and other scholars suggest,¹⁰ Japanese scholars in the study of religion largely concur on many of the aforementioned points, which is also reflected by the way in which this topic is presented in reference books. The entry on secularization in the *Gendai shūkyō jiten* 現代宗教辞典 (Dictionary of Contemporary Religion), for example, provides a very short introduction to western secularization thinkers and closes by peremptorily stating that any simplistic attempt to apply their theories to Japan based on the idea of church would be misleading.¹¹ In a similar vein, the author of the entry in the *Shūkyōgaku jiten* 宗教学辞典 (Dictionary of Religious Studies) wraps up his overview of western scholarship by suggesting that secularization theory, as a western paradigm, is now probably on the verge of completing its historical mission.¹²

This does not mean, however, that discussions revolving around secularization in Japan have disappeared from the scholarly scene. In fact, several scholars in Japan use the idea of secularization as a negative point of reference, while others have attempted to apply it more positively to the Japanese context. In other words, something close to a debate on secularization in Japan is still taking place, and it remains worthy of attention and examination. This article aims to partially address this gap. A comprehensive overview and analysis of Japanese literature on this subject would

require a much longer article, or perhaps even a monograph. For this reason, I will focus on the contributions given by Japanese scholars in the last decade, in order to illustrate some of the major trends and issues in the current debate.¹³

2. Religion, the State, and New Spirituality

One of the most influential voices in the recent debate on secularization in Japan is Shimazono Susumu 島蘭進 (b. 1948), emeritus professor at the University of Tokyo and especially well known outside Japan for his work on Japanese new religious movements.

According to Shimazono, it is possible to distinguish at least three major turning points in Japanese history that concern the relationship between religion and the state and the issue of secularization. The first one, he claims, occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the subordination of Buddhism to the state, and the movement away from the Buddhist worldview and its other-worldliness that was promoted by the ruling elite through the adoption of Confucian and Shintō elements. Shimazono locates the second turning point after the Meiji Restoration (1867); on the one hand, this opened the way to the modernization of the country and the rationalization of social life, but on the other hand it meant the creation of State Shintō, which was centered on the divinity of the emperor. Finally, the third turning point took place after World War II, with the new Constitution and the de-sacralization of the State.¹⁴ Shimazono asserts that the first turning point implies a certain trend toward secularization, while the second is more ambivalent, because of the incorporation of Shintō elements in the modern nation state. As for the third turning point, which implied the deletion

9 Yamanaka Hiroshi, "Nihon no shūkyō shakaigaku ni okeru sezokukaron," *Shūkyō kenkyū* 89 (2016): 43-44.

10 See Ōba Aya, "Sezokukaron, gōriteki sentaku riron," in *Kin-gendai Nihon no shūkyō hendō: Jisshōteki shūkyō shakaigaku no shiza kara*, ed. Terada Yoshirō et al. (Tokyo: Hābesutosha, 2016), 147-61.

11 See Miki Hizuru, "Sezokuka," in *Gendai shūkyō jiten*, ed. Inoue Nobutaka (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 2005), 322-23.

12 See Higashibaba Ikuo, "Sezokuka(ron)," in *Shūkyōgaku jiten*, ed. Hoshino Eiki et al. (Tokyo: Maruzen, 2010), 262-65.

13 For the same reason, this article does not take into account contributions to this topic made by non-Japanese scholars. For recent additions to the debate in the English language, see, for example, the special issue "Religion and the Secular in Japan" of the *Journal of Religion in Japan* 1, no. 1 (2012) including articles by Ian Reader, John Nelson, Mark Mullins, and Elisabetta Porcu; chapters 7 and 8 of my *Japanese Religions and Globalization* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); and Christoph Kleine, "Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan from the Viewpoint of Systems Theory," *Journal of Religion in Japan* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1-34.

14 Shimazono Susumu, "Nihon no sezokuka to atarashii supirichuariti: Shūkyō shakaigaku to hikaku bunka/hikaku bunmei no shiza," *Shakai shirin* 57, no. 4 (2011): 24-5.

of these religious elements after World War II, he suggests that it can be more explicitly related to the secularization process.¹⁵

Shimazono, however, is also eager to specify that these historical changes cannot be appropriately analyzed through the lenses of the concept of *laïcité* (*raishite* ライシテ). In fact, this idea is based on the western assumption that with modernity the separation between political institutions and the Christian church was accomplished, which, for Shimazono, is not necessarily found in other cultures. In East Asia, he claims, there was a clear historical tendency to create a political system centered on the sacred figure of the emperor, as envisioned in Japan since as early as the Edo period (1603–1867).¹⁶

Moreover, Shimazono provides a critique of secularization theory as such, which he identifies with the work of Bryan Wilson and the proponents of similar views. The main problem with these theories, he notes, is that they claim that the functional differentiation of society brings about the privatization of religion, which is thus deprived of many of its social functions. In Shimazono's view, Luckmann provides a more nuanced perspective on secularization by acknowledging that modern religion does not just manifest itself as an institutional phenomenon. However, Luckmann's theory, too, remains anchored to the thesis of the privatization of religion in modern society, which for Shimazono is clearly contradicted by at least three concurrent trends.¹⁷ In many countries worldwide, including not only Iran, India, Turkey but also the United States there is an ongoing revival of traditional religion at least since the 1970s. At the same time, an increasing number of people, especially in industrialized countries, are oriented toward forms of individual spirituality as opposed to

organized religion. Concurrently, there is an increase in the number of individuals dissatisfied with secularism who actively try to bring their religious commitment into secular institutions.¹⁸

For Shimazono, this indicates there is a general shift in global society from secularization to religion, and from religion to spirituality. Religion and spirituality, he affirms, are not the same but have always coexisted.¹⁹ Whereas in religion the relationship with the sacred is understood "in terms of a system," in spirituality is seen from the perspective of "individual experience." However, since the 1970s the general perception of spirituality as independent from religion has gradually gained more strength, thus opening the way to phenomena such as the New Age movement and the renewed emphasis on the spiritual world in Japan, which Shimazono terms collectively "new spirituality" (*atarashii supirichuariti* 新しいスピリチュアリテイ).²⁰ Shimazono notes, too, whereas in the early phase of new spirituality there was an underlying tendency to deny the value of religion, since the 1990s religion and spirituality have come to be considered within this movement as complementary,²¹ which is implicitly presented by him as an argument to support his criticism of the secularization thesis.

3. Religion and Laicization

The appropriateness of the concept of *laïcité* for the analysis of Japanese religions has also been discussed by the aforementioned Hayashi Makoto. Hayashi shares with Shimazono and other Japanese scholars the belief that secularization theory cannot be unreservedly applied to the modern Japanese context, characterized as it is by the emergence of new religious movements and lay Buddhist movements.²² He argues, however, that this does not mean there has been a general revival of religion, and that traditional religions have remain untouched by modernity, as is shown, for example, by the enforcement of the *shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離 (separation of *kami* and buddhas) policy and the *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈 (abolish Buddhism

15 Ibid., 24.

16 Ibid., 26. Needless to say, the interplay of religion and politics can be seen at work also in earlier stages of Japanese history, as is illustrated, for example, by the very adoption of Buddhism by the Yamato court in the sixth century, the establishment of the Ritsuryō system and the network of provincial temples (*kokubunji* 国分寺) for 'protecting' the nation, and the emergence of the *kenmitsu taisei* 顕密体制 (exoteric-esoteric system) in medieval Japan. For a general overview, see Helen Hardacre, "State and Religion in Japan," in *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions*, eds. Paul L. Swanson and Clark Chilson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 274–88.

17 Shimazono, "Nihon no sezokuka to atarashii supirichuariti," 31; and Susumu Shimazono, "From Salvation to Spirituality: The Contemporary Transformation of Religions Viewed from East Asia," *Religious Studies in Japan* 1 (2012): 5.

18 Shimazono, "From Salvation to Spirituality," 5–6.

19 Shimazono, "Nihon no sezokuka to atarashii supirichuariti," 32.

20 Shimazono, "From Salvation to Spirituality," 9–10.

21 Ibid., 20.

22 Hayashi, "Kindai Nihon no 'shinkyō no jiyū,'" 58.

and destroy Śākyamuni) movement in the Meiji period (1868–1912).²³ Hayashi suggests that these phenomena, for lack of a better term, can be explained through the concept of laicization (*raishizeishon* ライシゼイション). It is worth mentioning that his characterization of laicization diverges from common understandings of French *laïcité*, implying as it does the strong separation of church and state and the commitment by the state to be “lay, rather than confessional, while still respecting freedom of religion or belief.”²⁴ Rather, for Hayashi laicization has to do with the coercion exercised by the modern nation state upon religion. Based on his analysis of laws enforced by the Meiji government, he argues that they were effective in the creation of a public sphere through the removal of religious elements related to Buddhism, traditional Shintō, and Christianity.²⁵ In this sense, Hayashi disagrees with Shimazono’s characterization of the modern Japanese nation state as intrinsically religious. For Hayashi, the public sphere created by the Meiji reformers was meant to be truly secular (*sezokutekina kōkyō kūkan* 世俗的な公共空間), and the introduction of the emperor system and State Shintō only represented the next step in the process, like “pouring water in an empty vessel.”²⁶

A similar emphasis on the role played by political authority in the secularization process is offered by Nishimura Akira 西村明 (b. 1973), who does not use the term *laïcité* but distinguishes between two types of secularization, that is, “natural secularization” and “artificial secularization.” For Nishimura, the former refers to the weakening of denominational affiliation and the general trend of “people away from religion in the process of modernization.” This type of secularization, he observes, accounts both for the widespread non-religious attitude in contemporary Japan and for the process through which modern society takes over functions once performed by religion. Although Nishimura’s position is in this last respect not fully articulated, it comes close to classic western formulations of the secularization thesis. By “artificial secularization,” on the other hand, Nishimura means the deliberate “depriva-

tion from or constraint to people of particular religious faiths and practices by a particular authority.” In his view, this second type of secularization is exemplified by reforms such as the institution of the parishioner system in the Edo period and the establishment of State Shintō. As such, Nishimura observes, artificial secularization can lead to extreme adaptations,²⁷ in a way that is reminiscent of Hayashi’s application/adaptation of the idea of laicization to the Japanese context.

4. Public Religion and Post-Secularity

In the specific case of Japan, Shimazono has also attempted to provide some examples of the emergence of public religion as a reaction to secularism. For him, there are clear indications of this trend in the fields of medical care, nursing, education, and, more recently, in the spiritual care offered by religious specialists to those affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.²⁸

Shimazono’s idea that the spiritual counseling performed by Buddhist priests in the Tōhoku area may be understood as a form of public religion has been questioned by Horie Norichika 堀江宗正 (b. 1969). Based on his research conducted among disaster victims and focusing on their bonds with familiar spirits, Horie has observed that religious specialists offering “active listening” (*keichō* 傾聴) deliberately avoid any preaching, understand their practice as a form of therapy, and perform religious rituals only if they are specifically asked to do so. In other words, they are careful enough not to be seen as “religious” although they present themselves as providers of spiritual care.²⁹ For Horie, this and other relief activities conducted by Buddhist priests after the tsunami should rather be termed “recovery secularism”: “recovery” in the sense that its primary goal is the recovery and revitalization of the affected areas, rather

23 Ibid., 58.

24 Jean Baubérot, “The Place of Religion in Public Life: The Lay Approach,” in *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Deskbook*, ed. Tore Lindholm et al. (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media B.V, 2004), 441.

25 Hayashi, “Kindai Nihon no ‘shinkyō no jiyū,’” 61.

26 Ibid., 68.

27 Akira Nishimura, “Are Public Commemorations in Contemporary Japan Post-secular?,” *Journal of Religion in Japan* 5, no. 2-3 (2016): 149-50.

28 See Shimazono Susumu, “Gendai shūkyō to kōkyō kūkan: Nihon no jōkyō o chūshin ni,” *Shakaigaku hyōron* 50, no. 4 (2000): 541-55; and Susumu Shimazono, “Japanese Buddhism and the Public Sphere: From the End of World War II to the Post-Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Power Plant Accident,” *Journal of Religion in Japan* 1, no. 3 (2012): 203-25.

29 Norichika Horie, “Continuing Bonds in the Tōhoku Disaster Area,” *Journal of Religion in Japan* 5, no. 2-3 (2016): 222.

than the interpretation of the disaster through religious categories; and “secularism” because it implies the separation between the public and private sphere, and assigns religion to the latter.³⁰

A more nuanced approach to the same theme can be seen in the work of Takahashi Hara 高橋原 (b. 1969). For Takahashi, there are clear indications that Japanese society is largely secularized. The social welfare activities of Japanese religionists, including grief and spiritual care, cannot be regarded as a sign of religious revitalization in Japan, because they are not accompanied by membership growth among religious groups. He argues, however, that this trend shows that religious resources are being redistributed to other sections of secular society. In this sense, Takahashi claims, it counts as an instance of “post-secularity” in the sense illustrated by the German scholar Jürgen Habermas, that is, as a condition in which modern societies “have to reckon with the continuing existence of religious groups and the continuing relevance of the different religious traditions, even if the societies themselves are largely secularized.”³¹

The issue of post-secularity has been recently thematized by another Japanese scholar, Sumika Masayoshi 住家正芳 (b. 1973). Sumika agrees that postwar Japanese society, also as a consequence of the 1947 Constitution enforcing the separation of state and religion, is secularized in many respects. He suggests that Japan can thus be included in the list of post-secular societies in which, according to Habermas, “people’s religious ties have steadily or rather quite dramatically lapsed in the post-World War II period.”³² Specifically, Sumika has tested the applicability to Japan of the institutional translation proviso postulated by Habermas, according to which “citizens who want to use religious language in the formal public sphere have to accept that the potential truths of religious utterances must be translated into a generally accessible language.”³³ Based

on the examination of several courtroom cases over the religious nature of public ceremonies and practices since the 1960s (including the Tsu city groundbreaking ceremony case and the Mino’o war memorial case), Sumika has suggested that their use of a secular terminology exemplifies the attempt to mask religious values to legitimize the nation, rather than the applicability of Habermas’s proviso.³⁴

5. Testing the Secularization Thesis Empirically

Another stream of the debate on secularization in Japan has focused on the analysis of surveys and empirical data; it aims to show whether and to what extent Japanese society has been affected by secularization.

One of the recent publications on this topic attempts to demonstrate the incompatibility of the western concept of secularization with Japan through a survey conducted in 2006 among 1,800 respondents nationwide. The author of this research, Manabe Kazufumi 真鍋一史 (b. 1942), claims that despite the low attachment to religious beliefs (about thirty percent of respondents), secularization is progressing rather slowly in Japan. This is because, he argues, more than half of the respondents still engage in the same religious behaviors and practices, such as worship before the home altar. For Manabe, the data of this survey do not confirm the decline of Japanese people’s religiousness but rather “the fact that Japan’s unique religious feelings and attitudes continue to live on in people’s hearts as they had in the past.”³⁵

More relevant to the contemporary debate and the present discussion is the work of Ishii Kenji 石井研士 (b. 1954), who has provided a summary and detailed analysis of data from various surveys in his *Dētabukku: Gendai nihonjin no shūkyō* データブック—現代日本人の宗教 (Databook: The Religion of the Contemporary Japanese), the second volume of which was published in 2007.³⁶

Ishii has shown that there have been significant

30 Ibid., 221–22.

31 Hara Takahashi, “The Ghosts of Tsunami Dead and *Kokoro no kea* in Japan’s Religious Landscape,” *Journal of Religion in Japan* 5, no. 2–3 (2016): 194–95; see also Jürgen Habermas, “A Postsecular World Society? An Interview with Jürgen Habermas,” <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/02/03/a-postsecular-world-society> (last accessed December 23, 2016).

32 Masayoshi Sumika, “Behind the Mask of the Secular,” *Journal of Religion in Japan* 5, no. 2–3 (2016): 154–55; and Jürgen Habermas, “Secularism’s Crisis of Faith: Notes on Post-Secular Society,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25 (2008): 17.

33 Sumika, “Behind the Mask of the Secular,” 157–58.

34 Ibid., 172.

35 Kazufumi Manabe, “The Structure of Japanese Religiosity: Toward a Re-examination of Secularization in Japan,” *Kwansei Gakuin University Social Sciences Review* 12 (2007): 10–1.

36 Ishii Kenji, *Dētabukku: Gendai nihonjin no shūkyō* (Tokyo: Shin’yōsha, 2007).

changes in the religiosity of the Japanese in the post-war period. He acknowledges that if one looks at religious practices such as the New Year's visit to a shrine (or temple) (*hatsumōde* 初詣) and visiting the family grave (*haka mairi* 墓参り), there has been a significant increase of about ten percentage points over the last twenty-five years. However, several surveys also show that the percentage of those who "have an interest in religion" (*shūkyō ni tai suru kanshin* 宗教に対する関心) decreased dramatically over about the same period of time, from forty percent in 1978 to twenty-three percent in 2003. Similarly, the number of those who "have religious faith" (*shinkō ari* 信仰あり) has consistently decreased over the last sixty years, and according to several surveys is now below thirty percent.³⁷ Moreover, Ishii notes that the ties of individuals with institutional religion are weakening, too, illustrated for example by the lower number of families that possess a Buddhist home altar (*butsudan* 仏壇) or a Shintō one (*kamidana* 神棚) and perform the customary religious practices before them.³⁸ Among other data presented in this data-book, it is also significant that in comparative perspective the Japanese are among the people with the lowest trust in religious organizations, which is for Ishii also a consequence of the general distrust in religion created by the Aum incident in 1995.³⁹ Ishii also observes, however, that in many respects the religiosity of the younger generations is showing signs of vitality, which can be seen in their interest in the spirit world, divination, and the like, a phenomenon that he relates to the impact of the television and other mass media.⁴⁰

6. Conclusion

The overview above illustrates that the discussion of secularization in the Japanese context, far from having vanished altogether, has continued in the last decade among several Japanese scholars. It is of deep interest that these scholars are often aware of each other's work, which justifies the use of the term "debate" to describe their activities. In this sense, the subfield of religious studies on secularization in Japan is thus, to some extent, even more vital than other related subfields such

as that focusing on globalization, in which the level of interaction between scholars is very low.⁴¹ It is also worthy of mention that not a few Japanese scholars seem to be concerned with grounding their discussions on secularization in the analysis of empirical data, which certainly contributes to making their work more solid.

One observation that is hardly surprising concerns the persistence of a skeptical attitude toward secularization theory among Japanese scholars. This is well exemplified by Hayashi's claim that the secularization thesis is ultimately based on the western idea of the Christian church as a sacred canopy, an overarching structure originally subsuming all spheres of social life;⁴² by Manabe's reformulation of the claim that the western concept of secularization is essentially about levels of religious belief;⁴³ and, at another level, by Shimazono's idea that secularization theory is substantially flawed because it implies the decline of religion and its privatization, which are contradicted by the rise of spirituality and the vitality of new religious movements.⁴⁴

All in all, these approaches to secularization seem to be underlain by a rather narrow understanding of secularization theory. The idea that secularization is necessarily dependent on the western concept of church reflects to a large extent the work of Yanagawa and Abe, according to whom the church played in western societies an integrating function that is not at work in the case of institutional religion in Japan.⁴⁵ As such, it reiterates old views of Christianity as a creedal religion centered on dogmas,⁴⁶ and greatly overlooks not only the historical development of Christianity, but also the phenomenon of "belonging without believing" and the relatively weak attachment to orthodox beliefs within vast sectors of modern Christianity.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the assumption that secularization implies the decline of religion and its privatization seems to neglect not only the bare fact that there is no single secularization theory (but many different

37 Ibid., 3-4, 70.

38 Ibid., 76, 85.

39 Ibid., 103, 107-8.

40 Ibid., 141-61.

41 See Ugo Dessi, *The Global Repositioning of Japanese Religions: An Integrated Approach* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

42 Hayashi, "Kindai Nihon no 'shinkyō no jiyū,'" 58.

43 Manabe, "The Structure of Japanese Religiosity," 5-6.

44 Shimazono, "Nihon no sezokuka to atarashii supirichuariti," 30-1.

45 Yanagawa and Abe, "Some Observations on the Sociology of Religion in Japan," 12.

46 See Miki, "Sezokuka," 322-23.

47 See, for example, Franco Garelli, *Religion Italian Style: Continuities and Changes in a Catholic Country* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

approaches), but also that the central element even in classic secularization theories such as those formulated in the 1960s and 1970s by various scholars (e.g., Luckmann, Wilson, Berger, etc.) was not the idea of the inevitable decline of religion, but that of functional differentiation.⁴⁸ Paradoxically, claims such as Shimazono's that "the general trend of human history is directed toward the rise of spirituality"⁴⁹ provide the specular image of stereotyped understandings of secularization theory as the prophecy of the future demise of religious beliefs.

Still another idea that enjoys a certain popularity in Japanese religious studies is that the postwar proliferation of new religious movements and the emergence of new spirituality movements essentially contradict the secularization thesis. This does not, however, take into account sufficiently the distinction between different levels of secularization proposed by authors such as Karel Dobbelaere and José Casanova. The latter, in particular, has shown that the presence of secularization as functional differentiation does not prevent the revival of religion and its reappearance in the public sphere.⁵⁰ In other words, it is perfectly possible to have a secularized society characterized by the presence of new religious movements and informal spirituality.

More in general, a lack of clarity in the use of the term secularization is noticeable in the Japanese debate. Hayashi criticizes western secularization theory but at the same time affirms that Meiji policies resulted in the creation of a "secular public space," without specifying what he means by secular in this case.⁵¹ Moreover, he discards secularization but adopts the concept of *laïcité*, which is possibly even more tightly bound to western (French) intellectual history than secularization itself.

A similar tendency may be seen in the work of scholars who apparently show a more positive approach to secularization theory. For example, Takahashi indirectly defines secularization as the decline in religious membership, which represents however only one of the many facets of secularization.⁵² And Sumika,

though acknowledging that postwar Japanese society is secularized, relies on Habermas' implicit characterization of a secular society as one in which "people's religious ties have steadily or rather quite dramatically lapsed," without providing an exhaustive explanation of the concept.⁵³

Some of the limitations of the current debate on secularization have been observed by Japanese scholars such as Morooka Ryōsuke 諸岡了介 (b. 1976), who has criticized (within his discussion on the definition of religion) the wide currency that stereotyped views of secularization hold in Japan.⁵⁴ There are indications, nonetheless, that the current Japanese debate remains to an extent trapped between two relatively antagonistic angles.

On the one hand, one finds a certain inclination among Japanese scholars engaged in this debate to downplay the importance of analytical approaches to secularization, and the clarification of key concepts and ideas. This tendency might be related to one of Yamanaka's points listed above, in which he refers to the relative lack of a theoretical apparatus within Japanese religious studies that might prevent a deeper insight in the topic of secularization.⁵⁵ From another perspective, however, this may also be the effect of a certain eagerness of Japanese scholars to catch up with discussions on post-secularity taking place at the international level, which unfortunately ends up bypassing the preemptive clarification of the meaning of secularity.

On the other hand, there is the idea that the interplay between religion and other spheres of social life is in Japan somehow unique and cannot be explained through 'western secularization theory' (whatever this may mean). This tendency was already noticed by Swyngedouw in the early phase of the debate,⁵⁶ and is implicitly acknowledged by Yamanaka, when he includes "a general feeling of competition with Western Europe and the attempt to develop an original theory" in his list of the causes underlying the guarded attitude of Japanese scholars toward secularization theory.⁵⁷

48 See Olivier Tschannen, "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, no. 4 (1991): 395-415.

49 Shimazono, "From Salvation to Spirituality," 6.

50 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

51 See Hayashi, "Kindai Nihon no 'shinkyō no jiyū,'" 68.

52 See Takahashi, "The Ghosts of Tsunami Dead and *Kokoro no kea* in Japan's Religious Landscape," 194.

53 See Sumika, "Behind the Mask of the Secular," 155.

54 Morooka Ryōsuke, "Sezokukaron ni okeru shūkyō gainen hihan no keiki," *Shūkyō kenkyū* 85, no. 3 (2011): 623-43.

55 Yamanaka, "Nihon no shūkyō shakaigaku ni okeru sezokukaron," 43-4.

56 Swyngedouw, "Reflections on the Secularization Thesis in the Sociology of Religion in Japan," 65-88.

57 Yamanaka, "Nihon no shūkyō shakaigaku ni okeru sezokukaron," 43-4.

Needless to say, it is perfectly legitimate and desirable for Japanese scholars to create original approaches to the study of religious change in contemporary society. However, the more this is pursued by relying on the oversimplification of theories developed in the 'West' or other parts of the world, the higher the chance that they come perilously close to forms of reverse orientalism.

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A Tibetan Stupa within the Flow of Cultural Transformations: The Opportunities and Challenges of Transplanting Buddhist Architecture from Asia to Europe

EVA SEEGERS

1. Introduction

Discussions of the rich and varied forms of the stupa (Sk. *stūpa*)¹ are found throughout studies of Asian architecture and Buddhism. The stupa combines Buddhist values and aesthetic concerns in specific ways, making comparisons with other forms of historical architecture difficult. This essay takes up the complexities and significance of Tibetan stupas (Tib. *mchod rten*),² especially when these outstanding pieces of Buddhist

material culture travel to other continents. It highlights examples wherein non-Buddhists erect them on public grounds and asks questions about relocated traditions. Can the spiritual values, symbolic meanings, and religious significance of the stupa remain unchanged if it is constructed without the motivation of Buddhist beliefs? What new meanings might accrete that may never before have existed in the history of the stupa? This essay is embedded in the ongoing debates over the transformation of art and architecture within cultural flows between Europe and Asia. Based on a case study of a stupa located in a public botanic garden in Germany, it addresses some of the key issues and discussions that arise when an ancient tradition is emplaced in a new cultural context.

The term “culture” is difficult to define, and it is not within the scope of this essay to discuss the various concepts of culture that have developed over time in different academic disciplines. In 1952, American anthropologists Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn named 164 definitions of “culture,” and since then the

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- 1 Sanskrit words that have entered the English language (such as mantra or stupa) are not shown in italics and appear without diacritic marks. Their proper transliteration is given in brackets when first noted.
- 2 Tibetan terms have been transliterated according to the Turrel V. Wylie system. The phonetic transcription accords with the *THL Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan* by David Germano and Nicolas Tournadre. See Turrel V. Wylie, “A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 22 (1959): 261–67; and David Germano and Nicolas Tournadre, “Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan,” *The Tibetan and Himalayan Library* (2003), <http://www.thlib.org/refer->

[ence/transliteration/#!essay=/thl/phonetics/](#) (accessed October 12, 2016).

number has increased considerably.³ One definition that may frame the discussions within this essay defines it as being based on “knowledge, concepts, and values shared by group members . . . culture also consists of the shared beliefs, symbols, and interpretations within a human group.”⁴

Culture is generally understood today as a dynamic and discursive exchange or transformation process. Transformation denotes a major or complete change in appearance, form, and meaning. Much excellent work in the contemporary humanities has been devoted to explorations of cultural exchange and adaptation. One work in particular clarifies the concerns of the present essay and contributes to my thinking on the general questions posed above: Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch and Anja Eisenbeiß’s *The Power of Things and the Flow of Cultural Transformations*.⁵ I share their interest in exploring how material artifacts, as well as the imagining of ideas, are exchanged between cultures and historical times, how they are integrated and reassembled, and how they change their meaning in new cultural contexts.

The stupa in question is part of the material culture of the Himalaya, transplanted from Nepal to Germany.⁶ Buddhist groups within the geographical region of the Himalaya share traditional knowledge about the ritual use and worship of stupas, a living tradition for many centuries. Some groups know that within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition the stupa is a symbol for the Buddha’s *dharmakāya* (Tib. *chos sku*) or “truth body,” the eternal principle of ultimate truth. All groups know

that Buddhists use stupas as a “receptacle of worship” (Tib. *mchod rten*).⁷ The majority of Europeans are not Buddhist and thus do not share this traditional knowledge, nor do they share the same understanding of the symbolism and usage of a stupa as people from the Himalaya. They will therefore naturally create their own ideas about it.

This essay discusses a religious object, the stupa, which contains relics, mandalas (Sk. *maṇḍala*), and other precious substances, and whose construction is bound to rituals. In recent years, religious architecture and ritual have become increasingly popular targets of Buddhist Studies inquiries. One valuable example is Yael Bentor’s study *Consecration of Images and Stupas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism*, which focuses on a complex Tibetan ritual conducted yearly at the Bodhnāth *mahācaitya* (great stupa), in Kathmandu. The ritual, in basic terms, consists of a performance of a text written by Khri byang rin po che (1901–81), the late junior tutor of the Dalai Lama. Given its focus on stupa architecture, this essay is also situated within the context of the rare translations of construction manuals, a subfield of Tibetology and Indology. Christoph Cüppers, Leonhard van der Kuijp, and Ulrich Pagel published a richly illustrated handbook authored by the Tibetan scholar sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705) around 1687. It contains many examples about how to design, scale, and construct stupas. Pema Dorjee’s work *Stupa and its Technology: A Tibeto-Buddhist Perspective* gives a broad overview on the architectural background of the Tibetan stupa. He translated Tibetan works on the symbolic meaning and stupa construction manuals authored by Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364), for instance.⁸ One may

3 Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology Papers 47 (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, 1952), 41–78.

4 James A. Banks and Cherry A. Mc Gee, eds., *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, 7th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 8.

5 Lieselotte E. Saurma-Jeltsch and Anja Eisenbeiß, eds., *The Power of Things and the Flow of Cultural Transformations: Art and Culture between Europe and Asia* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010).

6 The Digital Himalaya Project Team broadly defines the Himalaya as the region stretching from Ladakh and Kashmir in the west to Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in the east, and from the Tibetan plateau in the north to the foothills in the south. See Sara Shneiderman, Mark Turin, and the Digital Himalaya Project Team, “Digital Himalaya: An Ethnographic Archive in the Digital Age,” *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research (EHBR)* 20, no. 1: 136, <http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/publications/ebhr.pdf> (accessed November 5, 2016).

7 On the connection between *dharmakāya* and *stūpa*, see Gustav Roth, “Symbolism of the Buddhist Stūpa,” in *Stupa: Cult and Symbolism*, eds. Gustav Roth, Franz-Karl Ehrhard, Kimiaki Tanaka, and Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 2009), 12; Niels Gutschow, “Stūpa: Eine Einführung in Geschichte, Typologie und Symbolik,” in *Tibet: Klöster öffnen ihre Schatzkammern*, ed. Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch (Essen: Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen Villa Hügel, 2006), 197; and David L. Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 3rd ed. (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2003), 37.

8 Rin chen grub is an important teacher in the transmission of the *’od zer dri med lha drug*, the 4th mandala of the master collection of Sakya materials (*rgyud sde kun btus*). Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, *Rin chen grub*, <https://www.tbrc.org/#Irid=P155> TBRC (accessed February 10, 2017), and Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, *Rgyud sde kun btus*. <https://www.tbrc.org/#Irid=W4CZ46035> (accessed February 10, 2017).

comment, however, on the emic viewpoint of Pema Dorjee: he uncritically writes that some of the sources he refers to can be regarded as the oldest instructions given by Buddha himself.⁹

Before turning to the specifics of the case study in Germany, I first provide some background on Tibetan stupas, focusing on their history in Nepal. A brief summary of the history of stupas and pagodas in Europe follows, based on my recent study “Visual Expressions of Buddhism in Contemporary Society: Tibetan Stupas built by Karma Kagyu Organisations in Europe.”¹⁰

2. The Tibetan Type of Stupa, the *Mchod rten* in Nepal

Stupas are among the key visual representations of Buddhism. They evolved from their start in India for more than two thousand years. They originally functioned to enshrine relics of the Buddha. From these ancient reliquaries, stupas have developed into very complex structures with a deep, multilayered symbolism. In Yael Bentor’s words:

The *stūpa* as a whole is conceived as the *dharma-kāya* in its meaning of “corpus of the Teachings.” Each part of the *stūpa* is regarded as a component of the teachings which together constitute the *dharma* in its entirety. Furthermore, these

components of the teachings comprise the path to enlightenment.¹¹

The conception of the stupa as the representation of the *dharma-kāya*, the essential body of the Tathāgata, can be traced to the Pāli Canon. Gustav Roth notes that because of this, the basic architecture of the early stupa was increased in terms of number of parts. When the Indian stupa arrived in the Tibetan cultural realm, likely during the initial dissemination (Tib. *snga dar*; seventh to eighth century), its architecture had already endured major structural transformations. As described by David L. Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, the earliest stupas in Tibet presumably consisted of a square platform and five square tapered tiers, upon which a tall dome rested. The superstructure was made from a series of thirteen wheels or rings topped with a half moon, a sun disc, and a drop. In addition to unique monuments like the gigantic dPal ’khor mchod rten of Gyantse (rGyal rtse), completed around 1427, the standardized group of “Eight Great Location-*Caityas*” (Sk. *aṣṭa-mahāsthāna-caityas*) became very popular in Tibet. These stupas, or *caityas*, are of Indian origin and commemorate the Eight Great Events of the historical Buddha, which occurred at eight different locations.¹² The *byang chub mchod rten* (Sk. *bodhi stūpa*; Enlightenment stupa) refers to Buddha’s enlightenment in Bodh Gayā and is the type most frequently built (figure 1). The architecture is divided into the throne (Tib. *gdan khri*); a section

- 9 Yael Bentor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996); Christoph Cüppers, Leonard van der Kuijp, and Ulrich Pagel, eds., *Handbook of Tibetan Iconometry: A Guide to the Arts of the 17th Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), plates 288–303; and Pema Dorjee, *Stupa and its Technology: A Tibeto-Buddhist Perspective* (New Delhi: Shri Jainendra Press, 1996), 143–50. The concepts etic and emic were coined by linguist Kenneth L. Pike, who introduced the terms into linguistics and anthropology in 1954. According to Pike, the “etic viewpoint studies behaviour as from the outside of a particular system,” while the “emic viewpoint results from studying behaviour as from inside the system.” Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (Den Haag: Mouton Publishers, 1967), 37. For more information on emic and etic discourse, see *Emics and Etics: The Insider/ Outsider Debate*, eds. Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, and Marvin Harris (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, 1990).
- 10 Eva Seegers, “Visual Expressions of Buddhism in Contemporary Society: Tibetan Stūpas Built by Karma Kagyu Organisations in Europe,” PhD Diss., Canterbury Christ Church University, 2011.

- 11 Yael Bentor, “In Praise of Stūpas: The Tibetan Eulogy at Chū-Yung-Kuan Reconsidered,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 38 (1995): 41. On relic veneration, see John S. Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004); and David Germano and Kevin Trainor, *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia* (New York: State University of New York, 2004). On reliquaries, see Michael Willis, *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India* (London: British Museum Press, 2000); and Roth, “Symbolism of the Buddhist Stūpa,” 12.
- 12 Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 89; Erberto Lo Bue and Franco Ricca, *The Great Stupa of Gyantse: A Complete Tibetan Pantheon of the Fifteenth Century* (London: Serindia Publications, 1993). For the murals inside the stupa, see David Jackson, *A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Painters and Their Traditions* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 90–3; and Prabodh Chandra Bagchi, “The Eight Great Caityas and their Cult,” *The Indian Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1941): 223–35. This group is also known as the “Eight Tathāgata Stūpas” (Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa'i mchod rten brgyad*), or “Tathāgata stupas of the eight sacred places.” See Niels Gutschow, “Stūpa: Eine Einführung in Geschichte, Typologie und Symbolik,” 198–99.

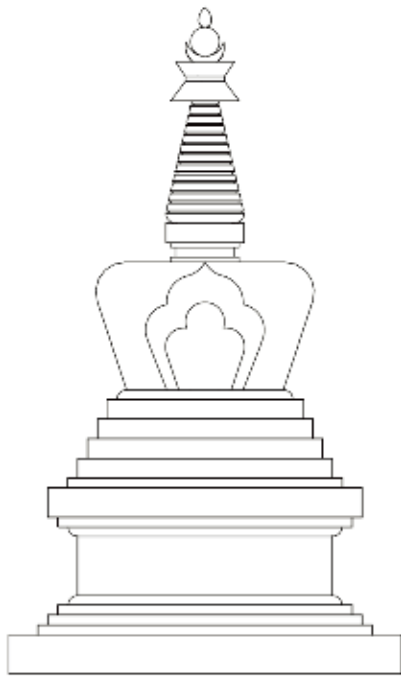


Figure 1. The Tibetan *byang chub mchod rten* (Sk. *bodhi stūpa*; Enlightenment stupa) refers to Buddha's enlightenment in Bodh Gayā; it is one of the "Eight Great Location *Caityas*." Drawing by Michaela Hastenteufel.

with steps that are designed differently; the vase (Tib. *bum pa*); a square railing on top of the vase (Tib. *bre*, more commonly known as the [Sk] *harmikā*); thirteen wheels (Tib. *'khor lo*) topped with a rain cover (Tib. *char khebs*) or parasol (Tib. *gdugs*); a moon (Tib. *zla ba*); a sun (Tib. *nyi ma*); and a jewel peak (Tib. *nor bu'i tog*).¹³

13 The basic Indian stupa architecture became somewhat extended in the early cave temples of Western India during the first and second centuries BCE, when the rather compact body of the early stupa became vertically elongated and its base elevated. Now resting on a cylindrical part, the height of the dome decreased in proportion to the base. Moreover, when Buddhism flourished in the region of ancient Gandhāra (present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan) during the second century BCE to the sixth century CE, unprecedented stupa forms emerged. The chronology is still unclear but there is evidence for the development of specific types that were classified by Heinrich Gerhard Franz. First is the so-called "tower stupa," for example, the Kaniška tower stupa near Peshāwar, which shows a longitudinal extension that would play an important role in the later development of pagodas in East Asia. The second type is the so-called "terrace stupa," such as the Tōp-é-Rustam in Balkh (present-day Baktra in Afghanistan)

The Nepalese have their own history of stupas, or *caityas*, as they call them.¹⁴ These buildings were the primary cult objects of the Newar Buddhists from the Licchavi period (ca. 300–800 CE) to the Malla period (ca. 1200–1769 CE).¹⁵ As analyzed in detail by Niels Gutschow, who composed a comprehensive account of the *caityas* of the Kathmandu valley, the construction of the characteristic Nepalese *caitya* on the one hand follows the ancient Indian archetype, while on the other hand it follows particular forms developed within this region. The *mahācaitya* Bodhnāth and Svayambhū are the most significant *caitya* in Nepalese culture, as is well known.

At what point in history the Tibetans brought their characteristic Tibeto-Buddhist stupa tradition to Nepal is a matter of speculation. It is generally accepted that the first Tibetans settled in the Everest area at the edge of the Tibetan plateau around the sixteenth century, and in my view it is most likely that they built the first stupas there. This point would require more scholarly attention because some stupas, such as the Tibetan stupas located in the Manang district, have not been researched yet.¹⁶ Franz-Karl Ehrhard undertook

and the Rawak stupa near Khotan. Here, the hemispherical dome was placed on a square plinth that in some examples also featured staircases leading upwards on all four sides. As explained by Marilyn Martin Rhie, in the third century CE the square-based stupa was prevalent in Eastern Central Asia. Heinrich Gerhard Franz, "Stupa and Stupatemple in the Gandharan Regions and Central Asia," in *The Stupa: Its Religious, Historical and Architectural Significance*, ed. Anna Libera-Dallapiccola (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980), 39–79; and Marilyn Martin Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia (2), The Eastern China and Sixteen Kingdoms Period in China and Tumshuk, Kucha and Karashahr in Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 637.

14 The Sanskrit terms *stūpa* and *caitya* originally held different meaning, but the precise etymologies of both terms are uncertain. *Stūpa* has been translated as "a knot or tuft of hair, the upper part of head, crest, top, summit," and alternatively "a heap or pile of earth, or bricks etc." The stem *stūp-* means "to heap up, pile, erect," but there are different opinions if this is the root from which the term *stūpa* derives. The term *caitya* has the meaning of being "a funeral monument or pyramidal column containing the ashes of deceased persons, sacred tree (especially a religious fig tree) growing on a mound, hall or temple or place of worship." See Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), 1260.

15 Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya: 1500 Years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley*, Lumbini International Research Institute Monograph Series 1 (Stuttgart and London: Edition Axel Menges, 1997), 305.

16 The Manang district borders on the Tibetan Autonomous Region to the north, the Mustang district to the west, the Kaski district to

some stupa research in the remote areas of Nepal by translating a document with the building history of a Tibetan stupa located in Junbesi, Solu-Khumbu in eastern Nepal. The stupa belongs to the “Eight Great Location-*Caityas*” and was built by members of the Nyang family (Tib. *nyang ris*) of the Sherpas of eastern Nepal, who trace their origins back to a famous revealer of ancient hidden texts or teachings (Tib. *gter ston*) of the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁷

Nepalese and Tibetan stupa architecture sometimes influence each other. Niels Gutschow found the first evidence for a Tibetan-style stupa, locally known as *bodhicaitya*, in Cvasapābhā, Kathmandu, built in 1701. This type is shaped in the same way as the Tibetan *byang chub mchod rten* (Enlightenment stupa) but rests on an additional platform. More than two hundred years later, this Nepalese version of the Tibetan stupa became more common in the Kathmandu valley and Gutschow counted eleven *caitya* of this type on the Svayambhū hill. It should be noted that Nepalese Tulādhār or Mānandhar families, not Tibetans, erected this hybrid type between 1940 and 1979.¹⁸

In the course of the diaspora, around 1959, the Tibetans popularized the “Eight Great Location-*Caityas*” in Nepal by building them around their new exile monasteries. Their numbers increased enormously over the years. The *caitya* tradition of the Newar continued in parallel. Even today, stonemasons regularly repair the old ones and cast new models for ritual construction and consecration. They also have Tibetan models on offer.

3. Contemporary Tibetan Stupas in Europe—A Brief Summary¹⁹

Tibetan Buddhism became very popular in Europe from the 1970s as high-ranking Tibetan lamas like the

the south, and the Lamjung district to the east.

17 This revealer was mNga' bdag Nyang ral Nyi ma'i 'od-zer. See Franz-Karl Ehrhard, *Buddhism in Tibet and the Himalayas: Texts and Tradition* (Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2013), 181–200, 182, note 1.

18 See Niels Gutschow, *The Nepalese Caitya*, 302–7.

19 This section briefly summarizes my detailed qualitative survey of contemporary Tibetan stupas belonging to the “Eight Great Location-*Caityas*,” built by Kar ma bKa' brgyud and Dwags shangs bKa' brgyud organizations in Europe. Seegers, “Visual Expressions of Buddhism in Contemporary Society,” 123–88.

16th Karmapa Rang byung rig pa'i rdo rje (1924–81) started traveling to “the West.” A variety of Tibetan Buddhist organizations subsequently emerged and began building stupas from the 1980s. As five major Tibetan groups and several sub-groups constitute the landscape of Tibetan Buddhism in Europe, I cannot easily pin down “the transmission” of “the Tibetan stupa” to Europe. Furthermore, “the Tibetan stupa,” as one sharply defined style of religious architecture, does not exist—its measurements, fillings, and rituals are directly bound to the old transmission lines of different Tibetan masters.²⁰ I narrowed the scope of my investigation to the Kar ma bKa' brgyud and Dwags shangs bKa' brgyud organizations, and counted over 220 stupas in sixteen European countries, erected during the past thirty-five years. The number would increase immensely if I included the stupas of all Tibetan organizations in Europe. Undoubtedly, these large numbers demonstrate that stupas are highly important to European Buddhists.

My studies revealed that only a few examples stand on public grounds, and even fewer have been initiated by non-Buddhists; the majority of stupas are built on private grounds at the initiative of Buddhist groups. These stupas follow the traditional key principles of stupa construction, as articulated in manuals or treatises (Tib. *mchod rten thig rtsa*) that show how to design, scale, and construct stupas. European Buddhists invite a lama specially designated as qualified to carry out spiritual supervision, in Tibetan *rdo rje slob dpon* (Sk. *vajrācārya*). This person is responsible for certain major tasks: the geomantic instructions for the examination and preparation of the ground, the exact timing of all steps in the building process, the measurements of the stupa, and the preparation and filling of the treasure chambers inside. The lama is furthermore respon-

20 Eight practice lineages shape Tibetan Buddhism and they can all be traced back to Indian masters. According to Matthew T. Kapstein, these “eight great conveyances that are lineages of attainment” (*sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyud*) can be traced back to the thirteenth century but have been formulated by sixteenth-century master Prajñāraśmi (‘Phreng bo gTer ston Shes rab 'od zer; 1517–84). These include: (1) sNga 'gyur rnying ma; (2) dKa' gdams; (3) Sa skya; (4) Mar pa bKa' brgyud; (5) Shangs pa bKa' brgyud; (6) Zhi byed and gCod; (7) rDo rje māl 'byor or sbyor ba yan lag drug; and (8) rDo rje gsum gyi bsnyen sgrub. Matthew T. Kapstein, “dDams ngag: Tibetan Technologies of the Self,” in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, eds. José Ignacio Cabézon and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 278.

sible for the rituals and consecrations before and during the actual construction and knows the exact method of arranging the mandalas inside the central axis, or life-tree (Tib. *srog shing*). Finally, the lama performs the consecration ritual (Sk. *pratiṣṭā*, Tib. *rab gnas*) subsequent to the completion of the construction. All these principles make a stupa what it is, namely a symbol for the *dharmakāya*, which Buddhists use as a “receptacle of worship” (Tib. *mchod rten*).²¹ Because stupas in Europe take root in a completely different cultural context, they become examples of the creation of new religious and secular spaces.

The most prominent example of this new type of space is the Enlightenment stupa in Benalmádena, located at the Costa del Sol in Spain. With a height of thirty-three meters and a floor area of one hundred square meters, it stands among the largest stupas in Europe. A Tibetan lama from the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan guided the ritual construction. Together with a German-based Polish architect who specialized in stupa building, the lama designed the most innovative Tibetan stupa so far. The stupa at the Costa del Sol is an outstanding example of the successful transfer of Buddhist visual representations into a new cultural and

religious environment. This unique piece of religious architecture has the potential to be the actual starting point of what could be called “Modern Stupa Architecture.” The religious significance of stupas in Europe built by Buddhist organizations can be compared to those in Asia, as devotees use them according to tradition (e.g., for circumambulation and participating in area religious activities).²²

Erecting Tibetan stupas in public parks or other public areas is a relatively new phenomenon in Europe. In the Tibetan cultural realm, it is common for stupas to be constructed at crossroads, alongside streets or in the countryside, which may follow the traditional concept of “liberation through seeing” (Tib. *mthong grol*), meaning that a stupa is thought to have soteriological efficacy by mere virtue of being viewed.²³ In this case, the supporters of stupas in public spaces can be thought of as adopting a common Asian tradition common in Europe.

Given that architecture is interwoven with the cloth of cultural life, what conflicts may arise when a Buddhist stupa is built in a mostly non-religious or Chris-

21 We find geomantic instructions in the thirty-second chapter of the *Vaidūrya dkar po* (The fundamental treatise on Tibetan astrology and calendrical calculations) by sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *The Vaidūrya dkar po of Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho: The Fundamental Treatise on Tibetan Astrology and Calendrical Calculations* (New Delhi: T. Tsepal Taikhang, 1971), vol. 2, fol. 21r1–30r4. A translation into German may be found in Petra Maurer, *Die Grundlagen der Tibetischen Geomantie Dargestellt anhand des 32. Kapitels des Vaidūrya dkar po von sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der Kultur- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte Tibets zur Zeit des 5. Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682)* (Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2009), 188–89.

Unsuitable sites for stupas are, for example, on a grassland with stones; at a place with *nāga*, scary deities, and *'dre* demons; or in a deep gorge at the edge of an earth fissure. Furthermore, a stupa should not be located in the east, for a stupa in the east is thought to destroy a place in the west as the *nāga* king lingers in the east and is angered if a foundation stone is placed there. Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, *bai DUrya dkar po*. <https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W30116> (accessed February 10, 2017).

Tradition stipulates that a special consecration ritual (Sk. *pratiṣṭā*, Tib. *rab gnas*), which transform religious objects such as stupas and images into sacred or holy objects, must be conducted when the construction is finished. For more information on contents and consecration, see Bentor, “Literature on Consecration (*Rab gnas*),” 290–311; and Yael Bentor, “The Content of Stūpas and Images and the Indo-Tibetan Concept of Relics,” *The Tibet Journal* 28, no. 1–2 (2003): 21–48.

22 This innovative stupa in Andalusia, Spain, built by the architect Wojtek Kossowski, is one of the most important visual representations of Tibetan Buddhist art in Europe. Strikingly, although this stupa adopted some of the principles of the German Bauhaus school and is very modern in shape, it still follows the required traditional principles of stupa construction, which make it a proper object of worship. The former mayor of Benalmádena, who wished to attract more tourists to his region, officially initiated the stupa. European-born Buddhists, following the Karma bKa' brygyud school of Tibetan Buddhism, invited Bhutanese master sLob dpon Tse chu rin po che (1918–2003), the nephew of Shes Rab rdo rje (fl. 18th century). Shes Rab rdo rje carried out a renovation of the Svāyambhū Mahācaitya, on behalf of the king of Bhutan. sLob dpon Tse chu rin po che guided the stupa project from the beginning but died near its completion, and the fourteenth Žwa dmar rin po che (1952–2014) performed the final *rab gnas*. See Eva Seegers, “The Innovative Stūpa Project in Andalusia, Spain: A Discussion on Visual Representations of Tibetan Buddhist Art in Europe,” *DISKUS. The Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR)* 17, no. 3 (2015): 18–39, <http://diskus.basr.ac.uk/index.php/DISKUS/article/view/78/67> (accessed November 1, 2016). On Shes Rab rdo rje, see Ehrhard, *Buddhism in Tibet and the Himalayas: Texts and Tradition*, 188, note 7.

23 Liberation from the cycle of existence through contact with the sense faculties is a common practice in the Tibetan cultural realm. As explained by Cathy Cantwell, the Tibetan *Book of the Dead* (Tib. *bar do thos grol*) is one of the most well-known examples. It must be read to a dying person in order to liberate him or her through hearing it (Tib. *thos grol*). Cathy Cantwell, “The Dance of the Guru’s Eight Aspects,” *International Journal of Tantric Studies* 1, no. 2 (November 1995), http://asiatica.org/ijts/vol1_no2/dance-gurus-eight-aspects/ (accessed October 12, 2016).

tian environment? Transplanting religious monuments from one culture to another may incite cultural clashes or contestation over religious and secular spaces, as I found to be the case in the German city of Hamburg. There, a nine-meter-high stupa was to be erected in a popular park in the center of the city, but the project sparked a debate over religious symbols in public spaces that ultimately led to its termination. The ensuing search for a new site caused a massive protest of residents at another park, and in the end the Buddhist initiators decided to rethink their wish to build a stupa in Hamburg if it was not clearly welcomed.

Austria holds two successful examples of Tibetan stupas erected on public grounds. One stupa was built in 2011 on a prominent site at the Mönchsberg in Salzburg, with a view of the castle, and two years later another stupa was erected on public grounds in the city of Linz. In both cities, European Buddhists together with government representatives found suitable construction sites, agreed on building permissions, and initiated the stupas. Skilled Tibetan lamas spiritually supervised the construction efforts.²⁴

Another example can be found in the United Kingdom in the heart of Yorkshire. Bhutanese monks erected a stupa in the garden of Harewood House, one of the National Trust stately homes in England. Constructed under the supervision of the Bhutanese Lama Sonam Chopel, it is the only stupa of this kind in the U.K. and was built in local stone by Yorkshire craftsmen. In 2005, the project concluded with a consecration ceremony presided over by the eminent Bhutanese Lama Baso Karpo. As it is part of a Himalayan garden with Rhododendron species, it shows some similarities to a stupa in Bremen, Northern Germany, to which I will move now.

4. The Stupa in the Rhododendron Park of Bremen, Germany

The initiative for the stupa in Bremen originated in the green science center Botanika, a project established in a public park by the city of Bremen in 2003. Today, the Botanika GmbH is a multifaceted science center aiming

24 On the case study carried out in Hamburg, see Seegers, "Visual Expressions of Buddhism in Contemporary Society: Tibetan Stūpas Built by Karma Kagyu Organisations in Europe," 189–200.

to promote biological diversity and the rhododendron genus to students and the public. It combines Asiatic landscapes and a discovery center with interactive exhibitions.

The stupa is embedded in the Botanika's vision to follow the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to network with other cultures. The history of the Rhododendron Park traces back to 1935, and today the forty-six-hectare park displays the second largest rhododendron collection in the world.²⁵ The Botanika was first intended as a tourist attraction; it was later renovated and extended. Michael Werbeck, former director of the Rhododendron Park and initiator of the Botanika, explained to me that one of the principal ideas behind the concept of the Botanika is to follow certain key points of the CBD, for example, conservation of biodiversity, sustainable usage, and the fair sharing of benefits (i.e., a considerable part of the park's earnings should flow back to the people in the countries from which the primary products originated).²⁶ The extraction of biological components from one part of the earth for use elsewhere—in this case, planting rhododendrons from the Himalayas in a German park—are included among these points.

5. The Stupa as an Exhibit within the Asiatic Landscape

The basic aim of the project was to create a botanic exhibition that would shed light on not only the flora

25 Hartwig Schepker, *Rhododendron-Park Bremen. 75 Jahre Blütenpracht* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2012), 10.

26 Michael Werbeck, interview by the author, Bremen, Germany, March 13, 2008. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted at the United Nations Conference for the Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This Convention is not confined to nature conservation *per se*; it also addresses the use—and hence the economic potential—of natural resources as the key to conserving biological diversity. It regulates, furthermore, the cooperation between industrialized countries on the one hand, which possess much of the technical knowledge required to utilize biodiversity; and developing countries on the other, which are home to much of the world's biological diversity and which also possess valuable traditional knowledge about traditional usage forms. The Convention on Biological Diversity is dedicated to preserving the foundations of life for future generations. See Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *Global Biodiversity Outlook 4 - Summary and Conclusions* (Montreal: Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2014), <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo4/gbo4-summary-en.pdf> (accessed January 10, 2017).



Figure 2. The stupa in Bremen, Germany. Photograph by Olaf Hudecek, 2003.



Figure 3. Map of movement for the pre-carved components of a Tibetan Enlightenment stupa transferred from Nepal to Germany in 2003. Image adapted from Google Maps.

but also the different cultures of Asia. Project initiators therefore decided to incorporate Asian culture and religion by displaying characteristic features from the region. People from Germany and the Himalayas, they believed, experience their landscapes in unique ways and have different relationships with nature such that the exhibit would be a way to help visitors understand and experience Asian landscapes.²⁷

In Bremen, Asiatic landscapes and mountain regions are displayed in an area of four thousand square meters and in three large greenhouses dedicated to the Himalaya, Borneo, and Japan, respectively. The exhibition features characteristic vegetation and cultural elements of each area and contains an extraordinary diversity of flora.

Directly in front of the main entrance of the Botanika, and prefacing the entire exhibition, stands a four-meter-high Tibetan stupa that was produced in Nepal (figures 2 and 3). Stupas dot the open landscapes of the vast Himalayan range of mountain peaks, which arc across Central Asia, and are one of the key visual representations of the Buddhist tradition which has shaped Himalayan countries to a high degree. Project

initiators determined that such a structure would serve as a perfect complement to the exhibition and decided to place it outside the entrance area. Inside the greenhouse featuring the “Himalayan World,” visitors find a statue, hand-made in Kathmandu over a period of thirteen years, of the reclining Buddha in *parinirvāṇa* posture. With a length of more than four meters, it is one of the largest bronze statues of a reclining Buddha in Europe. Visitors may rest on a bench in front of the statue and take in the visual splendor of the statue; they can also take part in a living custom found all over the Himalayas of turning a large prayer wheel (Tib. *ma ni 'khor lo*) containing 168 million printed mantras. Continuing into the greenhouse, visitors circumambulate a *mani*-wall (Tib. *ma ni 'i rdo phung*), a wall made of stones or stone slabs decorated with inscriptions of the six-syllable mantra of Avalokiteśvara (*om maṇi padme hūṃ*). Visitors encounter various other details drawn from Himalayan landscapes as well. A small cave containing many *tsha tshas* (stamped clay images) can be found high in the rocks beside a waterfall, a nod to the well-known Himalayan tradition of placing stamped clay images at sacred sites or other places in order to protect and bless their surroundings.²⁸ A Chinese tea

27 Michael Werbeck explained the main idea behind the Buddhist exhibits of the Botanika in a press release. Press Release, Senate Press Office, Bremen “Ein besonderer Botschafter für Botanika” (October 2002), <http://www.senatspressestelle.bremen.de/detail.php?id=16517> (accessed December 4, 2016).

28 The process of making clay *tsha tsha* is an act of devotion and the finished images are placed inside stupas or at sacred sites. The three main types are figurative, text plaque, and stupa shape. Their creation fulfills a variety of religious or community

pavilion has also been installed within the exhibition of plants from Vietnam and southern China, and a large seated statue of Shakyamuni Buddha will be integrated into the “Japan World” as part of a project initiated by the Dalai Lama, who offers a statue to each continent in the name of fostering world peace.²⁹

The exhibits highlight cultural exchange between Germany and Asia in more than a material sense. During the initial stages of construction, two Tibetan monks living in Nepalese exile were flown to Germany for the ritual construction of the stupa (I outline this below). When the Botanika ran an exhibition of traditional scroll paintings, or *thangka* (Tib. *thang ka*) in 2009, moreover, they invited a Nepali *thangka* painter to depict a colorful dragon on a rock in the Himalayan greenhouse—now part of the permanent “Himalayan World.” Botanika organizers regularly invite Tibetan monks from Nepal and South India to create sand mandalas of deities like White Tārā (Sk. Sita Tārā, Tib. *sgrol dkar*), which the monks destroy immediately following the completion ritual as a symbol for the impermanence of all phenomena. The sand is then deposited into the small river flowing through the Rhododendron Park. A diverse program of events such as movies, guided tours, lectures, and meditations centered around Buddhism and Tibet accompanies these yearly events as well. These activities highlight the project’s aim to promote lively cultural exchange with the countries of origin—incidentally, they also increase the number of visitors.

purposes. Toni Huber, “Some 11th- Century Indian Buddhist Clay Tablets (tsha-tsha) from Central Tibet,” in *Tibetan Studies*, eds. Ihara Shoren and Yamaguchi Zuiho (Narita: Naritasan Shinshoji, 1992), 493-96.

29 In 1993, the first installation and inauguration of such a Buddha statue was held in New Delhi’s Jayanti Park, and was presided over by the Dalai Lama himself. At the time of publication, the German statue is held in New Delhi at the Tibet House, under the spiritual guidance of Tenzin Dhedon, and is scheduled to be transported to Bremen in 2017. The process takes time, because the statue is a gift but its transportation and shelter site must be financed by other parties. See Tibet House, *Installation of Buddha Statue at Buddha Jayanti Park* (2015), <http://www.tibethouse.in/content/installation-buddha-statue-buddha-jayanti-park> (accessed December 5, 2016); and Antje Noah-Scheinert, “Friedensbuddha für die Botanika,” *Weser Kurier*, April 24, 2014, http://www.weser-kurier.de/bremen_artikel,-Friedensbuddha-fuer-die-Botanika-_arid,834679.html (accessed December 3, 2016).



Figure 4. Nepalese stonemasons checking the fit of pre-carved components for the uppermost section of the stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal. Photograph by Holm Triesch, 2003.

6. Construction History of the Bremen Stupa

Botanika project initiators ordered a four-meter-high Tibetan-type stupa from two Newar stonemason families in Kathmandu, Nepal (figure 4). The Newar is an important ethnic group in Nepal that has built *caityas* for centuries. The stupa elements were hand made over a period of eighteen months, packed into separate boxes with an overall weight of approximately eighteen tons, and transported by truck to India before being shipped to Germany. When the individual stupa elements arrived, the initiators realized that without people experienced in stupa construction it would not be possible to create an authentic stupa, only a replica. Dissatisfied with that prospect, they set out to find a proper spiritual guide who could apply the key principles of stupa construction. Few Tibetan lamas endowed with this expertise and either living in Europe or willing to travel to Europe for a single stupa project could be found, how-



Figure 5. Tibetan lama performing the foundation stone ceremony in the Rhododendron Park in Bremen, Germany. Photograph by Olaf Hudecek, 2003.

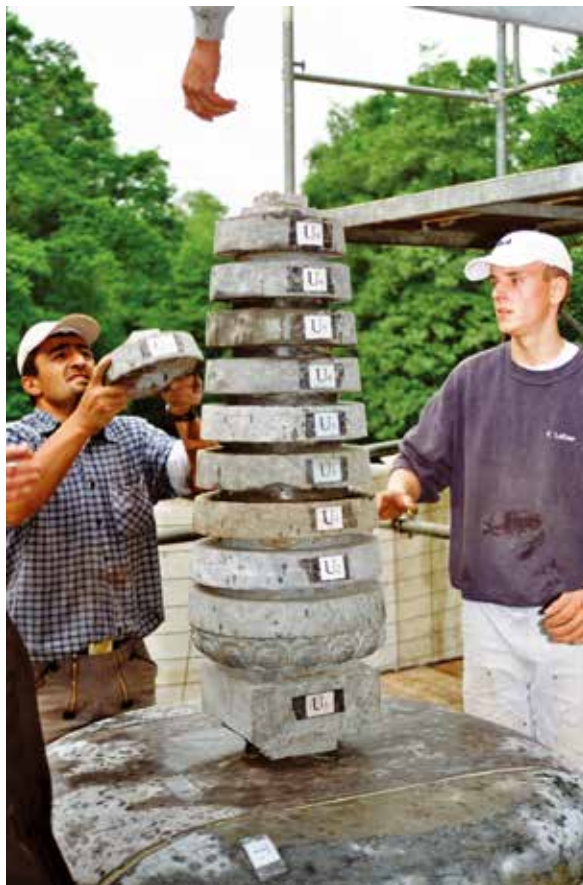


Figure 6. The stupa components carved in Nepal are reassembled in the Rhododendron Park in Bremen, Germany. Photograph by Olaf Hudecek, 2003.

ever. In the end, members of the local Diamond Way Buddhist center in Bremen organized and financed the spiritual part of the stupa construction.³⁰ Diamond Way Buddhism is a worldwide network of Karma Kagyu lay Buddhists who initiated their first European stupa in 1984 in Denmark.³¹ Their experienced stupa architect Wojitek Kossowski was at that time involved in

his sixteenth stupa project in Europe—the aforementioned thirty-three-meter stupa at the Costa del Sol in Spain. He offered important advice and suggested Lama Kalsang, a Tibetan lama from Kathmandu, to serve as the stupa master (figure 5).

The city of Bremen commissioned a construction company that, together with the Tibetan lama and the German Buddhists, erected the stupa. Figures 6 and 7 reveal the challenging nature of the construction process: using a hand-drawn sketch, the stupa was reassembled on site from stone components pre-carved in Nepal. The stupa contains three chambers that are ritually filled with precious substances, including some fifteen hundred hand-molded *tsha tshas*. Several specially blessed ritual objects and hundreds of mantra rolls were enclosed inside the stupa as well, arranged

30 Olaf Hudecek, interview by the author, Bremen, Germany, March 13, 2008.

31 This stupa in Lolland, Denmark was built by bsTan dga' rin po che (1932–2012), who was born in Khams, Eastern Tibet. See Seegers, “Visual Expressions of Buddhism in Contemporary Society: Tibetan Stūpas Built by Karma Kagyu Organisations in Europe,” 136. On Diamond Way Buddhism, see “Diamond Way Buddhism,” *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, ed. Edward A. Irons (New York: Facts on File, 2008), 162.



Figure 7. Construction of the stupa in the Rhododendron Park in Bremen, Germany. Photograph by Olaf Hudecek, 2003.

according to traditional instructions (figure 8). One of the most important parts of a stupa, the central axis or life-tree, which normally stretches up to the very top of the stupa, accidentally became much shorter in the Bremen project because the final stone spire lacked the central hole into which the lamas insert the life-tree. On Sunday, May 25, 2003, Lama Kalsang and Lama Ngö Drub performed the final consecration ritual (Tib. *rabs gnas*).

7. The Symbolism of the Stupa in this Extraordinary Context

Essential to the “reading” of religious architecture is the interpretability of symbols and artifacts. A stupa

on a crossroad in Kathmandu, for example, has been embedded in the social and religious life of the Nepalese people for centuries. A stupa is part of Buddhist and Asian culture and is therefore interpreted and used accordingly. When a stupa is transmitted from Kathmandu to a park in Germany, it will undoubtedly be interpreted and perceived differently than a Nepalese monument.

The stupa in Bremen represents the *byang chub mchod rten* type, which can be rendered in English as the Enlightenment stupa (Sk. *bodhi stūpa*) type. It symbolizes the Buddha’s enlightenment in Bodh Gayā and is the most common form of stupa in the Tibetan cultural realm. Tibetan sources explain this stupa as a representation of the Buddha’s mind that belongs to a group of well-known objects of worship, which are classified as receptacles of the Buddha’s body, speech, and mind (Tib. *sku gsung thugs rten*).³² Images and scroll paintings are considered receptacles of the Buddha’s physical body (Tib. *sku rten*). Texts, books, mantras, seed syllables, and all written forms of the dharma are receptacles for the Buddha’s speech (Tib. *gsung rten*), symbolizing his teachings. The mind of the Buddha (Tib. *thugs rten*) is represented by a stupa, essentially a container for the relics of the Buddha and those of accomplished masters who represent the Buddha. In short, a stupa represents all the qualities of the Buddha. It is likely that visitors to the Rhododendron Park do not perceive the stupa in this manner, however, but rather develop their own ideas, dependent upon their individual knowledge and the information provided by the local guide. This idea will be discussed below in the section titled “Transformations on Many Levels.”

For the initiators of the Botanika, the stupa unites the symbolism and history of Buddhism, a more than two-thousand-year-old world religion—this was their main reason for integrating a stupa into the Asiatic botanical exhibition. By situating the stupa outdoors at the entrance and not directly in the greenhouse with plants, they also added a new function the stupa: indicating to visitors that they are about to enter the world of the Himalayas and its religious traditions. I would therefore venture to say that the motivation for building it might be more educational than “spiritual” or Buddhist. After all, the eye-catching stupa and the statue of the reclin-

³² One source is the *Vaiḍūrya dkar po* by Sde-srid Saṅs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho mentioned in note 21.



Figure 8. The chambers inside the stupa filled with 1500 *tsha tsha* and other precious substances. Photograph by Olaf Hudecek, 2003.

ing Buddha inside the huge greenhouse became the principal tourist draws in the Himalayan section.

At the same time, the placement of the stupa at the entrance area where all visitors pass by can also understood as paying heed to the important meaning of stupas as imparting soteriological efficacy by the mere virtue of being visible. As noted above, achieving liberation from the cycle of existence through contact with the sense faculties is a common practice in Tibetan Buddhism.³³ The Tibetan lamas who supervised the project explained to the initiators that a stupa yields good karma.³⁴ Acknowledging this, the initiators decided it might even be beneficial if visiting school-children sat in the vicinity of a stupa and studied. In my view, this kind of statement demonstrates that a non-Buddhist German organization placed trust in the traditional Buddhist concepts connected to a stupa and was able to imagine it as having a positive effect on the local community.

8. The Stupa and the Garden of Human Rights

The stupa takes on another level of meaning as well, as part of the Garden of Human Rights, one project of the international organization “INSCRIRE: To write the Human Rights,” founded by French artist Françoise Schein at the time of the fall of the Berlin wall. Over many years and in many countries within and without Europe, the organization has conceived and created artistic works and events that highlight human rights principles and cultural diversity. Schein has written inscriptions from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) in public spaces such as subway stations or cultural institutions as a means of embedding them in the people’s awareness. The project connects interest in networks beyond borders with the conviction that this text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents the most important foundation for the social and political coexistence of humanity.³⁵ The project, further, adapts its vision to the cultural, social, and urban conditions of the places and countries with which it engages. In 2001, philosopher Barbara Reiter selected the Rhododendron Park in Bremen and de-

³³ See footnote 23.

³⁴ Sources like the *Adbhutadharmaparyāya*, a Buddhist canonical text about the making of stupas and images, the cult of relics and the merit resulting from them, explain how meritorious the construction and veneration of stupas might be. Yael Bentor, “The Redactions of the *Adbhutadharmaparyāya* from Gilgit,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 11, no. 2 (1988): 21–52.

³⁵ See INSCRIRE: To write the Human Rights, “The Garden of the Human Rights. Protected Difference at the Rhododendron’s Park in Bremen” (2009), <http://www.inscire.com/> (accessed December 5, 2016).

signed the sub-project “INSCRIRE: Garden of Human Rights,” which won the local prize of Agenda 21 after the 1992 conference in Rio. The text of the Human Rights Declaration appears on a continuous ribbon of bronze that winds along the footpaths through the park. The basic idea is that one can walk and read at the same time, reflecting upon the declaration while being in nature. Article 18 on the freedom of religion winds around the pedestal of the stupa. It reads:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.³⁶

The bronze band was installed at the same time as the stupa was constructed.

The ribbons establish a connection between the content of the declaration and where they are placed in the park. For example, Article 26 on education leads to the entrance of the Botanika.³⁷ Werbeck decided to place the article on religious freedom around the stupa because it represented to him “a symbol for the guarantee of religious freedom, although we are in a Christian country.”³⁸ Werbeck thus stresses that in Germany, a predominantly Christian country, people are nevertheless open to the symbols of other religions. As already noted in the case of a 2008 stupa project in Hamburg, however. According to city authorities, granting permission for the construction of a Buddhist symbol in a public park would oblige them to allow symbols of other world religions to be presented there as well, including those they did not want.³⁹ By integrating the

stupa into a project for human rights, the Bremen stupa became an icon for religious freedom and interreligious dialogue. These levels of meaning do not exist in the Himalayas and point to the context-dependent nature of the stupa’s symbolism.

9. Some Conflicts & Political and Economic Aspects

Some conflict and dispute arose surrounding the Botanika in Bremen, but according to Werbeck the central issue had nothing to do with the stupa or other Buddhist exhibits; rather, several influential citizens voiced concern that the Rhododendron Park was becoming a tourist trap. Residents living close to the park complained about additional streams of tourists or more cars parking in front of their homes. Fortunately, these protests have subsided.

Although no specific protests have been raised concerning the stupa in Bremen there have been vehement discussions on whether prayer flags could be hung in the Botanika’s entrance area. Some residents and local businesspeople interpreted the Tibetan prayer flags, which were visible from a great distance, as “pro-Tibet” signs. One of the initiators of the stupa project also served as a representative of a politically active group aiming to improve the situation in Tibet (Tibet Initiative Germany). His commitment to constructing a Tibetan stupa could be interpreted as supporting the interests of Tibet, but he denied this when asked. Certain parties were nevertheless deeply concerned about potential negative effects on trade relations, since the city of Bremen trades extensively with China. In response to this argument, Werbeck responded that he did not find it especially convincing because there is also a Chinese pavilion in the greenhouse of the Botanika. Both Chinese and Tibetan cultures, he noted, are well represented.⁴⁰

This dispute highlights a valid point, however. Once, when presenting my research on Tibetan stupas in Europe at a conference, an agitated Chinese researcher-colleague came forward and claimed that the construction of a Tibetan stupa in Europe is to

36 The German inscription reads: “Jeder Mensch hat Anspruch auf Gedanken-, Gewissens- und Religionsfreiheit; dieses Recht umfasst die Freiheit, seine Religion oder seine Überzeugung zu wechseln, sowie die Freiheit, seine Religion oder seine Überzeugung allein oder in Gemeinschaft mit anderen, in der Öffentlichkeit oder privat, durch Lehre, Ausübung, Gottesdienst und Vollziehung von Riten zu bekunden.” For the English text, see United Nations Human Rights (1948), *Universal Declaration of Human Rights: General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)*, <http://www.un-documents.net/a3r217a.htm> (accessed December 5, 2016).

37 Barbara Reiter, email interview by the author, December 5, 2016.

38 Werbeck, interview.

39 On the Hamburg case study, see Seegers, “Visual Expressions of Buddhism in Contemporary Society,” 189–200. For more details on human rights and Buddhism, see, for example, Peter Harvey,

An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundation, Values and Issues (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18–121.

40 Werbeck, interview.

be understood as a pro-Tibet activity. It would be far preferable to build a Chinese pagoda, the man argued, because China is many times larger and much more influential than Tibet, which is just a tiny province within that country—one need only compare China’s population of 1.3 billion to Tibet’s five million. The building of Tibetan stupas in Europe constituted for this man a symbol of “Western” hostility towards China. Although his suggested symbolism (i.e., Western support for an oppressed Tibet) is new, stupas have traditionally been used to make political statements, beginning with King Aśoka’s stupa-building project in the third century BCE, which was partially intended to assert his political authority. Whether building stupas today could be construed as an aggressive and hostile act, rather than a symbol of peace and harmony, is a topic requiring further research.

10. Transformations on Many Levels

This paper takes as its central theme the relocation of a traditional religious icon into a new, non-religious setting. It investigates the layered meanings of a transplanted Himalayan stupa through a case study in Bremen, Germany. This final section examines in more detail the multi-layered transformations involved in the process:

(1) The stupa in the public Rhododendron Park provides an excellent example of cultural exchange on many levels. Newar stonemasons pre-carved the many components of the stupa in Nepal, but instead of following the tradition of Nepalese *caityas* they designed it according to Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Here we can discern a first-level combination of “cultures” or traditions. We also see cross-cultural contact in the joint efforts of Tibetan lamas and German Buddhists to care for the stupa’s religious rituals and the depositing of relics into the stupa. The stupa is today part of the Rhododendron Park’s estate and is maintained by German Buddhists—actors from other countries (or “cultures”) are no longer involved. The stupa nevertheless still plays an ambassadorial role in representing the Himalayan region and acting as an intermediary between European and Asian cultures.

Let us consider briefly the intriguing idea that a Buddhist stupa or pagoda represents more “culture” than religion. I believe this notion emerged in the field

of landscape architecture as an approach to erecting Asian architectural structures in Europe without the motivation of Buddhist beliefs. By the middle of the eighteenth century, it had become fashionable to install decorative buildings in the gardens and estates of the landed gentry. A new style of architecture that excited particular interest was the so-called *chinoiserie*—a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century style of interior design, furniture, pottery, textiles, and garden design that represented a Western idea of Chinese design.

Chinoiserie drew on reports from travelers who felt inspired by the architecture of the “Orient” and subsequently sought to shape many gardens in a similar style. In the United Kingdom, the well-known connoisseur Richard Bateman (1705–73) installed a number of chinoiserie buildings in his garden at Windsor as early as the 1730s, while the gardens at Stowe, Shugborough, and Virginia Water also incorporated Chinese elements. By 1750, chinoiserie had spread widely and expanded to include other influences, both exotic and gothic. One of the oldest landscape pagodas in existence in Europe is the impressive fifty-meter-high Chinese pagoda in Kew Gardens, London, which the British architect William Chambers (1726–96) designed based on the ideals of chinoiserie in 1761. Another early example in Europe is the Japanese tower erected in 1905 by French architect Alexandre Marcel (1860–1928) near Brussels, Belgium, based on the ideals of Japonism. Marcel gained notoriety for his remarkable pagoda in the Rue de Babylone in Paris and his replica of parts of Angkor Wat for the Cambodian pavilion during the 1900 World Exhibition in Paris.⁴¹ Both the Japanese tower near Brussels and the Chinese pagoda in Kew Gardens, London were, however, commissioned and authorized by the royal houses of Belgium and England, respectively. These circumstances, along with a contemporary predilection among the upper class for Orientalism, indicate that the motivation for erecting such monuments was

41 After many years in China, Chambers published his book *Designs of Chinese Buildings* in 1757. He settled in England, became Princess Augusta’s (1768–1840) official architect, and designed more than two dozen buildings for Kew. The Belgian King Leopold II (1835–1909) requested Marcel to build the huge Japanese tower, which was finished in 1905, and a Chinese pavilion at Laken close to Brussels. For more information, see John Harris, *Sir William Chambers: Architect to George III* (London: Yale University Press, 1996) and Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens* (London: Royal Botanic Gardens, 2007).

less religious than imperialistic. Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1987, the asymmetrical power relationship in the dialogical discourse between "the West" and "the East" has been brought to the forefront of cross-cultural studies. Orientalism, for Said, denotes the Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the East. *Orientalism* and other works by Said sparked a wide variety of controversy and criticism.⁴²

Said's critique of the Western interpretation or creation of the Orient has been extended to criticism of the construction of Tibet as a land of Western fantasy, as outlined in Donald Lopez's *Prisoners of Shangrila*.⁴³ Lopez clearly applies Said's insights (as well as those of Foucault and Bourdieu) for his analysis of the ways in which Tibet has been appropriated in Western culture: "For Lopez, Tibet as it is understood in the West is less a country with its own history and socio-cultural arrangements than a construction, a mythical hyper-reality created by and for Westerners."⁴⁴ Tibet is not perceived on its own terms but as an "object of fantasy." This romanticized view of Tibet raises the quandary of how best to understand the erection of a Tibetan stupa in the "Himalayan World" section of a public park. Is a "romanticist" building a stupa in order to create a "little Tibet" or is there a deeper meaning? It is important here to distinguish between the project's initiators and its users or recipients, a matter I will return to shortly.

In this discussion of cultural transformation, it seems necessary to point out that artifacts, tools, and other tangible elements alone do not account for a culture's entire essence; we must also consider how members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. Cultural exchange today stands for the sharing of different values and knowledges on the same level, eye to eye. The stupa in Bremen, embedded in the vision of the Botanika to follow the Convention on Biological Diversity and to network with other cultures, provides a good example of this.

42 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). For critical discourse on Said, see, for example, *Edward Said's Translocations: Essays in Secular Criticism*, eds. Tobias Döring and Mark Stein (New York and London: Routledge, 2012).

43 Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangrila: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

44 George Dreyfus, "Are We Prisoners of Shangrila? Orientalism, Nationalism, and the Study of Tibet," *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 1 (2005): 2.

(2) Installing a stupa in a public park in northern Germany creates a multi-layered territory. The Enlightenment stupa, located the entrance area of a greenhouse complex, introduces visitors to the "Himalayan World." It is also visible from the terrace of the nearby restaurant. A single site in this case represents, on the one hand, a landscape exhibition with a Himalayan object and, on the other hand, a newly marked religious space that houses a sacred object.

(3) Specific actors with specific agendas encounter the stupa. We must distinguish between Buddhist practitioners who understand and use the stupa according to traditions and explanations from Buddhist teacher and general non-Buddhist viewers who may know nothing at all about Tibetan Buddhism. Non-Buddhists may perceive the stupa as an exotic artifact enticing them to explore the Asian landscapes inside the greenhouses. Buddhists, in contrast, recognize the stupa as an object of worship and may show their respect by circumambulating it and making good wishes. The mixing of interests need not be mutually exclusive, however, and may in fact complement each other. Buddhists, beyond their religious inclinations, may be inspired to visit the landscape exhibition and thus focus on more cultural aspects of the stupa. Non-Buddhists may wish to learn more about Buddhism and open up to the stupa's religious meaning. Observed from the Buddhist perspective, moreover, the stupa fulfills its visual efficacy and soteriological function by simply being seen, regardless of visitors' religious denominations (or lack thereof).

Contemporary Tibetan teachers often emphasize the difference between Tibetan culture and teachings on the essence of Buddhism. For example, Žwa dmar rin po che (1952–2014) invited his Western students to follow the example of the Tibetan masters who transferred Buddhism from India to Tibet and integrated it into their local customs and culture—he entreated his students to do the same.⁴⁵ During many interviews, I found that Buddhists who build stupas in Europe understand them basically as Buddhist symbols for enlightenment and not as cultural monuments transplanted from the Himalayas to Europe. Some practitioners may nevertheless retain a romantic view on

45 Žwa dmar rin po che, "Die Übertragung des Buddhismus in den Westen. Ein Vortrag in Kempten, September 1992," *Kagyü Life* 11 (1993): 13–6.

stupas and the special atmosphere created by these monuments. Some non-Buddhists may associate everything from Tibet with mass media imagery (i.e., the Dalai Lama, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize). For these people, it is probably much easier to understand a stupa as a “peace monument,” as many Buddhist organizations do.⁴⁶

If a non-Buddhist sees a stupa in a public park dedicated to the exhibition of Himalayan plants, as in Bremen or Yorkshire, he or she may interpret it correctly as a representative and typical object for this region or as a support for the exhibited plants. If an information board informs visitors that it is a Tibetan Buddhist stupa originating in the Himalayas, some visitors may interpret it as an idealization of Tibet, even if the initiators had an entirely different motivation for its construction. To counteract possible misinterpretations, initiators and clients should provide information about the general meaning of stupas and the reasons for constructing a stupa at this particular site. In Graz, Austria, for example, a glass panel inscribed with basic information is displayed and residents from the Buddhist center talk to passersby who show interest. Yearly open-house days, when school classes are invited to visit, are also occasions to provide information. Unless such measures are taken, the stupa in Bremen might be little more than a romantic symbol of a foreign Buddhist culture, where prayer flags flap in the wind, Buddha images recline in rock niches, red-robed monks and nuns scatter sand mandalas, and Nepalese painters create dragons on rocky walls.

(4) The Buddhist stupa is a very flexible architectural structure, designed to represent key principles of Buddhist doctrine but able to adapt other levels of meanings. Like a transparent gemstone reflecting the colors of its surrounding area, a religion adopts the “colors” of the cultures it is practiced in. Applied to the case at hand, the construction of an Asian stupa in Europe implies the adoption of local circumstances—the significance of the stupa in Bremen extends far beyond

religious and cultural aspects to economic, political and sociological themes. As this paper has examined, in addition to traditional religious meaning the stupa in Bremen represents Himalayan culture in a broad sense. What makes this stupa unique, however, are its additional references to the contemporary topic of human rights. Because of its integration into the “Garden of Human Rights” project, it also constitutes an icon of religious freedom. This combination of symbolism is uncommon and innovative, marking the stupa as a model case for what may happen if a religious object is relocated to a non-religious setting and incorporated into several overlapping local projects. The layered meanings of the transplanted stupa show an extraordinary multi-functionality which we do not find in Asia. Still, the stupa in Bremen is an exceptional case. Most stupas newly built in Europe are initiated by Buddhist groups and organizations for their religious value. As I have analyzed elsewhere, these “religious stupas” are primarily used for Buddhist practice but occasionally take on contemporary meanings. For example, Tibetan Buddhists erected a stupa on the grounds of the Institut Tibétain Yeunten Ling in Huy, Belgium and dedicated it to world peace with the hope that the stupa would shield the area from a nearby nuclear power plant. This new interpretation demonstrates again the flexible functions of a stupa.

11. Concluding Remarks

Within the flow of cultural exchanges and transformations, the stupa may open to new interpretations without losing its traditional significance. In other words, a stupa can take on new levels of meaning in order to meet the local needs of the context and the people involved while still retaining its spiritual values, symbolic meanings, and religious significance.

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46 For example, the Japanese Nipposan Myōhōji Buddhist Order which erects peace pagodas around the world. There exist more than eighty peace pagodas in Japan, India, Ladakh, Sri Lanka, Europe and the USA. See Jacqueline I. Stone, “Nichiren’s Activist Heirs. Sōka Gakkai, Risshō Kōseikai, Nipposan Myōhōji”, in *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism*, eds. Damien Keown, Charles S. Prebish, and Christopher Queen (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 63–94.

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Tenrikyō's Divine Model through the Manga *Oyasama Monogatari*

ELISABETTA PORCU

1. Introduction

THE idea of religion continuously reinventing itself has come to the fore once again during a recent symposium held at Kyushu University.¹ A clear example is Japan's modernization during the Meiji period (1868–1912), when Buddhism needed to face the challenges coming from external threats (such as those posed by Christianity as well as foreign economic and political interests) and internal struggles related to the forced separation of Buddhism and Shintō, the subsequent persecution of Buddhism, and the establishment of what was later labeled State Shintō (*kokka shintō* 国家神道). Such a reshaping is, however, not surprising considering that religion is part of a socio-economic fabric in continuous flux and, as such, always involved in processes of transformation and (re)affirmation of

authority, being linked to politics, economy, science, and culture, as well as competitions among different religious traditions.² The field of culture, in particular popular culture, can be aptly seen as an arena where religious institutions attempt to keep their bonds to society.³ Two notable expressions of such culture, manga and anime, have become distinctive aspects of Japanese culture and significant examples of what Joseph

1 4th IMAP in Japanese Humanities Symposium on Pre-Modern Japanese Culture: Religion and Imagination in Japanese Contexts, organized by the IMAP in Japanese Humanities in December 2016. This paper was written during my stay as a visiting professor at the IMAP in Japanese Humanities, Kyushu University, and I would like to thank my colleagues Cynthia J. Bogel and Ellen Van Goethem for their kind invitation. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their comments.

2 See also the recent study on the Ise shrines by Mark Teeuwen and John Breen where the idea of Ise as an immutable sacred space is clearly deconstructed. Mark Teeuwen and John Breen, *A Social History of the Ise Shrines: Divine Capital* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017). In present-day Japan, we can consider the strategies used by religious institutions to overcome a condition where religion is not playing an influential role in public life and their attempts to experiment with new modes of temple's management and communication with members and visitors. See my paper "Pop Religion in Japan: Buddhist Temples, Icons, and Branding," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 26, no. 1 (2014): 157–72; and John K. Nelson, *Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

3 In this regard, see my paper "Pop Religion in Japan," Elisabetta Porcu and Paul Watt, eds., *Journal of Religion in Japan* 1, no. 1 (2012), special issue on "Religion and the Secular in Japan;" and Satoko Fujiwara, ed., *Journal of Religion in Japan* 5, no. 2–3 (2016), special issue on "Secularity and Post-Secularity in Japan: Japanese Scholars' Responses."

Nye has labeled “soft power.”⁴ Through popular culture things Japanese have gained global recognition,⁵ and religious groups and individual priests have often turned to popular culture to appeal to younger generations in contemporary Japan.⁶

In this brief paper, I will focus on some crucial aspects of a manga created by Tenrikyō 天理教 (a new religious movement originating in the nineteenth-century), *Oyasama monogatari* (*Gekiga Oyasama monogatari* 劇画教祖 (おやさま) 物語), in relation to the group’s doctrine as expounded in the *Tenrikyō kyōten* 天理教教典 (The Doctrine of Tenrikyō) and the *Ofudesaki* おふでさき (Tip of the Divine Writing Brush).⁷ In particular, I will draw attention to the life of the group’s foundress, Nakayama Miki 中山みき (1798–1887), otherwise known as Oyasama 教祖, as the Divine Model (*Hinagata* ひながた) to be followed, and how her figure as a divine being is represented in the manga in an attempt to create a closer connection between her and Tenrikyō’s members.

Oyasama monogatari belongs to what Yamanaka Hiroshi has termed *kyōdan manga* 教団マンガ, which are produced by religious institutions about their teachings and founders.⁸ As I highlighted elsewhere in the case of Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗, although the institutions insist to claim the “innovative” use of

manga and anime to communicate with their members, the choice of themes and the way the founders are portrayed are quite traditional and can be seen as a manga-ized replica of accounts found in the denominations’ booklets and teachings transmitted through *kawaii* (“cute”) figures. For example, the anime *Shinran sama: Negai, soshite hikari* 親鸞さま—ねがい、そしてひかり (Shinran-sama: His Wish and Light, 2008) clearly mirrors a classical/popular narrative of the Buddhist master Shinran’s (1173–1262) life and teachings. In presenting this project, the Honganji-ha branch of Shin Buddhism has used expressions such as “innovation” and “a new current of visual propagation,” which aimed at conveying Shinran’s biography “in a style never before attempted” and appropriate for the times. Despite all these claims, however, the choice of themes from Shin Buddhist teachings, as well as the way Shinran is portrayed, are quite traditional and an expression of the Honganji-ha’s official stance. These also represent the reassuring message the branch wishes to transmit to its followers through the animated, *kawaii*, and approachable figure of its founder.⁹ In terms of both content and style, not much of a “revolution” is to be seen here.

Stylistically, the majority of *kyōdan* manga are very linear and their layout lacks cinematic diversification of the frames, such as different angles and close-ups, while the traits of the characters are roughly drawn. This is particularly evident in the case of traditional Buddhist schools, but not only there. Examples include the biographies of Buddhist masters such as Dōgen (*Manga Dōgen sama monogatari* まんが道元さまものがたり, The Manga Story of Master Dōgen 2003) and Keizai (*Manga Keizai sama monogatari* まんが瑩山さまものがたり, The Manga Story of Master Keizai, 2005) produced by Sōtō 曹洞 Zen; and the *Manga Hōnen Shōnin den* マンガ法然上人伝 published in 1995 by Jōdoshū 浄土宗 headquarters and translated into English in 2009 as *Just As you Are: The Manga Biography of Pure Land Master Honen Shonin*; or biographies of founders of new religious movements, such as Risshō Kōseikai’s 立正佼成会 *Manga Ichijō no hohoemi* まんが一乗のほほえみ (The Smile of the One Vehicle Teaching, 2001–03) on Niwano Nikkyō 庭野日敬 (1906–99), to name just a few.

4 See Craig Norris, “Manga, Anime and Visual Art Culture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*, ed. Yoshio Sugimoto (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 236–60.

5 Cf. Koichi Iwabuchi, “Japanese Popular Culture and Postcolonial Desire for ‘Asia,’” in *Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan*, eds. Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 15–35; and Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, “Introduction: Inside-out Japan? Popular Culture and Globalization in the Context of Japan,” in *Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan*, eds. Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, 2.

6 This does not mean, however, that the efforts of both institutions and individual priests have been successful in terms of increasing membership, etc. See Porcu, “Pop Religion in Japan.”

7 Tenrikyō Kyōkai Honbu, *Tenrikyō kyōten* (Tenri: Tenrikyō Dōyūsha, 2012 [1949], hereafter: *Tenrikyō kyōten*); and Tenrikyō Church Headquarters, *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*, tenth edition (Tenri: Tenri Jihosha, 2006, hereafter: *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*). The *Ofudesaki* was revealed by God the Parent to Oyasama, who started to compile it in 1869. See Tenrikyō Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush*, English, Japanese and Romanization (Tenri: Tenri Jihosha, 2004).

8 Yamanaka Hiroshi, “Manga bunka no naka no shūkyō,” in *Shōhi sareru ‘shūkyō,’* eds. Ishii Kenji and Shimazono Susumu (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1996), 161. For a classification of religious and educational manga, see also Mark MacWilliams, “Religion and Manga,” in *Handbook of Contemporary Japanese Religions*, eds. Inken Prohl and John Nelson (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 595–628.

9 Elisabetta Porcu, “Speaking through the Media: Shin Buddhism, Popular Culture and the Internet,” in *The Social Dimension of Shin Buddhism*, ed. Ugo Dessi (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 209–39.



Figure 1. Cover of Tenrikyō's 2008 manga, *Oyasama monogatari* (Gekiga *Oyasama monogatari* 劇画教祖 (おやさま) 物語).

Tenrikyō, on the other hand, in *Oyasama monogatari* has chosen to represent the life of the group's foundress through the genre known as *gekiga* 劇画. This term, meaning “drama/dramatic pictures,” was used in opposition to manga 漫画 or “whimsical pictures,” and used from the late 1950s by a group of manga artists, such as Tatsumi Yoshihiro, Saitō Takao, and Sanpei Shirato, who wanted to adopt “a more serious, graphic approach” targeting a more adult audience.¹⁰ *Gekiga* are characterized by realistic tones,

¹⁰ *Gekiga* fall into the general category of manga. See Frederik Schodt, *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1983), 66–7; and Kinko Ito, “Manga in Japanese History,” in *Japanese Visual Culture: Exploration in the World of Manga and Anime*, ed. Mark MacWilliams (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 26–47. In the late 1960s, Tezuka Osamu also had to modify his style towards a more realistic, *gekiga*, style, after this genre gained popularity. See Susanne Phillipps, “Char-

acters, Themes, and Narrative Patterns in the Manga of Osamu Tezuka,” in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. Mark MacWilliams, 68–9, 81–2.

different from the cute traits of *kodomomuke* 子供向け manga (for children) or *shōjo* 少女 manga (“girls’ comics”), and by their political-oriented topics which made this genre popular among young workers and student activists, in particular in the 1960s.¹¹ Unlike other religious institutions that have focused on cute characters in their creation of manga and anime,¹² Tenrikyō has tried to locate its product within the frame of a more realistic genre where *kawaii* features hardly find a place. This does not mean, however, that content-wise the manga is “innovative,” or has diverged from a “traditional” account of the foundress’s life, as I will show below. The choice of the *gekiga* in this case, was not so much a strategic choice of the group than it was dictated by the fact that its author, Nakajō Tateo 中城健雄 (b. 1938), is a well-known *gekiga* artist and Tenrikyō follower, who in 1987 became head of the Tenrikyō Moritakabun 森高分 church in Aichi.¹³ In his recollection, to write the *gekiga* version of the foundress story was a way to combine his religious path as a religious leader with its profession as a manga artist, which he clearly saw as a sign sent by Oyasama.¹⁴

2. The Gekiga Biography of the Foundress of Tenrikyō

Tenrikyō is a new religious movement (*shin shūkyō* 新宗教),¹⁵ whose origins date back to the late Edo period. It was founded in 1838 by a farmer’s wife and medium,

acters, Themes, and Narrative Patterns in the Manga of Osamu Tezuka,” in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. Mark MacWilliams, 68–9, 81–2.

¹¹ See also Norris, “Manga, Anime and Visual Art Culture,” 239, 242. Another example of *gekiga* within the religious manga is *Ningen kakumei* 人間革命 (The Human Revolution, 1989–2003) by Sōka Gakkai 創価学会, which features fifty-six volumes (now available as e-books) and a ten-anime DVD collection.

¹² See, for example, my analysis of the manga *Tannishō* and the anime *Shinran sama: Negai soshite hikari*, of the Honganji-ha in Porcu, “Speaking through the Media.”

¹³ See also http://doyusha.jp/doyu/top/?page_id=16619 (accessed 21 December 2016).

¹⁴ See Nakajō Tateo, “Oyasama monogatari,” *Shōwa shōnen* 70 (2013), http://doyusha.jp/doyu/top/?page_id=16619 (accessed 27 December 2016). In this essay, he refers to his work both in terms of *gekiga* and manga.

¹⁵ For an overview of the periodization of new religious movements and questions on terminological issues, see, for example, Trevor Astley, “New Religions,” in *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions*, eds. Paul L. Swanson and Clark Chilson (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), 91–114.

Nakayama Miki, in what is now Tenri, in Nara prefecture. As we will see in more detail below, a crucial aspect in Nakayama's life and the origin of the group, is that, according to Tenrikyō's teachings, she was chosen by Tenri-ō-no-mikoto 天理王命 (Lord of Heavenly Wisdom), or Oyagami 親神 (God the Parent) as he was called later, as his vessel in this world to save all human beings, who are meant to live a "joyous life" (*yōki gurashi* 陽気ぐらし) through a complete reliance on God's providence. This is closely linked to the idea that Nakayama's residence was the place where God had created humankind, and that Tenri is the location where Nakayama is still believed to live.

The manga *Oyasama monogatari* was originally issued in five volumes between April 1987 and August 1990 by the organization's publishing company, Tenrikyō Dōyūsha. In 2008 the first three volumes were made into a single, voluminous manga of almost 700 pages that focuses on the life story of its foundress. The first part, titled "Tsukihi no yashiro 月日のやしほ (The Shrine of Tsukihi)," is centered on the foundation of Tenrikyō in Nara prefecture and the life of Nakayama Miki/Oyasama from her childhood until 1864. Part two, "Tasuke zutome たすけづとめ (The Salvation Service)," is related to events from 1864 to 1877, and the last part, "Tobira hiraite 扉ひらいて (The Portals Open)," covers episodes from 1877 until Nakayama Miki's death in 1886.¹⁶ The first volume was translated into English by the Translation Committee of the Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America and was first serialized in the North American *Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters' Newsletter* (2010–15). It was subsequently published by Tenrikyō Dōyūsha on the occasion of the 130th Anniversary of the foundress's death in January 2016, and a Kindle edition was made available in July of the same year.¹⁷ In the intention of the group, the manga version of the life of its foundress "was a long-cherished hope." The intent to publish a manga characterized by "dignified illustrations and simple yet appropriate vocabulary" to help the readers familiarize with the life of Oyasama and "feel closer to the Divine Model" is clearly stated in the preface.¹⁸ In this regard,

as I have argued elsewhere using Walter Benjamin's formulation, we might say that this manga—through the technological reproduction of Nakayama Miki's life and teachings—detaches to some extent "the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition" and that by reaching viewers in their own situation, "it actualizes that which is reproduced."¹⁹ Through the medium of manga and the creation of a more approachable image of the group's foundress, the distance between her (the religious object) and the viewers (as recipient of the religious message) is minimized and, as a consequence, this might lead to a closer connection of the members to the institution.²⁰ Moreover, building familiarity between the readers and the characters is an important aspect of manga (and anime) that makes the subject more comprehensible,²¹ and in this case might facilitate religious communication.

The life of the foundress as the Divine Model to be followed is crucial in Tenrikyō's doctrine. These lines from Chapter Five of *Tenrikyō kyōten* provide a version of Oyasama's exemplary (and divine) life in a nutshell:

Oyasama not only revealed the teachings of God the Parent by Her spoken word and by Her writing brush but demonstrated them in Her life. The life of Oyasama after She became the Shrine of God is indeed the Divine Model for all humankind to follow.

Oyasama wa, kuchi ya fude de Oyagami no oshie o toki akasareru to tomo ni, mi o motte kore o shimesareta. Kono michi sugara koso, man'nin no Hinagata de aru.

教祖は、口や筆で親神の教えを説き明かされると共に、身を以てこれを示された。この道すがらこそ、万人のひながたである。²²

According to Tenrikyō's teachings, Nakayama Miki, who was inclined to compassion and benevolence since

16 The texts are written by Hattori Takeshirō 服部武四郎 (b. 1925), a Tenrikyō member.

17 See also <http://www.tenrikyo.com/OurTeachingsOyasama.html> (accessed 14 December 2016).

18 Translation Committee Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America, *Tale of Oyasama* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Doyusha, 2016), Book One,

iii. The sentence "dignified illustrations and simple yet appropriate vocabulary" is missing in the Japanese original, where the term *roman* ロマン (novel) is used instead.

19 See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

20 See Porcu, "Speaking through the Media."

21 See Mark MacWilliams, "Introduction," in *Japanese Visual Culture*, ed. Mark MacWilliams, 10.

22 *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*, 35; and *Tenrikyō kyōten*, 45.

her childhood, received a revelation by Tenri-ō-no-mikoto to save all humankind when she was forty-one years old. This revelation occurred after a possession experience when God of Origin, God in Truth (Moto no Kami Jitsu no Kami 元の神実の神) chose Miki as his vessel. She became in this way the shrine where Tsukihi 月日 (lit. moon-sun) abides, *Tsukihi no yashiro*. The world and humankind were created by Tsukihi/Oyagami, and everything in the whole universe depends on his divine providence (*shugo* 守護), which occupies a great deal of space in the manga.²³ God the Parent was called Tsukihi since he “manifests in the heavens as the moon and the sun and sheds benevolent light all over the world.” His will is for human beings to enjoy what is called “joyous life” and rejoice “the blessings of heaven and earth without discrimination.”²⁴ In order to grant them salvation in the sacred place of origin, or *jiba* ぢば, God the Parent revealed himself through Oyasama, who is believed to remain alive forever at the *jiba* to protect humankind. In the scriptures, the unity of Tenri-ō-no-mikoto, Oyasama, and the *jiba* is highlighted and only through the acceptance of this truth can the path to salvation be accomplished.²⁵ The location of Nakayama’s residence was disclosed as the center of the universe and therefore chosen by Oyagami as the place to reveal himself. It is maybe no coincidence that it was located in Yamato province (present-day Nara prefecture), traditionally considered the origin of Japanese civilization.²⁶ Here Tenrikyō headquarters were built with the *jiba* located in the inner sanctuary of the head temple and marked by the *kanrodai* かんろだい (the stand for the heavenly dew),²⁷ an hexagonal pillar set up to prove the exact location of the origin of humankind:

There at the Jiba, I began all the human beings in this world.

The Jiba in *Nihon* is the native place of all people in the world.

As proof of My beginning of human beings, I shall put the Kanrodai into place.²⁸

23 See *Oyasama monogatari*, e.g., 162, 166, 191, and 192.

24 See *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*, Chapter Four “Tenri-ō-no-mikoto,” 29; and *Tenrikyō kyōten*, 37. See also *Ofudesaki* X: 54 and VI: 102.

25 *Tenrikyō kyōten*, Chapter Four.

26 See Robert Kisala, “Images of God in Japanese New Religions,” *Nanzan Bulletin* 25 (2001): 22.

27 See also *Oyasama monogatari*, 493.

28 *Ofudesaki* XVII: 7–9; English translation from Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush* (Tenri:

Moreover, the location of Tenri as the birthplace of humankind is underlined through its designation as Oyasato 親里 (residence of origin) and the words that welcome believers and visitors to Tenri city: “Yōkoso o-kaeri” ようこそおかえり (Welcome Home!).

3. The Beginning of Tenrikyō: Nakayama Miki as the Shrine of God

Nakayama Miki is depicted in the scriptures and the manga as a compassionate being since her early life. In the *Tenrikyō kyōten* she is presented as kindhearted and with a deep interest in a (non-specified) “path of faith” to the extent that she decides to dedicate her life to it. In the *gekiga*, on the contrary, following Chapter 2 of the *Kōhon Tenrikyō Oyasama den* 稿本天理教教祖伝 (The Life of Oyasama, Foundress of Tenrikyo, Manuscript Edition), some space is devoted to her initial pursuing of the Pure Land Buddhist teaching and her wish to become a nun in that tradition, which is, however, not mentioned in the *kyōten*.²⁹

A significant phase in Nakayama Miki’s earlier life, and the future of Tenrikyō, is closely knit to her moving to what would be “the Residence of Origin” (Oyasato; *moto no yashiki* 元のやしき) after her marriage into the Nakayama family. This is presented in the scriptures as a “mysterious causality” (*kushiki innen* 奇しきいんねん), as is the appearance of God the Parent “on earth through Oyasama as the Shrine.”³⁰ This idea of causality is recurrent in both the teachings and the manga and is linked at the outset of the *Tenrikyō kyōten* to the selection of Miki as the vessel of the *kami* in this world:

I am God of Origin, God in Truth. There is causality in this Residence. At this time I have descended here to save all humankind. I wish to receive Miki as the Shrine of God.

Tenri Jihosha, 2004), 460; see also *Tenrikyō kyōten*, Chapter Two.
29 See *Oyasama monogatari*, e.g., 66–70, 82–3. The *Kōhon Tenrikyō Oyasama den* was first published by the headquarters in 1956 on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the foundress’s death. Tenrikyō Kyōkai Honbu, *Kōhon Tenrikyō Oyasama den* (Tenri: Tenrikyō Dōyūsha, 2016).

30 See *Tenrikyō kyōten*, Chapter Five, Hinagata, 45; and *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*, 35; and Chapter Three, Moto no ri (The Truth of Origin), *Tenrikyō kyōten*, 25. For an analysis of the concept of karma (*innen*) in Tenrikyō, see Robert Kisala, “Contemporary Karma: Interpretations of Karma in Tenrikyō and Risshō Kōseikai,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21, no. 1 (1991): 73–91.

Ware wa moto no kami jitsu no kami de aru. Kono yashiki ni innen ari. Kono tabi, sekai ichiretsu o tasukeru tame ni amakudatta. Miki o kami no yashiro ni morai uketai.

我は元の神・実の神である。この屋敷にいんねんあり。このたび、世界一れつをたすけるために天降った。みきを神のやしろに貰い受けたい。³¹

The crucial event in the founding story of Tenrikyō is Nakayama Miki's possession experience and her becoming the Shrine of Tsukihi. This experience is powerfully described in the manga³² and thus worthy of some additional space here.

Everything started when Miki's elder son, Shūji 秀司, was at one time struck by an unbearable pain in his leg. The doctor, unable to help, advised Shūji's father, Zenbei, to consult with a *shugenja* 修験者, a mountain ascetic, to pray for his son.³³ Believing that the pain was due to a curse inflicted upon Shūji by the god Isonokami (Isonokami daimyōjin 石上大明神) as he accidentally stepped on a rock where the deity was said to abide, the *shugenja* performed a ritual ceremony. Its effectiveness, however, proved useless. Various other incantations were recited at the village, and in one of these Miki replaced the shamaness who accompanied the mountain ascetic, as she would not be able to come. It was on that occasion that Miki experienced possession by God of Origin, God of Truth, who forcefully wished to receive her as the Shrine of God (*kami no yashiro* 神のやしろ).³⁴ The scene is strongly depicted in the manga: An aura of light emanates from Miki's figure while all attendees, deeply bowing down before her, are overwhelmed by the powerful words of the God flowing from the foundress's body. No other elements apart from the words of God the Parent and the figure of Miki shown from the back, engage the viewers in this scene.

Miki's family and the *shugenja* pleaded the God to choose another person and another place to reside, but the God was steadfast and warned them to accept his request for the sake of humankind or they would experience the devastation of Nakayama's house and

family.³⁵ Miki sat in *seiza* holding paper rods in both hands without eating or drinking for three days, while the negotiation of the family with the God continued. Worried about Miki's state of exhaustion, her family finally succumbed to the God's request. At this point, the health conditions of Shūji and Zenbei visibly improved and Miki awoke from her possession with no recollection of what had happened.³⁶ It was 1838, the year that marks the foundation of Tenrikyō. Miki became Oyasama and the vessel of Tsukihi as is clear from Tenrikyō's scriptures:

These thoughts of Tsukihi are spoken through Her: the mouth is human, the mind is that of Tsukihi. Listen! I, Tsukihi, am borrowing Her mouth wholly, and I, Tsukihi, am lending My mind wholly.³⁷

According to the teachings, the reluctance of Miki's family to surrender to Tsukihi's request, which would benefit humanity immensely, is explained as a sign of human self-centeredness, which led them to miss the broader picture of salvation for all. It was only by overcoming selfish thoughts and concerns that they were able to abide by the will of Tsukihi/Oyagami. In Tenrikyō's view, Oyasama is the only medium through which human beings can worship God the Parent and understand the "divine will" (*Oyagami no oboshi meshi* 祖神の思召) and the religious truth,³⁸ and Oyagami is the only true God—the others being mere "instruments" to make the "providence easier to understand."³⁹ In this regard, ten aspects of Oyagami's providence, *jūzen no shugo* 十全の守護, are listed in the scriptures and the manga. These are expressed through ten sacred names, each with a specific role in the providence plan at two levels, that of the human body (which is only lent to human beings by God the Parent) and of the world. Among them, Kunitokotachi no Mikoto is related to the eyes and fluid in the human body and water in the world; Omotari no Mikoto is the providence of warmth in the body and fire in the world; Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto are the models of man

31 *Tenrikyō kyōten*, 3; the English translation is quoted from *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*, 3. See also *Oyasama monogatari*, 37-9.

32 *Oyasama monogatari*, 34-56.

33 *Ibid.*, 10-2.

34 *Ibid.*, 35-7.

35 *Ibid.*, 43-50.

36 *Ibid.*, 56.

37 *Ofudesaki* XII: 67-8; translation into English quoted from *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*, Chapter One, 4.

38 *Tenrikyō kyōten*, 14.

39 *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*, 24; and *Tenrikyō kyōten*, 30.

and woman and the seed and seed plot respectively.⁴⁰ The appearance of deities from Shintō mythology is not only due to the fact that Tenrikyō draws, among others, from Shintō and folk religions, but it seems also related to the group's attempts during the Meiji period to conform to the policy of State Shintō in order to be officially acknowledged as a religious organization.⁴¹ The manga offers a quite detailed account spread over two hundred pages of the struggles between Tenrikyō and Shintō authorities in the attempt of the group to affirm its own doctrine and the predominance of God the Parent/Tenri-ō-no-mikoto, before surrendering and signing a pledge in five articles (*Gokajō no ukesho* 五ヶ条の請書); these included a declaration that the *kami* to be revered were those of the pantheon of Shintō *kami* and that humankind (and Japan) was not created by Tenri-ō-mikoto but according to the foundation myths of the *Kojiki* 古事記 (Records of Ancient Matters, 712) and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (Chronicles of Japan, 720).⁴² Such adaptations are not unusual in the history of Japanese religions, including traditional Buddhist denominations (*dentō bukkyō* 伝統仏教). There are instances where the words of founders and the teachings have been modified to fit with the demands of the times, and are used as means of supporting the imperial and nationalistic system in times of war, while later used to acknowledge war responsibilities and express pacifism.⁴³ Also, Tenrikyō, like many other religious groups, was not immune from cooperating with Japan's imperialism, and its missions expanded along with Japan's militarist efforts outside its borders. After World War

II, however, through the *Fukugen* 復元 (Restoration of Original Teaching) movement, the group altered its doctrines in an attempt to distance itself from its war/imperialistic period, which led to the revision of the *Tenrikyō Kyōten* in 1949.

4. Oyasama's Life as the Divine Model

Chapter Five of the *Tenrikyō kyōten*, titled *Hinagata* (The Divine Model), continues with the story of Oyasama after her possession experience, and important steps in her life are briefly highlighted. These are to be found in the manga in their close link to the history of Tenrikyō's growth and initial institutionalization. Everything in Oyasama's life, her religious path, and the lives of her followers is framed within the divine will of God the Parent. For example, the manga describes the difficulties faced by Oyasama's family after she gave away all of the family's possessions to the poor following Oyagami's wishes to "fall to the depths of poverty"; Oyasama's miraculous healing episodes; Tenrikyō's growth and the persecutions by the authorities, including several detentions of the foundress and her disciples; the establishment of the first *kō* 講 (associations of followers); the writing of the *Ofudesaki* and the *Mikagura uta* (Songs for the Sacred Dance) to explain Oyagami's divine plan; the systematization of the practice; the spreading of the teaching in provinces other than Nara; and lastly the foundress's passing away.

In the manga great emphasis is placed on Oyasama's central and divine image and the scenes of possession are strongly depicted, as I noted above. Her healing powers are emphasized, at first with regard to safe childbirth and then with other illnesses. This is a crucial aspect of Tenrikyō's teachings, where illness and pain are seen as a sign of God the Parent to warn individuals against going into "dangerous paths:" "Illness and pain of whatever kind do not exist. They are none other than the hastening and guidance of God."⁴⁴ To become aware of this and follow the path indicated by God the Parent will lead to the joyous life and a better world.⁴⁵ In the manga, Oyasama's healing power is also linked to conversion stories, which are a typical trait

40 See *Tenrikyō kyōten*, Chapter Four; and *Oyasama monogatari*, 374-75.

41 See also Kisala, "Images of God in Japanese New Religions," 23. Tenrikyō was recognized as one of the thirteen Shintō sects in 1908, after modifying its teachings in line with state nationalism. However, it revised its doctrines in the postwar period (1949, and further revisions were made in 1984); in 1970 it withdrew from the Association of Shinto Sects.

42 *Oyasama monogatari*, 586-87. It follows Chapter Nine of the *Kōhon Tenrikyō Oyasama den*.

43 A clear example in the field of Buddhism is provided by wartime doctrines (*senji kyōgaku* 戦時教学) in Shin Buddhism. Here, we see the modification of the scriptures in order to reinforce the institution's partnership with the imperial state, and the use of Shinran's and Rennyo's 蓮如 (1415-99) words to promote imperialism and as justification of belligerence during Japan's fifteen-year war (1931-45). See Elisabetta Porcu, "Anniversaries, Founders, Slogans and Visual Media in Shin Buddhism," *Japanese Religions* 34, no.1 (2009): 53-73; and Fukushima Kanryū and Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, eds., *Senji kyōgaku to shinshū*, 3 volumes (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1988, 1991, 1995).

44 *Ofudesaki* II: 7, translation into English quoted from Tenrikyō Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki*, 27.

45 See *Tenrikyō kyōten*, Chapter Six.

of the communication strategies used by new religious movements, and the spreading of the teaching.⁴⁶

Stylistically, from the moment Oyasama ceases to be the human Nakayama Miki and is acting and speaking as God the Parent (which covers almost 600 pages of the volume), she is either seen from the back, or her profile is shown. Sometimes she is depicted from a frontal angle but her face is never shown to preserve her sacredness—her body being the vessel, or in Tenrikyō's terms, the Shrine of God the Parent. Along with the connection to the sacred aspect of the foundress, the shrouding of Oyasama's face in this manga may remind us of the convention in premodern Japan of concealing the emperor's face in paintings.⁴⁷ To hide the foundress's visage locates her figure in a realm that, although linked to human beings and this world, is at the same time above and detached from the viewer's domain.⁴⁸ This is in accord with the scriptures, where it is taught that although Oyasama's physical appearance was still no different from that of "ordinary people," her mind was that of God the Parent.⁴⁹

5. Conclusion

This short paper has focused on Tenrikyō's use of manga as a way to transmit Oyasama's Divine Model to its members and its attempt to facilitate religious communication through this medium. The group's engagement has resulted in a product that, according to Tenrikyō itself, is at the same time educational and adequate to depict and "dignify" Nakayama Miki's life. The story of Oyasama, her sacredness, the foundation and later developments of this new religious movement from the late Edo period to the foundress's death in 1887 are conveyed through the *gekiga* genre with its use of realistic tones rather than a manga characterized by *kawaii* traits, as in the case of other religious organiza-

tions. The Divine Model (*hinagata*) of Oyasama's life and actions is the basis of this volume and the source of its religious legitimacy. This model is presented and highlighted in the manga not only through a textual correspondence with the teachings, including direct quotations from the scriptures, and the various explanations in notes, but also visually through the choice of drawing techniques. Oyasama's face is always concealed and she is portrayed as a liminal figure, yet very present and engaging with the viewers. In this way, the audience is constantly reminded of her existence as God the Parent in this world, his vessel, and the medium between the world of humankind and the divine realm of God, from whom, according to the teachings, all derives and on whose providence everything depends.

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46 *Oyasama monogatari*, e.g., 167–68, 188, 190, 296, 362–68.

47 See, for example, Matthew P. McKelway, *Capitalscapes: Folding Screens and Political Imagination in Late Medieval Kyoto* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 150, 207.

48 This is different from the depiction of founders in other manga I analyzed, such as Hōnen, Dōgen, and Niwano, who, though highly respected, are still considered human beings, and therefore this technique is not used.

49 *Oyasama no sugata wa, yo no tsune no hitobito to kotonaru tokoro wa nai ga, sono kokoro wa, oyagami no kokoro de aru* 教祖の姿は、世の常の人々と異なるところはないが、その心は、祖神の心である。See *Tenrikyō kyōten*, 5; *The Doctrine of Tenrikyō*, 4.

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The Importance of *Kōden* in the Establishment of Identity: The Title of the *Dainichikyō* in the Opening Sequence of the *Hizōki*

HENNY VAN DER VEERE

SHINGONSHŪ 真言宗 is a generic term used by a large number of independent organisations based on ritual lineages, each with their specific ideas and their training, and education system. Nowadays, the best known of these organisations is arguably the Kongōbuji-ha 金剛峯寺派 through their headquarters on Mt. Kōya; a century ago that would have been the Tōji-ha 東寺派 located in the old capital, Kyoto. The ritual organisations which employ the name Shingonshū do so because they share a heritage from the past, hold on to training courses for their ritual specialists which have many similarities, and, of course, claim to have their foundation and inspiration in the (alleged) works of Kōbō Daishi Kūkai 弘法大師空海 (774–835). They recognize to a certain extent each other's permits and qualifications, but at the same time show a variety of differences in the performance of ritual and the interpretation of their authoritative works.

In scholarship, especially in contributions by priests belonging to those organisations, a variety of issues, tenets, and ritual practices are taken up from a perspective based on the similarities that keep the concept of Shingonshū together. This is also the general atmosphere in most works by Western academics, many of which concern doctrinal ideas (*kyōsō* 教相). On the contrary,

in the field of ritual studies and studies of practice (*jissō* 実相 and *jissen* 実践), these organisations and ritual lineages emphasize what separates them and discern various differences, certainly in respect to the efficacy of altar rituals and in the way their bridge to unification with the absolute world is built. Moreover, research on matters pertaining to “Shingonshū” customarily takes the form of a diachronic approach in which most, if not everything, is traced back to Kūkai as originator, or supposes a continuity in the development from the founder Kūkai until the present situation.

I see a number of problems in the above-mentioned approach. Firstly, I am not convinced that everything can be traced back to Kūkai and his successors or that descriptions that start from the works of Kūkai will yield a historically correct picture of the developments in Japanese history. Further, I think that research into the contemporary situation in Japan, its ritual networks, services, and position in society would become more revealing and fruitful when we consider existing practices without this compulsory connection with the vicissitudes in the long history of ritual practice. We can easily discern organisations in contemporary Japan which, although they screen themselves off from the public eye to a certain extent by professing to have eso-

teric knowledge which is not available to laics or uninitiated, possess a system of training their priests which is very much their own in the emphases they place on certain aspects traditionally linked with the concept of Shingonshū. During the training and general education of their members in as far as they aspire to become ritual specialists, these organisations, whether they boast a long history or not, are supposed to present a coherent picture of their ideas on ritual in a doctrinal setting, or at least an epistemic for the performance of ritual, its efficacy, and its relationship with the needs of the clients, that is defensible and coherent.

It follows that one path to an understanding of how the ritual specialists organize their lore and cater to their clients, and one way to discover the actual differences between the schools, is to investigate the contents of those education models. Such a line of inquiry would provide insights in the way the various schools define themselves and build their identity, and would show us the systematics and tools of their universe. In other words, instead of approaching the ritual expert from a framework defined from outside the tradition itself, whether that be from Western perspectives on the Japanese religious situation or buddhological approaches informed by nineteenth-century constructions of the East, I prefer to investigate the insider perspective of the priests and the organisation they belong to in present-day Japan. I believe that an analysis of the contents of the transmission system, and especially the initiation lectures called *kōden* 講伝 will reveal what certain organisations hold most dear, what sets them apart from each other, and, in addition, may bring to light new topics which may have escaped the eye of the observer and remained under the radar otherwise.

In the present article I would like to show how such a study of the workings of the education system may yield some interesting data and focus on the points that are considered unique by a certain organisation through an example taken from the *kōden* initiation lectures, for my purpose here from the *Hizōki kōden* 秘藏記講伝, the lectures on the *Hizōki* 秘藏記, a basic text for many and possibly all ritual lineages.¹ This one example will support my claim, I hope, that the actual identity and characteristics of contemporary lineages

is (re)defined during these sessions, always under the guise of the perpetuation of tradition. At the same time, my discussion will show some of the ramifications of the explanations which contribute to a more general build-up of lore about the universe of the priest.

The first line of the *Hizōki*² consists of just the title of the *Dainichikyō* 大日經 (Mahāvairocana sutra)³ and over the centuries much time and effort was spent to interpret this fact. This is the topic I lift from the transmission system to clarify my position. The questions I keep in mind when discussing this example are influenced by an interest in the contemporary situation and in the way the identities that are strengthened during the transmissions and trainings lead to competition and a tendency of monopolizing the truth, while at the same time the overall identity of the Shingonshū construct is sought or accommodated.

Before I go into a detailed discussion of how this topic is treated in the training of ritual specialists and how their “universe” is constructed, I will first describe the general course of the training of the Shingon priest. I then continue with a discussion of the position of *kōden*, the initiation lectures that provide the priests with information on both ritual and doctrine, usually in an integrated form. I hope to show that often and maybe only in these lectures the ideas, the way the organisations define themselves, and matters important for their identity, come to the fore and can become the subject of research when the records of these *kōden* are used as sources.

After sketching these environments, I discuss the *Hizōki kōden*, the initiation lectures on one of the basic texts for the ritual framework and doctrinal exegesis of the Shingonshū. I select from these *kōden* my main example to illustrate the workings of the various education systems, namely the problem of why this authoritative text opens with the title of the *Dainichikyō*. The exegesis on this riddle has so many ramifications that I will have to limit myself here, but I hope to convince the reader that the discussions on what may seem a minor problem to outsiders to the tradition are instrumental to arrive at some understanding at least about what this kind of education is about. In the process the discussion also demonstrates how such an issue as in my

1 An extensive discussion about the meaning of the title can be found in the commentaries, but “Notes on the Secret Store” may be vague enough to accommodate the majority of interpretations.

2 *Kōbō Daishi zenshū* (Osaka: Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo 1965–68) II: 1–73, hereafter KDZ; and *Shingonshū zensho* (Wakayama: Kōyasan Daigaku Shuppanbu, 2004) IX: 9–39, hereafter SZ.

3 T 18, 848; Ch. *Dari jing*.

example can be expanded to define a number of basic assumptions that lie at the core of the lineage or organisation that provides this information in their training.

1. Education and the Transmission of Lore

All the various organisations that share the Shingonshū heritage and are active in contemporary Japan show similarities in recruitment and training. Summarily, in order to become a qualified priest the aspirant or novice (*jusha* 受者) first has to seek acceptance by a master (*shishō* 師匠), take the tonsure (*tokudo* 得度), and then start his ritual training called *shido kegyō* 四度加行. In this cumulative practice a number of levels are distinguished related to templates for rituals. The position of the *goma* 護摩 fire-ritual in the build-up varies according to schools, but in the Shingonshū the Kongōkai 金剛界 practice, dedicated to the acquirement of the wisdom to discriminate between correct or wrong insights, always precedes the Taizōkai 台藏界 practice, which entails the actualisation of wisdom in the use of helpful means. This order of practice is a major distinction with Taimitsu 台密 ritual lineages.

The student learns a number of templates through repeated practice in the context of the details and finesses of his ritual lineage (*ryū* 流), from the “reading” or chanting of sutras and *darani* 陀羅尼, preparing the altar, cutting the flowers, to mixing the incense and handling a brush to write wooden plaques (*fuda* 札), all skills learnt in order to familiarize himself with the tools of his trade.

Depending on the qualified instructor (*ajari* 阿闍利) who is the master of ritual, the content of this training may be basic ritual or may include the specific definitions of the ritual lineage, the *hiketsu* 秘決, which I translate as ‘esoteric definitions’, definitions of matters pertaining to the esoteric tradition. The information is conveyed to the novice in the form of *denju* 伝授, transmission of ritual matters (*jissō*). There is no doctrinal training involved in this stage.

Although the term *shido kegyō* suggests that we have to do with four stages, actually there are more and *shido kegyō* can be treated as a period of seclusion during which the daily round of ritual duties is mastered by imitation, including the veneration of the main deity of a *ryū*. The morning and evening rituals are repeatedly performed too. The ritual manuals differ depending on the school, on the legendary background, and so on.

Although information on *shido kegyō* and translations of the manuals into English are now easily obtainable, I find that hardly any allowance is made in these works for the differences between the schools.⁴ The intricacies of one lineage, such as the Chūin-ryū 中院流, are often treated as if they are the general model for all lineages that bear Shingonshū in their name.

When the practice of *shido kegyō* is concluded, the novice can apply for the initiation called *denbō kanjō* 伝法灌頂. This initiation provides the trainee with the basic qualification to work as a ritual specialist and sometimes earns him the title of *ajari*. He is now permitted to perform various kinds of rituals for the benefit of clients, the laics (*zaike* 在家). Moreover, he has access to literature and texts which are meant for the eyes of the initiated only, and he is allowed to attend the sessions for further instruction which I will discuss hereafter.

At this point in his career the priest has probably studied Buddhism and the historical background of his lineage in courses at university but may not have been instructed about the specific doctrinal position and ritual points of his own lineage and about his own lineage in contradistinction to other groups, even though he considers himself to be part of a certain lineage. The level of *ajari* gives him access to the continued teaching of his school or that of other schools. For ritual and practical matters, the priest continues his studies through *denju*, transmissions, among them the most important being the *ichiryū denju* 一流伝授. This transmission concerns the complete know-how of one ritual lineage. The student is informed about the contents of the *origami* 折紙,⁵ folded papers with basic ritual information such as the *shingon* 真言 (*mantra*) and *in* 印 (*mudrā* hand postures) to be used during specific

4 Taisen Miyata, *Handbook on the Four Stages of Prayoga; Chūin Branch of Shingon Tradition* (Wakayama: Kōyasan Shingonshū Kyōgakubu, 1988) contains a partial translation of the manuals used on Mt. Kōya for foreigners; Richard Payne, *The Tantric Ritual of Japan: Feeding the Gods: The Shingon Fire Ritual* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture & Aditya Prakashan, 1991) focuses on the *goma*-ritual but provides information on the Mt. Kōya set of manuals as well. Robert Sharf, “Thinking Through Shingon Ritual,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26, no. 1 (2003): 51–96 has probably the most extensive discussion on the contents of *shido kegyō*, heavily influenced by the Daigoji tradition, it would seem, but although referring to the differences (see note 18 in Sharf’s article) between the organizations, holds on to a concept of an over-arching Shingonshū.

5 These are called *kirigami* 切紙 in other (later) Buddhist groups.

rituals, and receives a signed example of these documents. Among these we also find the document which shows his place in the *kechimyaku* 血脈, the bloodline of his lineage. Besides access to these *denju*, the priest is also permitted after *denbō kanjō* to attend the lectures in which instruction in both *kyōsō* and *jissō* in integrated form is given, the *kōden* sessions.

In the words of an influential *dentō-ajari* 伝統阿砂利 (an *ajari* who continues the transmissions) from Mt. Kōya, Ōyama Kōjun:

About the understanding of *kōden* (*kōden no kokoro* 講伝の心得): doctrinal instruction (*kyōsō*) is open to all people, regardless of whether they have received *kanjō* or not; however, instruction on practical matters (*jissō*) is limited to those who are initiated, and this is the same for [participation in] *kōden*. The instructions in the *kōden* cover both *kyōsō* and *jissō* and reveal profound issues; among them the said *Hizōki* belongs to [the category of] *kōden*.⁶

Ōyama then explains that in the case of *kōden* a “permissive initiation” (*koka kanjō* 許可灌頂) is necessary and that in his lineage (Chūin-ryū) the most abbreviated form is chosen.

There is agreement that in the discussions during the *kōden* the doctrinal and practical ritual lore is combined. *Kōden* have eminent scholar-priests as instructor and are supposed to imitate the original Shingon myth of Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来 instructing Kongōsatta 金剛薩埵 in the sense that the instructor, the Dai-ajari, is to be considered by the listener as Dainichi Nyorai and the recipient as Kongōsatta. These attitudes and the way the sessions are carried out, the *sahō* 作法, are based on a text with some short notes attributed to Kūkai,⁷ and worked out in the various lineages. Often, the ritual format of such transmissions and the added visualisations are already explained in the first part of the *shido kegyō*. The provenance of the template in Kūkai’s works explains the similarity we find between the schools in the format.

Since the instructions of the *kōden* concern the Taizōkai and the Kongōkai aspects of reality, the ques-

tion may be raised which preliminary visualisation is suited for the recipient Kongōsatta. According to the Chizan-ha 智山派 scholar Nasu Seiryū it is general practice in Tōmitsu 東密 that after the initial body purification (*goshinbō* 護身法) the Kongōkai visualisation on the stupa and on the syllable BAN is most appropriate.⁸

Ueda Reijō states in the introduction of his *kōden* on *Rishukyō* 理趣經 (Naya Sutra, Sutra Giving Guidance towards the Truth)⁹ like many other records of these transmissions: “*Kōden* are held on a number of topics such as *Rishukyō*, *Mandarashō* 曼荼羅抄, *Dainichikyōsho* (*Oku no sho*) 大日經疏 (奧ノ疏) and *Hizōki*.” Here we find a number of categories which touch on the core of the rituals, the exegesis and the tenets of the various lineages that associate with the concept of Shingonshū. This doesn’t necessarily mean that all ritual specialists, priests from minor temples and so on, have all attended these sessions. There is no compulsory system for further study after the *denbō kanjō*, although pressure from the various headquarters or even peer pressure allows for a high turn-out for these instructions.

I believe the actual system of lore and knowledge is not only transmitted in these sessions but also determined by the speakers/transmitters. What is more salient here is my claim that, more than a study of doctrinal works by itself, the discussions in the *kōden* indicate what is important for the identity of a ritual lineage and how the so-called heritage of Kūkai is unpacked at every single confrontation with seemingly divergent views. The approach is by no means based on a binary heterodox versus orthodox or heteropraxis versus orthopraxis discussion, which is also illustrated by the fact that priests from different lineages may attend the lectures of famous *ajari*-instructors. From experience I know that, having received *denbō kanjō* as a Buzan-ha 豊山派 priest, an organisation that uses the *Daidenbōin* 大伝法院 lineage, I could attend *denju* and *kōden* in a variety of lineages, from the Chūin-ryū lineage to Saidaiji 西大寺 lineages.

6 Ōyama Kōjun, “Hizōki kōden,” vol. 2 of *Ōyama Kōjun Sentoku Kāigiki shūsei: Kōdenmon* (Osaka: Tōhō Shuppan, 1995): 173–234.

7 *Shingon denju sahō* in KDZ IV: 417–24.

8 For a more detailed explanation please refer to Nasu’s *kōdenroku*. Nasu Seiryū, “Hizōki kōden,” vol. 7 of *Nasu Seiryū chosakushū* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1997), 3, for the mental preparation of the student.

9 Ueda Reijō, *Rishukyō kōroku* (Kyoto: Dōmeisha, 2002), 6.

2. *Hizōki Kōden*

My intention here is to illustrate how fruitful a study of *kōden* and exegetical literature can be for a fuller understanding of the way the different lineages view themselves and to emphasize that there is no one Shingonshū but a variety of lineages who together adhere to this concept. Because the lineages hold on to their own interpretations of basic texts and tenets, a mere translation of any sentence tells us preciously little about the meanings that are contained in the systems of the lineages nor does it inform us about the salient points within the overall architecture.

When I take up my example from the *Hizōki* I am fully aware of the discussions about the date of composition and the unresolved problems in manuscript study, the actual number of its volumes (one or two) or chapters. The composition of the original text is dated by scholars such as Mukai Ryūken¹⁰ to after the introduction of the *Shōmuge-kyō* 撰無碍經¹¹ in 986 while the conclusions drawn by Ōzawa Shōkan,¹² a date before 878, are serious enough to warrant further research.¹³ It is hard to pin the composition to an exact date or year but it seems most likely that both the *Hizōki* and the twenty-five-article testament (see below) came to the fore in the time of Kangen 觀賢 (853–925) who was instrumental in the awarding of Kūkai's posthumous name of Kōbō Daishi.

The Shingon schools consider the *Hizōki* to be a collection of notes made by Kūkai during the instruction he received in China under Huiguo 惠果 (Jp. Keika, 746–805). The Tendai 天台 (Miidera 三井寺) view is mostly that these were the notes Huiguo took when

he studied under Amoghavajra (Ch. Bukong 不空, Jp. Fukū, 705–74). There is no autograph by Kūkai nor is there an extant definitive version. In a manuscript from 1313 it is recorded that Gahō 我法 (Jishō shōnin 自性上人, ?–1317) tells his students that in the days of Raijo 頼助 (1246–97) an effort was made to reconstitute the original text by comparing all manuscripts but this ended in failure.¹⁴

Putting the problems with the manuscripts aside for now, I think it is better to speak of a meta-text, an idea about what the *Hizōki* is and means, and the divergences we can discern among the lineages do not harm the authority of the text as an idea. The text in *Shingonshū zensho* is a compromise text which can be divided, depending on the school, in a number of chapters, from ninety to a hundred depending on the commentator.

The *Hizōki kōden* can be traced from the thirteenth century on, although not always in complete form. The oldest extant record of a *Hizōki kōden*, the *Hizōshō* 秘藏抄 (Commentary on the *Hizō*[ki]), is dated 1222 and was written by the Daigoji priest Shinken 深賢 (?–1261) who attended the explanations by Jōken 成賢 (1162–1231) in sessions that took place on Mt. Kōya.¹⁵ A comparison of recent records (*kōdenroku* 広伝録) shows that the various lineages, although recognizing the value of many older records, place emphasis on works that contain the essentials for their tradition. For Daigoji Sanbōin 醍醐寺三宝院 lineages scholar-priests such as Gōhō 果宝 (1306–62) are authorities, in the Chūin-ryū the records of the instructions by Dōhan 道範 (1178–1252) and Yūkai 宥快 (1345–1416) are paramount.

The template of the records and commentaries often resembles a syllabus. They contain an outline followed by the order of the discussions and of the points that the *ajari* introduces. They may be in the form of summary notations of the main subjects under discussion, or again more elaborate texts with discussions on all points of the instruction. At times these notes were recorded by the instructor himself, but we find many

10 Mukai Ryūken "Fukūyaku *Shōmugekyō* to *Hizōki* to no kankei ni tsuite," *Buzan kyōgaku taikai kiyō* 9 (1981): 13–24; and "Hizōki seiritsu kō," *Mikkyōgaku kenkyū* 15 (1983): 53–67.

11 T 20, 1067. I use the conventional abbreviated name because the full title is exceptionally long. See Mikkyō Jiten Hensankai, ed., *Mikkyō daijiten* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1991), 1205.

12 Ōzawa Shōkan, "Hizōki no ikkōsatsu," *Taishō Daigaku Daigakuin kenkyū ronshū* 1 (1977): 95–108 and "Hizōki no senjutsu nendai ni tsuite," *Mikkyōgaku kenkyū* 24 (1992): 47–61 draw attention to the fact that *Hizōki* is mentioned five times in *Rokutsū jōki* 六通貞記 (Six Messages Recorded by the Abbot of the Jōkanji [Shinga]), an important text for the Nishinoin-ryū 西院流. This text is dated 878, so our text must have been composed earlier. I am not convinced of this date and its ascription to Shinga 真雅 (801–79) for several reasons. For one, the text cites the *Goyūigō* 御遺告 (Final Instructions), which I think dates from the beginning of the tenth century. More research is needed in this case as well.

13 Ueda Reijō, *Hizōki kōden* (Kyoto: Dōmeisha, 2002), 12.

14 See Nakagawa Zenkyō, "Hizōki ni tsuite no josetsu," *Mikkyōgaku kenkyū* 1 (March 1969): 42.

15 The *Hizōshō* (1 *kan*) is often referred to as the (*Zōchū*) *Yakinshō* (藏中) 冶金抄. It mentions as instructor Henchiin Jōken and as recorder Shinken 深賢 (?–1261), who was the founder of the Daigo Jizōin 醍醐地藏院. The transmission took place in Jōō 貞応 1 (1222) in Ōjōin Rengenotani 往生院蓮花谷 of Mt. Kōya. The text is included in vol. 15 of *Zoku Shingonshū zensho* (Wakayama: Kōyasan Daigaku Shuppanbu, 2008), hereafter ZSZ.

instances of notes taken by a listener and approved afterwards by the *ajari*. These collections are generically called *kōdenroku*.

There are a number of quite recent *kōdenroku* of the *Hizōki* available,¹⁶ but for my exposition here I limit myself to the *kōdenroku* of Oda Jishū and Ōyama Kojun, Nasu Seiryū, and Ueda Reijō, the first two belonging to the Chūin-ryū, the third to the Chizan-ha, and the last to the Daigoji Sanbōin Dosen-ryū. These records are structured along the same patterns we can discover in older commentaries; they can be viewed as the continuation of tradition. Many of these older records show the number of days the full instruction took, and an order similar to contemporary sessions of the problems they discuss, starting with authorship, the authoritative commentaries for the lineage, and so on.

The usual *kōden* starts off, after the *ajari* relates how he was himself instructed, with a discussion of the manuscripts, the main commentators of the lineage and references to writers from other lineages, and so on. For my purpose, an illustration of the wide-ranging meanings exegetes found in just the first sentence of the *Hizōki*, I mention here the important role of the commentaries by Dōhan and Yūkai for the Chūin-ryū and Gōhō and Ryūyu 隆瑜 (1773–1850) for Daigoji and Chizan-ha.

3. The First Line of the *Hizōki*

The oldest manuscripts of the *Hizōki* have no chapter titles. Ueda Reijō¹⁷ uses the titles from the manuscript owned by commentator Gōhō for the discussion and in transmission. Ōyama prefers writers from the Mt. Kōya lines, starting with the oldest in existence, Shinken's, and subsequent commentaries. The editor of the text in *Shingonshū zensho* says: "the division in chapters of this present [*Hizōki*] is made on the basis of the *Hizōki shūyōki* 拾要記 [1842 by Ryūyu] and the *Hizōshō* [7 kan; 1283, author unknown]."¹⁸

There are *Hizōki* manuscripts with a title on the cover, a title on the first page, or without any title, but all manuscripts, as far as I know, have as the first entry the title of the *Dainichikyō*. Some lineages and commentators count this as a chapter in itself, others as a mere opening. The first thing I can say is that a mere translation of this title will do no justice to what the traditions have to say about this sentence in this specific context. Every sentence or character is supposed to be there for a reason.

In the commentarial tradition and the *kōdenroku*, the problem of the first sentence is referred to as "Title of the *Dainichikyō*."¹⁹ It is counted as a separate chapter by Ueda Reijō but not by Oda Jishū and Ōyama Kōjun, an initial difference between Daigoji and Mt. Kōya lineages, although admittedly not a major one. Such qualifications of divisions within the text lead to divergences in the number of chapters the commentators give, from eighty-seven to a hundred.²⁰

This opening sentence runs:

摩訶毘盧遮那尾三菩提美紀梨爾地瑟他蘇多覽
Makabirushana. bisanbōji. bikirini{ta}. chi-
shuta. sotaran.

The first line thus contains no more than the Sanskrit title of the *Dainichikyō* written in Chinese characters used phonetically.

In the Taishō canon²¹ the title of the translation from the Sanskrit by Śubhakarasiṃha (Ch. Shanwuwei 善無畏, Jp. Zenmui; 637–735) and Yi Xing 一行 (Jp. Ichigyō, 683–727) is *Daibirushana jōbutsu jinpen kaji kyō* 大毘盧遮那成仏神變加持經. Ueda Reijō and Oda Jishū follow the old commentaries who refer for the reconstruction of the Sanskrit title to Kūkai's commentaries²²

16 Nakagawa, "Hizōki ni tsuite no josetsu," 42 however, states that there are no recent ones for the *Hizōki*, probably because he does not allow for the fact that there may be several decennia in between *kōden*, as was the case before the twenty-first-century *kōden* of Ueda Reijō.

17 Ueda Reijō, *Hizōki kōden*, 2002, prepared for the *kōden* at Shuchiin Daigaku from 2002 until 2004.

18 SZ IX: 9. Not to be confused with Shinken's work with the same title from 1222.

19 Oda Jishū, "Hizōki kōden kiyō," in vol. 2 of *Oda Jishū kōdenroku* (Osaka: Tōhō Shuppan, 1990). Gōhō's chapter in his *Hizōki shishō*, is titled "Makabirusha no koto." Gōhō, *Hizōki shishō*, in *Shūtenbu Shingonshū jissō shōsho*, vol. 85 of *Nihon daizōkyō* (hereafter *Nichizō*) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1976), 109. Likewise Shinnichi (?–1309), author of *Hizōki kanmon* 秘藏記勘文, has a chapter, titled "*Dainichikyō* no koto." ZSZ XVI.

20 Interestingly, Gōhō remarks that he opts for a hundred chapters because of the "fullness of the number." *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō* 115.

21 See also Paul Demiéville, Hubert Durt, and Anna Seidel, eds., *Répertoire du canon bouddhique Sino-Japonais: Edition de Taishō. Hōbōgirin*, appendix volume (Paris: L'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Institut de France, 1978), 78.

22 Kūkai wrote seven introductions to this text (*kaidai* 解題). See, for example KDZ IV: 3.

where the title appears in *shittan* script: *Mahā vairocanābhisambodhi vikṛnitādhiṣṭi sūtram indrarāja*.²³

It is tempting to enter the discussion here about whether the text should be classified as a sutra, the Japanese view, or as a *tantra*, the Indian and Tibetan classification. I would stray too far from my purpose here, the working of the *kōden*, when I would introduce into the discussion commentaries on this text that were not used and/or known by the exegetes of Japan. I think that this is a defensible choice since references to Indian commentaries such as Buddhaguhya's²⁴ (fl. eighth century) are not found in the commentaries I use.

Kūkai wrote a number of treatises in which he presents his interpretations of the ideas and ritual directions recorded in the *Dainichikyō*. For him, this text was pivotal to the defence of his ideas on, for example, the stages of the mind's development and the nature of insight as *nyojitsu chijishin* 如實知自心 ("jitsu no gotoku jishin o shire") as well as the main practice of the five-syllable *shingon*. He considered the way this text treats the nature of the absolute Buddha (*hosshin* 法身) and its preaching (*A-ji honpushō* 阿字本不生) as the culmination of doctrinal thinking and used it to confirm his paramount position relative to other (non-tantric) schools, as here was the profoundest insight into the Dharma. Kūkai's substitution of causation from the six great elements (*rokudai engi* 六大緣起) for causation from *honpushō* (*honpushō engi* 本不生緣起) is discussed in later parts of the *kōden* but not here in relation to the title.

3A. THE EXPLANATION OF PHRASES (KUGI 句義)

In the exegetical literature of the Shingon schools the commentators address as many issues as they can find, it would seem, but the determination of the category to which the issue under discussion belongs is considered a *sine qua non* in many cases. All language constructs can be explained on various levels, from the meanings in the everyday world to the most profound embedded meanings. A certain *shingon* may be explained from the meanings of the words it contains or from the mean-

ings attributed to the individual syllables. The first discussion is therefore often about the meanings of the phrases (*ku* 句) of a sentence, of a *shingon*, or of a statement. The *kugi* thus opens many an explanation and I follow the convention here.

In the *Dainichikyō kaidai* (*Hokkaijōshin*)²⁵ 大日經解題 (法界淨心) (Introduction to the Mahāvairocana Sutra: The Pure Mind of the Dharma-World), Kūkai gives as the full title of the *Dainichikyō*: *Daibirushana jōbutsu jinpen kaji kyō indaraō*. In the ensuing discussion of the parts of this title he distinguishes between original Sanskrit words (*birushana*, *butsu*, *ind[a]ra*) and Chinese words (*dai*, *jō*, *jinpen*, *kaji*, *kyō* and *ō*). A full translation of the Sanskrit words into Chinese characters and Japanese pronunciation would yield *Dainichi* 大日 *joan henmyō* 除暗遍明 *jōshō gakusha* 成正覺者 *jinpen kaji* 神變加持 *kyō* 經 *Taishaku* 帝釈-ō 王. 'Mahā', which is written in *shittan*-script, means 'great' (*dai*); 'Birushana (Vairocana)' means 'the sun, the darkness removing, expanding light' (*Birushana*); [*a*] *bhisambodhi* means 'having reached complete insight' (*jōbutsu*); 'vikṛnita' means 'mystic changes' (*jinpen*); '[*a*]dhiṣṭi' means 'unification (*kaji*)'; 'sotaran' means 'sutra' (*kyō* 經); 'Indrārājā' means 'Taishaku-ō'.

It did not escape the attention of commentators²⁶ that the Indian deity Indra is lacking in the versions of the text in current use as well as in the title here. Actually, the *Dainichikyōsho* 大日經疏, the commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sutra compiled between 725 and 727, the basic commentary in the Shingon schools, mentions this addition as part of the Sanskrit version.²⁷ There is also a difference between 'vikṛnita' and the more common 'vikṛvita/vikurvita,' but I have found no comment on this as yet.

3B. ESOTERIC READINGS

Shingon exegesis frequently uses a further method, specific to their transmissions, as a tool to discover and explain esoteric meanings and content of texts. This approach is found appended to doctrinal explanations, or at times as the main concern of the commentator. In this case as well it is possible to read

23 Also known as *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi vikurvītādhiṣṭhāna sūtram Indrarāja*.

24 For one view on those continental traditions, see Stephan Hodge, trans., *The Mahā-vairocana-abhisambodhi tantra: With Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). This work does not account for the specific Japanese interpretations, notably the development of *bodaishin* through three stages, and is therefore of not much use for the present study.

25 KDZ IV: 3.

26 Gōhō, *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō*, 115.

27 T 39, 1796: 0579b13. This is the *Daibirushanajōbutsukyōsho* 大毘盧遮那成佛經疏, the Great Commentary, which, according to tradition, contains the explanations of the *Dainichikyō* provided by Zenmūi and recorded by Yi Xing.

esoteric lore in the title itself, applying the concept that the ideal world of realization is integrated in all thought, matter, and language of the world of the senses. Esoteric Buddhist concepts can be discovered as submerged meanings, or can be projected and distributed over any appearance, becoming their superior attribute.

I already introduced Shinken as the author of the earliest extant *kōden* record, the *Hizōshō* of 1222. In this work, he interpreted the title as a concise statement about real existence in four aspects: its essence, nature, function and appearance. This real, or absolute, existence is comprehensively described by the three bodies and the five wisdoms of Dainichi Nyorai. The three bodies are *Makabirushana* = *hosshin*; *jōbutsu* 成仏 = *hōjin* 報身; *jinpen kaji* 神變加持 = *ōjin* 応身. In a similar way the five kinds of wisdom are distributed over the parts of the title: the *hosshin* comprises the wisdom of *daienkyō-chi* 大円鏡智, *byōdōshō-chi* 平等性智, and *hokkaitaishō-chi* 法界体性智; *jōbutsu* corresponds to *myōkansat-chi* 妙觀察智; while *jinpen kaji* stands for *jōsosa-chi* 成所作智. This explanation may have been transmitted as part of the *kuketsu* of certain lineages since neither Ueda Reijō's *kōden* nor the commentators from this lineage refer to it, as far as I have been able to discover.

The unknown author of the *Hizōshō* from 1283 explains, similar to Kūkai's explanations in the aforementioned *Kaidai*, that 'Maka' stands for 'Dai', which refers to the *rokudai hosshin*, *Birushana* for the sun, and *bisanboji* for *jōbutsu*.²⁸ In the form of a dialogue, he compares the specific *shingon* meanings with Taimitsu interpretations, which are different.

The focus of his discussion is on the difference in meaning of the term *jōbutsu* since the Taimitsu scholar Annen 安然 (?841–?915) uses the same phrase, *jōbutsu*. To elucidate, the unknown author pulls the card of exoteric-esoteric division and explains that the meanings are not the same as there is a difference between *kengyō* 顯教 and *mikkyō* 密教, between a shallow and profound level of analysis. He postulates that the *jōbutsu* in the title of the sutra refers to *hōni no jōbutsu* 法爾成仏, the Buddha-hood as the inher-

ent absolute in itself and by itself, and not *hōni zuien jōbutsu* 法爾從緣成仏, the attained Buddha-hood reached through conditional progress starting out from the inherent absolute. The *Rishushaku-kyō* 理趣釈經²⁹ is quoted to show that the complex under discussion here is the wondrous body of all the various Nyorai in their unshared reality. From this complex mentioned in the title, represented by the syllable UN (Sk. *hūṃ*), everything, both man and the five great elements come forth. Basically, he continues, the eight schools (*kengyō*) differentiate between man and dharma, while a basic Shingon tenet is that Man is Dharma (*jin soku hō* 人即法) and Dharma is Man (*hō soku jin* 法即人). The absolute inherent in all is Dainichi in essence, substance, action, etc.; in other words, *hōni jōbutsu*. Thus, the commentator writes, "*jōsanboji*" in the title refers to the Dharma, and Annen's *jōbutsu* is the term for Man.

To follow our unknown writer somewhat further to get an idea of the exegetical atmosphere, the next explanation in this commentary concerns the term "Vikirini" which is explained as "mysterious transformations" (*shinpen* 神變). These function in four ways: when flowing downwards, retrogressively, it indicates a causal history of transformation leading back to the source, original enlightenment (*hongaku no engi* 本覺緣起); upwards, progressively, it leads to the pinnacle of initial enlightenment (*shigaku no jōten* 始覺上轉); when the transformations work sometimes up and then down, we notice the working of the five wisdoms and the four bodies; when there is no transformation upwards nor downwards, the term refers to all sentient and non-sentient beings and all constructed and non-constructed (*sanskṛta* and *asanskṛta*) dharmas, which are essentially represented by the syllable A of non-production.

When the *kōden* thus discuss the opening line, they introduce the topics of the commentators not only as historical precedents but also in order to distinguish the general Shingon thought from other groups and in addition they add to the store of the audience's knowledge while wielding the analytical tools that are characteristic for their organization.

28 *Hizōshō*, SZ IX: 41. This commentary is also known as *Hizōki shimonsho* 秘藏記私聞書 (Personal Notes Regarding [Aural Instruction into] the *Hizōki*). It contains the record of a transmission that took place in Kōan 弘安 6 (1283) in Kamakura Sazame no tani 鎌倉佐々目谷.

29 Sutra Explaining the Guidance towards the Truth, a work attributed to Amoghavajra. T 19, 1003.

4. Why Does the Text Open with the Title (Only)?

The *kōden* then explain that commentators propose various reasons, historical and doctrinal, as to why the *Hizōki* opens with the title of *Dainichikyō*. Since the writer is supposed to be Kūkai, historical reasons are sought in Kūkai's life and the known biographies. Raihō 頼宝 (1279–1330), for example, assumes that Kūkai placed the title of the sutra at the beginning, and thus accorded it prime place, as a result of the major role this sutra played in the course of his public career and his private life.³⁰ There is general agreement that Kūkai's initial motive to go to China was to learn the full meaning of this sutra after he discovered it, as the story goes in many biographies, under the pagoda of Kumadera 久米寺, acting upon a revelation in a dream or in meditation. I turn, in the company of the exegetes, to one of the basic texts of the Shingon traditions, the *Goyuigō* 御遺告 (Final Instructions), to situate this event and highlight the importance of the *Dainichikyō* for Kūkai's career in the framework of accepted lore of the Shingon school. During the *kōden* this becomes an opportunity to ascertain the importance of this text and to instruct the listeners in its contents.

4A. THE "FINAL INSTRUCTIONS"

It may come as no surprise that Kūkai's final instructions to his disciples before his death carry great weight for all those who consider themselves keepers of his heritage. These instructions, of which there are several redactions and versions under the name (*go*)*yuigō* or (*go*)*yuikai* 御遺戒. The version of *Goyuigō* that would become one of the most influential texts for the Shingon traditions, the so-called "Final Instructions in Twenty-five Chapters" (*Goyuigō nijūgokajō* 御遺告二十五箇条),³¹ in all probability dates from the tenth century.³² In the same way as the *Hizōki* is the back-

bone for the ritual practice of most Hirosawa-ryū 広沢流 schools, this "Testament," as it is called by some translators,³³ contains basic lore for the Ono-ryū 小野流 schools and contains indispensable information for some of their major rituals.

A few words may be necessary on the position of both the *Hizōki* and the *Goyuigō* as well as their use in esoteric Buddhism. The division in lineages that can be traced back to Hirosawa 広沢 pond or the Mandaraji 曼荼羅寺 in Ono 小野 continues to the present day due to basic differing interpretations in ritual and exegesis thereof, although many of the contemporary lineages are the result of cross-fertilisation and ever-newer interpretations by leading ritualists. There are also lineages belonging to none of the above two, such as Kojima-ryū 小島流. Although ritual transmissions make their own selection to create a curriculum for the study of both theory and practice, they are not exclusive in the sense that initiated priests from other lineages are not admitted to *denju* and *kōden* sessions as described above. Depending on circumstances and teachers, such lineages are changing continuously by combining the contents of various transmissions while preserving their distinguishing elements brought to the fore by the founder; at least that is the pretension.

In the present case as well, all schools make use of both texts and freely cite from them. The precise interpretations of the contents of these texts and their esoteric definitions, such as the *hiketsu*, are transmitted in ritual settings, *kōden* for the *Hizōki*, and *denju*, often part of the *ichiryū denju*, for the *Goyuigō*.

The first chapter of the *Goyuigō* has effectively become the approved biography of Kūkai, although historians have highlighted a number of problems and fabrications. This biographical chapter relates that at one time Kūkai implored the buddhas to reveal to him the ultimate truth of Buddhism, which he had not been able to discover even after wide-ranging studies. The young Kūkai then received a revelation in which a person appeared who informed him about the existence of the *Dainichikyō* which could be found in Kumadera: "That is the text you need."³⁴ The *Goyuigō* describes how Kūkai got hold of the *Dainichikyō* and ascribes Kūkai's problems to understand the text fully to a lack

30 *Hizōki kikigaki* from 1309, ZSZ XV: 62a. The lecturer was Jishō Shōnin Gahō.

31 KDZ II, kan 7: 781–808.

32 See, for example, Takagi Shingen, *Kūkai: Shōgai to sono shūhen* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1997) for biographical details and Ueyama Shunpei, *Kūkai* (Tokyo: Asahi Shuppansha, 1992 [2002(3)]), 133–55 for the impossibility of Kūkai as the author of the various testaments. For the tenth-century theory both writers propose, I refer also to my forthcoming study on the place of the *Goyuigō* in the construction of the Shingon tradition as derived from Kūkai.

33 "Abschiedsworte" in Herman Bohner, "Kobo Daishi," *Monumenta Nipponica* 6, no. 1 (1943): 281.

34 KDZ II, kan 7: 783.

of esoteric specialists in Japan able to explain the Sanskrit parts that appear in this sutra; at least, that is one way to read the text.

The exegetes Dōhan and Gōhō quote the relevant passage from the *Goyuigō*.³⁵ *Dōhan* states: “this sutra was the reason why Kūkai wanted to study in the Qinglongsi (Jp. Seiryūji 青龍寺) and therefore he placed it [’s title] at the beginning of this work.” Gōhō puts this in dialogue form. “Question: Why is the orally transmitted definition (*kuketsu* 口訣) of the *Dainichikyō* placed first? The basic motive for Kōso Daishi [Kūkai] to go to China in search of the Dharma stems from the mystical revelation (*kantoku* 感得) he received about this sutra.”³⁶ Gōhō writes that according to such works as the *Goyuigō* and the *Kumadera ryūki* 久米寺流記 (Historical Account of the Kumadera) the first thing Kūkai asked after he met his teacher Huiguo in China were his definitions (*ketsu* 訣) on points that were unclear to him.

4B. KUMEDERA RYŪKI

*Kumadera ryūki*³⁷ is the legendary history of Kumadera, the temple where Kūkai read the *Dainichikyō* for the first time. The question how the sutra came to be there becomes a matter for investigation and consequently the information in the historical account of this temple as well. The commentators are familiar with this text and drag it into the explanations, especially because this record contains a tale involving the translator of the sutra, Zenmui, and the vicissitudes of the sutra. Zenmui, a prince, had come from India to China in 716 and became highly favoured by the Emperor who appreciated him for his knowledge of Buddhist matters. The tale relates how Zenmui then travelled from China to Japan; he is depicted as a travelling man in the time he worked in India as well, but once arrived in Japan, he found nobody spiritually developed enough to understand his teachings, whereupon he hid the scrolls of the *Dainichikyō* under the support pillar of the East stupa of Kumadera. Whether the text was translated already

from Sanskrit into Chinese³⁸ is discussed below.

At this point, the commentators run into the problem of reconciling the mythology that had developed around the famous masters with the historical facts as they knew them. Of course, we can leave the fiction of Zenmui actually coming to Japan for what it is, a tale, but in view of the importance of correct transmission and out of respect of the past, this was impossible for the commentators, who looked for a perfect reconstruction. A description of the way they handled this problem also provides insights in the logic that structured the debate, although this formed no part of the transmission.

Gōhō lifts the story from the *Kumadera ryūki* and relates that Zenmui brought the text with him to the land of “Ubō-matai” 烏卯馬台.³⁹ “Ubō” is one of the old names for Japan,⁴⁰ “Matai” can be short for “Yamatai.” Gōhō explains that when Zenmui looked for a place to enshrine his scrolls, he came to Takechi 高市 in the province of Yamato, written 大日本国. Some three years later, he built a hall near the East stupa here, setting up a “precious shrine” using three grains of *busshari* 仏舍利, relics of the Buddha-body. The set of seven scrolls of the *Dainichikyō* is used as support for the central pillar. Gōhō’s text then explains the correspondences and metaphors it discovers: the stupa (*datō* 駄塔) is the remnant/residue of the body that emanated in our world as Shaka, while the lord of the sutra, Birushana, is the complete complex of all emanations, *shana*. “However, the great potential of this small country was not ripe yet [for esoteric Buddhism].”⁴¹ Zenmui left the text behind and returned to China. Later Kūkai obtained this sutra.

Gōhō digs up an intricate web of allusions and metaphors in this tale, constructed, we may assume, in the course of the historical development of the transmissions. In fact, his method is a model of esoteric exegesis, which makes it worthwhile to dwell on this great example of esoteric reasoning somewhat longer.

The question Gōhō and his fellow-commentators

35 *Hizōkishō*, ZSZ XV: 37a. This commentary contains the explanations by Jōhen 静遍 (1165–1223) which were recorded by Dōhan. Gōhō’s remark is found in his *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō*, 115.

36 *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō*, 115.

37 In *Shakkebu*, vol. 27 of *Zoku gunsho ruiju* and *Jishibu* 3, vol. 85 of *Dainihon bukkyō zensho* (Tokyo: Bussho Kankōkai, 1912–22). The manuscripts go back to at least Genkō 3 (1333).

38 It is thought that Prajñadeva (Ch. Wujing 無行 (630–?) brought the main body of the Sanskrit version, the first six scrolls, to China, and Zenmui noted down the content of the seventh scroll based on the revelations he experienced. With his assistant Yi Xing he translated all into Chinese, a total of seven scrolls.

39 *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō*, 115–16.

40 *Chibu*, vol. 1 of *Kojiruien*, Kojiruien Kankōkai, ed. (Kyoto: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1927–30), 12.

41 *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō*, 116.

faced concerns the reason why Zenmui left the text at Kumedera and why this was a suitable place. His explanatory logic works on the basis of standard esoteric metaphors and symbols within an extended network of parallel meanings, paronomasia, similarities and set associations discovered in both pronunciation and meanings of certain characters, especially around the character for Sun 日 as in Sun-Buddha and as in Dainichi.

The first part of the explanation introduces the location as a *reijō* 靈場, a place of extraordinary spiritual value. The said location is thus suited to enshrine the major text, in this case as a concrete fundament of the supporting central pillar of the stupa. What is more, the place itself must have been considered receptive for the teachings of Zenmui's esoterism by prior association found in its name, which already shows that this province (*kuni* 国) is a region where the *jishō hosshin hōni* 自性法身法爾 (the unconstructed dharma state in itself of the dharma body in its own nature), (a qualification of the nature of) the lord of the sutra (the great sun = Dainichi), was already present. In other words, Gōhō wants to say that the ideal conditions were there because the characteristics of the place were those of reality in its basic subsumed form. That is precisely the reason why the province is called 大日本国. This concept (of spiritual presence) corresponds to the *kami* Ōhirume no mikoto 大日靈貴尊, he adds.

Gōhō then argues:⁴²

The province also goes by the name of 烏卯馬台. 烏 is used in the text to refer to the sun-disc,⁴³ 卯 stands for the moon but [the combination Ubō] also means the [land in the] east because that is where the sun rises. The name Matai 馬台 (horse-stand) refers to Nittenshi 日天子, who rode a horse-cart with eight horses over the course of the sun. Now, the virtuous qualities of the [subsumed] truth (*ritoku* 理德) which are “framed” by the Taizō mandara, are under the control of the sun-disc, while the qualities of wisdom as presented in the Kongōkai have the form of [= appear on] the moon-disc. Western India is called Gesshi 月氏, the eastern region is called Japan. The Shingon (sic) patriarch Ryūju (Nāgārjuna) belonged to the

42 Ibid.

43 The first character of Ubō may refer to the three-legged crow in the sun and the second to the hare in the moon, meanings that are important for Gōhō's handling of a supposed sub-text.

Gesshi (Yuezhi) tribe and he was the one who opened the Iron stupa in South India to spread the teachings contained in the *Kongōchōgyō* 金剛頂經 [cycle]. Kōso Daishi was born in Japan and had a revelation about the *Dainichikyō* [stored] in the East-Stupa of Kumedera.

Gōhō basically says that the Iron stupa in the west reveals the *Kongōchōgyō* cycle while the Kumedera East stupa produces the *Dainichikyō*. In this way, although a bit between the lines, the writer compares Kūkai with Ryūju, eventually both patriarchs, and connects the Japanese patriarch with the mythical opening of the Iron stupa in India, which is a metaphorical image for reaching insight in itself anyway. The patriarchs are linked in transmission and in their relationship to the sutras. Although I cannot be sure, it may be that Gōhō also intends to do away with the historical and causal categories in these associations and treats the matter under discussion with the tools of the Shingon approach from the domain of realization, in a sense breaking down time and space.

I suppose Gōhō was aware of Kūkai's idea in the *Fuhōden* 付法伝⁴⁴ that both the Taizō- (*Dainichikyō*) and *Kongōchōgyō* practices were transmitted by Nāgārjuna from the Iron stupa to mankind, and he may also have been aware of the different, and historically later, division of the bloodlines (*kechimyaku*) from these sources made in Taimitsu since Ennin 円仁 (794–864) and Enchin 円珍 (814–91). I will leave this problem to another opportunity.

The author then unfolds the esoteric geography of the world. He continues with an explanation of the dual system of sutras, directions, and locations arguing that:

Iron in the system of correspondences between the five elements (*gyō/jing* 行) governs the western direction and refers to the *mandara*⁴⁵ hung on the western wall of a Buddhist hall, i.e. the Kongōkai *mandara*. [As a projection] the height of this stupa

44 The full title of this work is *Himitsu mandarakyō fuhōden* 秘密曼荼羅教附法伝. KDZ I, kan 1: 1–50.

45 I prefer to use the Japanese word *mandara* instead of *maṇḍala* to avoid misinterpretation; *mandara* in Shingon exegesis does not only mean “domain” but has the added meaning of the ways in which Dainichi Nyorai pervasively displays the universe as an act of compassion. In this fragment, the pictorial *maṇḍala* is meant as well.

is sixteen *jō* 丈,⁴⁶ reflecting the sixteen bodhisattvas of the Kongōkai. This [Kume-dera] pagoda governs the eastern direction and stands for the *mandara* [hung in] the east. Its height is eight *jō* expressing the eight lotus petals of the [central Hall of the] Taizō *mandara*. He who abides in India [Ryūju] in the west spreads [the transmission of] the Kongōkai, the man in the east [Kūkai] the Taizōkai. That is the true working of the unconditioned dharma domain (*hōni dōri* 法爾道理). This all is not the result of conditional [karmic] activity. Of the eight patriarchs, Ryūju is [still] placed to the west of the altar, Kōbō Daishi to the east of the altar. Isn't this the reason here [why the title appears as the opening of the texts]?⁴⁷

4C. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Following these discussions, commentators such as Gōhō scrutinized the historical information. He explains that according to “a certain text” Zenmui came to China in Kaiyuan 開元 4 (716) and the following year he translated the *Gumonji-hō* 求闡持法 (Ritual Practice for Perfect Memorization). Thereafter, he set about translating the Sanskrit text of the *Dainichikyō*, which was finished in Kaiyuan 12 (724). He came to Japan in Kaiyuan 5 (717) and left this translation in Kumedera. Gōhō wondered if there might be a mistake in the sources, because this chronology would imply that the translation was not finished in 717.

When Kūkai eventually found his master in China, he first inquired about points obscure to him in the *Dainichikyō*. Gōhō, and others with him, then wondered: Why is it then that only the title is given and not the orally transmitted definitions (*kuketsu*)? The answer is that the *kuketsu* concern the complete sutra in seven scrolls and are rather extensive (*kōhaku* 広博 or broad learning) and, since a commentary by Zenmui exists, the title is placed first as a reference that the *kuketsu* must be consulted.

4D. WAS THE SUTRA IN SANSKRIT OR CHINESE?

Another point that worried the commentators was

that the presumed author of the *Hizōki* had a choice between the Sanskrit and the Chinese titles to open his text, so why is the title in Sanskrit, although written in Chinese characters that were used phonetically? Some are of the opinion that the text left in Japan by Zenmui was in Sanskrit and, therefore, an Indian manuscript. To corroborate this solution they refer to volume six of the *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 (Brief History of Japan, late Heian period) which reads: “according to a certain record the Tripiṭaka master (*sanzō* 三藏) Zenmui of the great Tang came to Japan in Yōrō 1 (717).”⁴⁸ The commentators omit the following remark that no textual corroboration could be found by the compilers of the *Fusō ryakki*. This year corresponds to Kaiyuan 5 (717) and, as mentioned above, the translation was finished (only) in Kaiyuan 12 (724). Thus, holding on to the idea that Zenmui came to Japan in 717, some exegetes conclude that he must have left the Sanskrit manuscripts behind. Kūkai would have asked his teacher in China first about this Sanskrit version and that is why the *Hizōki*, the record of his discussions with his teachers, commences with its title.

Gōhō then offers his personal opinion. He asserts, numbering his arguments as follows, that the sutra brought to Japan and found by Kūkai must have been the Chinese translation because:⁴⁹

“Zenmui brought the *Dainichikyō* to benefit the sentient beings in the eastern realm. This region [Japan] has no practice and use of Sanskrit. How could this be a Sanskrit book?”

“The *Goyuigō* says: a certain person announced [in a dream/meditation to Kūkai]: [in Kumedera there] is a sutra by the name of the *Daibirushanakyō*. This revelation in Kūkai’s dream already used the title of the Chinese text. How could that be a book in Sanskrit?”

“The same text tells us that Kūkai “loosened the cords and browsed the text, but the meanings of many places remained abstruse for him.” The phrases (*bunsei* 文勢) that were legible or intelligible must have been in Chinese.”

Further, the *Dainichikyō* is not listed in Kūkai’s *Go-*

46 One *jō* (ten *shaku* 尺) may mean a length of around 3 meters, which would yield a height of forty-eight meters or may mean the height of a grown man, often said to be 1.7 meter but people were somewhat smaller in the fourteenth century. The general idea is sixteen or eight times the length of a grown man.

47 *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō*, 116.

48 Entry under Empress Genshō 元正 (r. 715-24) added to the remark that Dōji hōshi 道慈法師 returned from the Tang. Dōji (?-744) learned the *Gumonjihō* from Zenmui in Chang’an and after his return came to live in the Daianji 大安寺, a temple also known as Takechiji 高市寺; later he moved to Nara.

49 *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō*, 117. The numbering of the arguments is by Gōhō; parts between quotation marks are translations by the author, other parts are paraphrases.

shorai mokuroku 御請来目録 (Catalogue of Imported Items)⁵⁰ from which we may conclude that Zenmui brought it and Kūkai was not the first to import it.⁵¹ If the text brought by Zenmui would have been in Sanskrit, Kūkai would definitely have brought a copy in Chinese with him; it is after all a crucial text for his form of Buddhism, and it would have been in his list.

The *Kumadera ryūki* says that he deposited seven scrolls. The *Tobu yōmoku* 都部 要目 (List of [Darani for the] Heads of the [Mandara] Divisions)⁵² says that the short version from the Tang is in seven *kan*; therefore this must have been the translation.

Gōhō does not find the story in the *Fusō ryakki* plausible; “Zenmui finished the translation in Kaiyuan 13 (725)⁵³ and died in Kaiyuan 23 (735). However, the mysterious changes of the great saint and his virtue are unimaginable.” Is Gōhō being ironic?

Gōhō concludes his lists of arguments with two references, one to a text related to Kashima Daimyōjin 鹿島大明神 and one to the famous Taima maṇḍala 当麻曼荼羅 which shows influences of the Chinese text. These needn’t concern us here.

This list of arguments appears time and again in the commentaries. Gōhō himself ends this part of his explanation by saying that there must be no doubt that this is the text which encouraged Kūkai to go and study in China and, further, that this fact is the traditional *kuketsu*, the oral definition of the reason why the Sanskrit title is placed here opening the text. Actual *kuketsu* on the sentence are either found in the text itself or in the Great Commentary.

5. Doctrinal Framework

Yūsen 雄仔 (dates unknown), writing in 1668, takes the discussion away from the mere historical orientation and supposes an overall doctrinal framework as an underlying structure in the *Hizōki*, pointing out that while the text opens with the *Dainichikyō*, it concludes with the *Ekō darani* 回向陀羅尼 from the *Shugo(kokkai-*

shudarani)-kyō 守護國界陀羅尼經.⁵⁴ The *Dainichikyō* is placed at the head of the text because it represents the world of compassion in the Womb-store (*Taizō-bu*) and concerns the virtues attached to the causes leading to realization (*intoku* 因德). The above-mentioned *Shugo-kyō*, on the other hand, reasons from the world of the pinnacle of wisdom (*Kongōchō-bu*), and expresses the virtues attached to the domain of result (*katoku* 果德) in the Kongōkai. He writes: “You should understand that in a process of development from the cause to the result, *Dainichikyō* is placed at the beginning of the work and *Shugokyō* last.”⁵⁵

6. Conclusion

In the discussion above I have tried to make clear that a study of the transmission and education system particular to certain lineages may inform us about the present-day situation of Shingonshū lineages, the way they frame their identity, and the concepts and tools that are important to them. I have taken up the *kōden* sessions because they offer an integrated form of ritual and doctrinal explanations. The actual explanations delve into the past for an authorization of their tenets and esoteric definitions, searching for confirmation and corroboration in the works of Kūkai and later exegetes, but the actual synthesis of the past and present is made on the spot.

The tasks of the teachers in such cases are not only a historical reconstruction and perpetuation of the past. The major point seems to be to explain what is important for the profession of today’s priests. For the identity of the lineage itself, they devise and construct a consistent system of lore analysed in depth following both age-old conventions and an inherent logic derived from the basic perspective on reality and the state of man in it and as part of it. For the education of the priests, reference is made to the accepted explanations concerning the biography of the founder, the necessities for the ritual performance, the basic view that the universe appears as a combination of various *mandara* which can be used as maps showing the distribution of meanings, and as many of the dogmas and tenets that the *ajari* chooses to present. It is outside my scope here

50 KDZ I: 69-104. This is Kūkai’s list of materials he brought with him from China; it was a list for official use.

51 Actually, Dōji 道慈 (?-744) would be more obvious since he studied under Zenmui and also brought texts on the *Gumonjihō* to Japan.

52 *Tobu darani moku* 都部陀羅尼目, T 18, 903.

53 This is a mistake in the text, made by Gōhō or a copyist.

54 *Hizōki shiyōshō*, ZSZ XVI: 371-72. The sutra is T 19, 997.

55 *Ibid.*, 372.

to compare the qualities of individual teachers; for the Shingon priest they are all Dainichi Nyorai anyway.

One example, in this case from the *Hizōki kōden*, is taken to illustrate that exegetes as well as the *ajari* distribute their explanations within an overall scheme of inherited meanings and redefined concepts which has grown over the centuries, a scheme that sets boundaries to the discussion. The first thing that is clear from the example of the title of the *Dainichikyō* is that a mere translation does no justice to the way this line is treated by a particular lineage nor does it reveal the interpretation in contemporary Japan. It follows that to rely on a certain edition of a text, for instance taken from the *Kōbō Daishi zenshū*, is no guarantee for insight into other lineages than the one of the editors of this collection.⁵⁶

Secondly, when I compare the various explanations, the accents placed by different teachers on a varying number of inherited “truths” appear to be important for the lineages to frame their identity and distinguish them from other lineages. As I showed, the first line or chapter of the *Hizōki* spawned a number of discussions among the exegetes, and I could easily extend this discussion and show particularities in the following chapters of this text or discuss other texts where such particularities of interpretation show the emphasis of the ritual lineage. As a matter of fact, the chapter following our example here is about the integrated *mandara* (*ryōbu mandara* 両部曼荼羅). Some readers conclude from the sparse information in the text that this concerns a *genzu mandara* 現図曼荼羅, a *mandara* displaying the appearances of its inhabitants, others that this *ryōbu mandara* is lifted from the collections of the original *Kongōchōgyō*-cycle.

From a reading of the commentaries, independently or in the setting of the *kōden*, it becomes clear that besides conventional argumentation other methods and tools are employed to confront the problems; in fact, the exegetes have their own strategies to solve questions. In this discussion of the first “Chapter”, I have shown some of the tools they can wield. The quasi-historical

approaches, the lore, and the textual evidence that can be brought to the discussion, do not differ from commentators from non-esoteric schools. However, their ploy of using the constructed esoteric world of meanings differs from other networks of meanings as we can find, for example, in the Taimitsu tradition. A study of a selected system of one specific lineage will reveal additional meanings again in abundance, all presumed to be included in Kūkai’s insights in “reality,” but will also yield meanings that set the lineage apart from others.

In my example I showed a number of ramifications and included subjects which may appear to digress from the central argument. However, I find that in order to show the actual working of this kind of education it is not my task to weed out certain parts of the contents. I had to make choices, but the topics presented here are the actual content considered important for the teachers of the *kōden*.

What the inquiry into the *kōden* also shows, I think, is that a study of the debates and commentaries may bring to light how the various schools deal with their heritage, hold on to their identities as separate traditions, and, moreover, what they find important in their own architecture of lore. The results of such studies augment our understanding of these ritual schools over mere translation. Moreover, even though we cannot acquire the esoteric information in its entirety, we can deduce from the discussions in the sources available to us what the real foundation is of each of the views and attitudes that are often just heaped together as Shingonshū. In this case as well the contemporary debates presented in the education system may be the best starting point to understand the role and identity the professional priests see for themselves in present-day Japan.

I must add in conclusion that I was fortunate to receive instruction from highly respected *ajari*. In the case of the *Hizōki kōden* I received *kōka kanjō* from Ueda Reijō and attended his sessions over a three-year period from 2002–04. I am well aware that this path and these opportunities are not open to all. The *denjuroku* and the commentaries, however, are easily obtainable nowadays, and these texts provide excellent explanations in themselves for the study of the ritual networks that carry Shingonshū in their titles or their heritage.

In the *denju* and *kōden* transmissions we find the basic formulation of the present temple activities, not in the doctrinal works by Kūkai; of importance is how interesting these may be in themselves. Gōhō’s *Shishō*

56 In Roger Goepper, “Maṇḍala Speculation in Shingon Buddhism Based on the *Hizōki* and its Commentaries,” in *Embodying Wisdom, Art, Text and Interpretation in the History of Esoteric Buddhism*, Robert Linrothe and Henrik H. Sorensen, eds. (Copenhagen: The Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 2001), 37–56, a study of the *maṇḍala* view presented in the *Hizōki*, I miss this realization that Mt. Kōya does not equal Shingonshū.

has an *okugaki* 奥書, postscript, which says that the *denjuroku* contains the “esoteric definitions that have been passed on in the lineage” (*sōshōhiketsu* 相承秘決) which he transmitted to Kenbō 賢宝(1333–98). This instruction is then called “a profound secret which is found on the bottom of a box.” The manuscript concludes with: “don’t show this to others!”⁵⁷ To truly understand the world of the Shingon priest it is best to consider the education he has received and investigate the explanations these texts prefer to keep from us.

Chronological List of Most Important Commentaries

1222 *Hizōshō* 秘藏抄 (1 *kan*), often called *Zōchū Yakin-shō* 藏中冶金抄. The instructor was Henchiin Jōken 成賢 and the notes are by Shinken 深賢 (?–1261), the founder of the Daigo Jizōin 醍醐地藏院. The transmission took place in Jōō 貞応 1 (1222) in Ōjōin Rengenotani of Mt. Kōya 高野山往生院蓮花谷. ZSZ vol. XV. The text is mentioned by Gōhō.

Hizōkishō 秘藏記鈔//抄 (1 *kan*), also called *Hisōden-shō* 非相伝抄. Transmission by Jōhen 静遍, recorded by Shōchi-in Dōhan 道範 (1178–1252). ZSZ vol. XV: 35–58.

1283 *Hizōshō* 秘藏抄 (7 *kan*). The title inside is *Hizōki shimonshō* 秘藏記私聞書; the author is unknown. The transmission took place in Kōan 弘安 6 (1283) from the 24th day of the third month and was recorded in Kamakura Sazame no tani 鎌倉佐々目谷. SZ IX: 41–133.

Hizōki shiki 秘藏記私記 (4 or 5 *kan*). The title inside is *Hizōki shi nikki* 禾草言私日記, the author is unknown. Ōyama mentions that “one tradition” attributes the text to Raiyu.

Before 1309 *Hizōki kanmon* 秘藏記勘文 (3 *kan*), composed or copied by Shinnichi 信日, who died Engyō 延慶 2 (1309). ZSZ vol. XVI. The *okugaki* says: Karyaku 嘉曆 3/4/28 (1325/4/28) copied by Kongōbusshi Junjin 純臣.

1309 *Hizōki kikigaki* 秘藏記聞書 (6 *kan*), also called *Hizōki himonshō* 秘藏記秘聞鈔 but this text is in 3 *kan*. The lecturer was Jishō Shōnin Gahō 自性上人我宝 and the transmission was recorded by Raihō 頼宝. The last day of the transmission was on the 29th day of the eighth month of Engyō 延慶 2 (1309). ZSZ vol. XV.

1314–42 *Hizōki zōkanshō* 秘藏記藏勘(肝)抄 (5 *kan*). As above, the lecturer was Gahō, but now the instruction was noted down by Shōmudōin Dōga 聖無動院道我. The transmission took place in Shōwa 正和 3 (1314), five years after the sessions recorded by Raihō, but the text was only completed in Ryakuō 暦応 5 (1342). ZSZ vol. XV. The sessions were held in a place called Sendō gosho 仙洞御所.

1352 *Hizōki shishō* 秘藏記私鈔 (10 *kan*). This is the influential commentary composed by Gōhō 果宝 (1306–62) in Kannō 観応 3 (1352). *Nihon Daizōkyō Shingonshū jissō shōsho* 日本大藏經真言宗事相章疏.

1371 *Hizōki gusō* 秘藏記愚草 (5 *kan*). Title inside *Hizōki kikigaki* 秘藏記聞書. The transmission of Kenbō 賢宝 recorded by Shōjun 清俊 in Ōan 応安 4 (1371). ZSZ vol. XV.

1413 *Hizōki zōdanshō* 秘藏記藏談抄 (2 *kan*). Titles inside are *Hizōki denjushō* 秘藏記伝授抄 as well as *Zōmonshō* 雜聞鈔. This is the transmission from Yūkai 宥快 (1345–1416) recorded by Kaizen 快全 in Ōei 応永 2 (1413). ZSZ vol. XVI. A later copy from Mt. Kōya’s Shinnōin 親王院 is discussed in *Gyōei bunko* 堯榮文庫 3.

1635 *Hizōki hōshōgōki* 秘藏記宝性合記 (10 *kan*). Recorded by Kenkai 建海 in Kan’ei 寛永 12 (1635). ZSZ vol. XVI.

1668 *Hizōki shiyōshō* 秘藏記旨要抄 (5 *kan*) by Yōchiin Yūsen 桜池院雄仔 from Kanbun 寛文 8 (1668). ZSZ vol. XVI.

1842 *Hizōki shūyōki* 秘藏記拾要記 (9 *kan*) by the Chizan prelate Ryūyū 智山能化隆瑜 from Tenpo 天保 3 (1842). SZ vol. IX.

57 *Hizōki shishō*, in *Nichizō*, 351.

Bibliography

ABBREVIATIONS

- DNBZ = *Dainihon bukkyō zensho* 大日本仏教全書. 150 vols. Edited by Bussho Kankōkai 仏書刊行会. Tokyo: Daihōrinkaku, 2007.
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Buddhist Texts on Gold and Other Metals in East Asia: Preliminary Observations

PETER KORNICKI WITH T. H. BARRETT

If printing is defined as a means of producing multiple copies of a given text, then the cylinder seals used from the second millennium BCE onward by the Akkadians and other peoples in the ancient Middle East have a claim to be considered as the earliest attempts to print in the world.¹ Further to the east, in northern India, short Buddhist texts, either the so-called Buddhist creed or *dhāraṇī* invocations, were repeatedly stamped into soft clay at least by the second century BCE, and this practice spread to Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Tibet.² While stamped clay tab-

lets were undoubtedly thus a form of printing, this was undertaken in order to reproduce multiple copies of short Buddhist texts for votive or ritual purposes rather than for reading. It was a response to instructions given in certain sutras that promised long life or other benefits if texts were multiplied a prescribed number of times. Once the copies of the text had been produced, they were usually placed inside a stupa or pagoda and then served no further purpose: in other words, it was the act of production and their installation inside a stupa that was the point, rather than what subsequently happened to them.

That, on the face of it, is the nearest we get to printing until the eighth century, when multiple copies of texts were being reproduced on paper in China, Korea, and Japan, albeit still for ritual purposes rather than for reading. These, too, were subsequently placed inside miniature pagodas or larger pagodas and served no further purpose.³ It should be noted that these various technologies for the multiplication of texts do not pro-

We are grateful to the anonymous British collector who has allowed images from items in his possession to be used in this article and to the anonymous referees whose constructive comments enabled us to make considerable improvements to this article.

- 1 Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum, 1987).
- 2 Simon D. Lawson, "A Catalogue of Indian Buddhist Clay Sealings in British Museums," (D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1982); Arlo Griffiths and D. Christian Lammerts, "Epigraphy: Southeast Asia," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 988–1009; Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London: British Library, 1982); and B. A. Litvinskii and T. I. Zeimal', "Nekotorye aspekty ierarkhii i semantiki stūpa b srednei Azii i Indii," in *Drevniaia India: istoriko-kul'turnye sviazy*, ed. G. M. Bongard-Levin (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 183–4.

- 3 Peter Kornicki, "The *Hyakumantō Darani* and the Origins of Printing in Eighth-Century Japan," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 9 (2012): 1–28.

duce absolutely identical copies owing to the wear and tear suffered by the seals, stamps, or wooden blocks, but the copies are textually identical. This is, of course, not necessarily the case with texts multiplied by hand, which are prone to dittography, haplography, and other forms of inadvertent error. These technologies can, therefore, be seen as early forms of printing.

In this article we examine some Buddhist texts on metal plates produced in East Asia that show signs of having been produced by means of a different ancient form of printing. Some of these metal plates have never been properly studied and others are, for various reasons, inaccessible and all that is currently available for research is an image. What links them is the fact that all reproduce parts of the Chinese Buddhist canon in metal. The use of a precious metal as a medium was not unique to East Asia, since metal plates were used in South and Southeast Asia for both Buddhist texts and administrative documents. The East Asian examples are, for the most part, much less known, and in some cases not known at all, but it is clear that this practice reached China, Japan, Korea, and the Khitan (Liao) empire and deserves to be better known.

These metal plates carrying texts need to be considered in the context both of the functions of material texts in Buddhism and of the materiality of writing in East Asia. As mentioned, the discovery of stamped clay tablets in Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Tibet reveals that the material forms of Buddhist texts were not necessarily designed to preserve or disseminate those texts even when produced in multiple copies, and the same was true later of Buddhist texts printed on paper. The clay tablets were in fact an essential part of devotional practices prescribed particularly in *dhāraṇī* sutras, which contain the texts of Buddhist spells or invocations known as *dhāraṇī*. The *dhāraṇī* were either to be recited orally a number of times or reproduced in one of a number of specified ways, including copying by hand.⁴ When reproduced on clay or some other semi-permanent material, the texts were

placed inside a *caitya*, stupa, or pagoda.⁵ These practices were witnessed by two Chinese monks who visited India in the seventh century, Xuanzang 玄奘 (c. 602–64) and Yi Jing 義淨 (635–713):

It is a custom in India to make little stūpas of powdered scent made into a paste; their height is about six or seven inches, and they place inside them some written extract from a sūtra.⁶

[People in India] make [incense] paste caityas and paste images from rubbings. Some impress them on silk or paper, and venerate them wherever they go. Some amass them into a pile, and by covering them with tiles, they build Buddha-stūpas... Furthermore, whether they build images or make caityas, be they of gold, silver, bronze, iron, paste, lacquer, brick or stone, or they heap up sand like snow [*sic*], when they make them, they place inside two kinds of relics. One is called the bodily relic of the Great Teacher; the second is called the dharma-verse relic on causation.⁷

In light of these accounts, it seems that the material texts, whether printed on paper, hammered or inscribed in metal, or molded or stamped in clay, or otherwise produced and placed inside stupas are best considered not as ‘books’ but as ‘written embodiments of Buddhahood,’ in other words, as a replacement for the bodily relics that had earlier been placed inside stupas.⁸ This is a somewhat different concept from that

4 Richard D. McBride, “Dhāraṇī and Spells in Medieval Sinitic Buddhism,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28 (2005): 85–114; Yael Bentor, “On the Indian Origins of the Tibetan Practice of Depositing Relics and Dhāraṇīs in Stūpas and Images,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115 (1995): 248–61; and Paul Copp, “Altar, Amulet, Icon: Transformations in Dhāraṇī Amulet Culture, 740–980,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 17 (2008): 239–64.

5 Stupa denotes a Buddhist monument, while a *caitya* was a funerary monument, but in Buddhist contexts they are often used indiscriminately. The word pagoda, which is of uncertain etymology, is used mainly to refer to the form the stupa took in East Asia when made of timber, brick, or stone.

6 Samuel Beal, *Si-yu-ki, Buddhist Records of the Western World*, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1906), 2.146; T 51, #2087, 920a; T51n2087_p0920a21-23 (henceforth to be recognized as CBETA digitized canon).

7 Junjiro Takakusu, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671–695)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 150; T54n2125_p0226c15-20. On the references to “sand like snow” and paper, see T. H. Barrett, “Did I-Ching Go to India? Problems in Using I-Ching as a Source on South Asian Buddhism,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 15 (1998): 142–56.

8 James B. Apple, “The Phrase *Dharmaparyāyo Hastagato* in Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature: Rethinking the Cult of the Book in Middle Period Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134 (2014): 26. See also the articles cited in note 4, above.

of the 'cult of the book,' the notion that texts in the material form of books can themselves become objects of worship, which has been much discussed in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India and further afield.⁹

With regard to the second point, the materiality of texts in East Asia, it is important to remember that in early China non-Buddhist texts were inscribed on various surfaces, including tortoise shells and ox scapulae used for oracle bone inscriptions, and pieces of jade in the case of Daoist inscriptions. Metal was used in the case of cast-bronze vessels, which sometimes carried inscriptions as part of the casting and which date from ca. 1200 BCE onward.¹⁰ The casting technique was at least theoretically capable of producing multiple copies, but the texts in such cases are epiphenomenal: that is to say, the point seems to have been to produce the bronze vessel, which subsequently was used in rituals or placed in a grave and may or may not have included a text, rather than to present a text, which was a secondary consideration.¹¹ By contrast, the Buddhist texts to be discussed below are not epiphenomenal: the sole or main purpose of the plates made of gold and other metals was to act as a medium for the text. And so far, the only such metal plates found in East Asia carry Buddhist texts. In South Asia and Southeast Asia, on the other hand, they were used for other purposes as well: copper was used extensively to record land transactions; other metals, including precious metals, were sometimes used to record dedications or the details of ritual acts. The use of metal in these circumstances was presumably in the interest of preservation.¹²

9 See Apple, "The Phrase *Dharmaparyāyo Hastagato* in Mahāyāna Buddhist Literature," and David Drewes, "Revisiting the Phrase '*Sapṛthivipradeśaś Caitiyabhūto Bhavet*' and the Mahāyāna Cult of the Book," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 50 (2007): 101-43.

10 Gil Raz, *The Emergence of Daoism: Creation of a Tradition* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 164-5; Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 313; and Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 40-4, 153-7.

11 Chengyuan Ma, "The Splendor of Ancient Chinese Bronzes," in *The Great Bronze Age of China: An Exhibition from the People's Republic of China*, ed. Wen Fong (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 10, 15.

12 Arlo Griffiths, "New Documents for the Early History of Puṇḍravardhana: Copperplate Inscriptions from the Late Gupta and Early Post-Gupta Periods," *Pratna samiksha* 6 (2015): 15-38; Arlo Griffiths and D. Christian Lammerts, "Epigraphy: Southeast Asia," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 991 and *passim*; and Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit,*

In the case of Buddhist texts, it is already well known that some metals, including gold, were used for the production of single copies of Buddhist texts in South Asia. As Losty has pointed out, "from a very early period are found votive offerings on gold or silver inscribed with the Buddhist creed, which would appear to have been placed in stūpas or buried in the foundations of monasteries or similar religious foundations."¹³ The use of gold and other metals, the evidence suggests, gradually spread to other parts of the Buddhist ecumene. At Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, seven gold plates containing portions of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* inscribed in Sanskrit in Sinhala script were found in 1982.¹⁴ Similarly, in 1897 two gold plates inscribed in Pali were found in Burma near Śrī Kṣetra (modern Hmawza), one of the Pyu city states; known as the Maunggan gold plates, they are now in the British Library and probably date from the sixth century.¹⁵ The National Museum of Myanmar in Yangon also has three gold leaves inscribed in Pali that were found in the Khin Ba stupa mound in Śrī Kṣetra in 1926-27, which are ascribed to the fifth century CE.¹⁶ Farther to the southeast, in what is now Indonesia, a number of Buddhist texts, including *dhāraṇī*, inscribed on gold, silver, or lead foil have been found, and they are thought to date from around the ninth century CE.¹⁷

Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 122-3, 129-30.

13 Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*, 10.

14 John Clifford Holt, *Buddha in the Crown: Avalokiteśvara in the Buddhist Traditions of Sri Lanka* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 67; Hema Ratnayaka, M. H. Sirisoma and Siri Heenpella, *Jetavanārāma Gold Plates* (Colombo: Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1983); and M. H. F. Jayasuriya, *The Jetavanārāma Gold Plates: Being a Fragmentary Sri Lankan Recension of the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* ([Kelaniya]: University of Kelaniya, [1988]).

15 Griffiths and Lammerts, "Epigraphy," 996; and Harry Falk, "Die Goldblätter aus Śrī Kṣetra," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 41 (1997): 53-92.

16 Janice Stargardt, "The Oldest Known Pali Texts, 5th-6th Century: Results of the Cambridge Symposium on the Pyu Golden Pali Text from Śrī Kṣetra, 18-19 April 1995," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 21 (1995): 199-213; and Falk, "Die Goldblätter." They are illustrated in Thein Lwin, Win Kyaing, and Janice Stargardt, "The Pyu Civilization of Myanmar and the City of Śrī Kṣetra," in *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia*, ed. John Guy (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), 65.

17 Arlo Griffiths, "Early Indic Inscriptions of Southeast Asia," in *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia*, ed. John Guy (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), 53-7; Arlo Griffiths, "The 'Greatly Ferocious' Spell (*Mahāraudra-nāma-hṛdaya*). A *Dhāraṇī* Inscribed on a Lead-Bronze Foil Unearthed near Borobudur," in *Epigraphic Evidence in the*

The production of such texts as these, inscribed on gold or gilt plates or other metals, certainly has scriptural authority in the Mahāyāna tradition. One example is to be found in the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines* (Sk. *Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*), which was translated into Chinese on several occasions, the first time in the second century CE (*Bachansong banruo jing* 八千頌般若經).¹⁸ Knowledge of these votive practices may well have been transmitted to China orally by the many Chinese and Korean travelers to India or by monks from India, Sri Lanka, and Central Asia who travelled to China, but they were also embodied both in texts written by Chinese travelers themselves describing what they had seen and in scriptures that mentioned such practices.¹⁹ For example, a text translated into Chinese in the early fifth century states that Ashoka had Buddhist texts inscribed on gold in order to preserve them.²⁰ This reference alone would at least have introduced the practice of inscribing Buddhist texts on gold to readers of the Chinese Buddhist canon all over East Asia. Furthermore, the dominant school of Buddhism in Sri Lanka was known in China as the ‘school of red copper plates’ (*chi tongye bu* 赤銅鑠部), and the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang recorded a story that in the time of the Buddhist King Kanishka the canon was preserved on copper leaves.²¹ The practice of inscribing Buddhist texts on gold is also mentioned in a Chinese translation of the early eleventh century, a time when there were increased Chinese contacts with maritime South

and Southeast Asia.²² Consequently, although the *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (General Records of the Founders of Buddhism) was compiled in the thirteenth century, it is intrinsically credible in asserting that a Chola mission arrived in China in 1023 with texts in Sanskrit on gold leaf, and that Dharmapāla, the translator of one of the texts we now have printed on gold, was instructed to translate these materials.²³

In light of all this, it seems that there can be little doubt that Buddhist texts on gold leaf were familiar in China at least as a concept, and were most likely seen and produced there. What is more, the textual references must have made the practice known in neighboring societies that acquired copies of the texts contained in the Chinese Buddhist canon.

In addition to all these textual references, there is now considerable concrete evidence for the spread to East Asia of the practice of producing Buddhist texts on gold or other metals, as the following examples show. These examples are, however, very uneven in terms of the amount of information currently available. Each will be discussed separately, and then some consideration will be given to the points they have in common, to the extent that current knowledge makes this possible.

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1. In northeastern China restoration work at the so-called White Pagoda (Shijiafo Sheli Pagoda 釈迦舍利塔) in Balin Right Banner, Inner Mongolia, has brought to light several items of interest. The White Pagoda was built in 1047, when that area of China was part of the Khitan empire, and it was at that time that some items were placed in a relic depository at the base of the pagoda. In 1049 a further depository was constructed in the pinnacle of the pagoda, and this contained three gilt sutras.²⁴ Unfortunately, the full details of these have not yet been made available. However, the first of the sutras is a small silver sheet (11.6 x 21.2; measurements given in centimetres with vertical measurement given first) with a text inscribed in intaglio, and it is a text that

Pre-Modern Buddhist World, ed. Kurt Tropper (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2014), 1–36; and Arlo Griffiths, “Written Traces of the Buddhist Past: Mantras and Dhāraṇīs in Indonesian inscriptions,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77 (2014): 137–94.

18 Will Tuladhar-Douglas, “Writing and the Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism,” in *Die Textualisierung der Religion*, ed. Joachim Schaper (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 255–7; and Seishi Karashima, *A Critical Edition of Lokakṣema’s Translation of the Aṣṭasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 道行般若經校注 (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2011), 495.

19 Tim Barrett, *The Woman Who Discovered Printing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 102–3.

20 *Foshuo pusa xing fangbian jingjie shentong bianhua jing* 佛說菩薩行方便境界神通變化經 (translated by the Indian monk Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅, 394–468), T09n0271_p0315c29–0316a01.

21 Chuan Cheng, “Designations of Ancient Sri Lankan Buddhism in the Chinese Tripitaka,” *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies* 2 (2012): n. 13 and *passim*.

22 *Foshuo wunengsheng damingwang tuoluonijing* 佛說無能勝大明王陀羅尼經, T21n1233_p0173b03.

23 *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 45, T49n2035_p0408c02–04.

24 Hsueh-man Shen, ed., *Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China’s Liao Empire (907–1125)* (New York: Asia Society, 2006), 74, 82–83; and Youn-mi Kim, “The Hidden Link: Tracing Liao Buddhism in Shingon Ritual,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 43 (2013): 151–52.

had already been used in both Korea and Japan as part of a ritual practice intended to prolong life. The text is a passage from the Chinese translation of the *Sutra of the Dhārāṇī of Pure Unsullied Light* (Sk. *Raśmivimala-viśuddhāprabhādhārāṇī sūtra*, Ch. *Wugou jingguang ta tuoluoni jing* 無垢淨光大陀羅尼經), which was translated into Chinese by a Tokharian monk called Mitraśānta 彌陀山 (fl. late 7th–early 8th c.), together with Fazang 法藏 (643–712), in the ‘last years’ of the reign of empress Wu 武則天 (r. 690–705).²⁵ Another object is a gilt-silver sheet (9.0 x 102.5; 0.05 thick) containing the text of the *Sutra of the Dhārāṇī of Pure Unsullied Light*. There is also a gold sheet with the Sanskrit text of *Xiangluntang zhong tuoloni zhou* 相輪槿中陀羅尼呪, one of the *dhārāṇī* from the *Sutra of the Dhārāṇī of Pure Unsullied Light*.²⁶

2. The large North Pagoda in Chaoyang city, Liaoning province, has also yielded metal sutras. The North Pagoda seems to have originally been constructed during the Tang dynasty (618–907) and then enlarged in the mid-eleventh century, when this part of southern Manchuria was part of the Khitan empire. Restoration work carried out in the 1980s revealed the existence of two cavities, one underground and another at the top of the pagoda. The cavity at the top contained, among other things, a standing silver-gilt sutra container dated the twelfth year of Chongxi 重熙 (1043). Inside this was found a roll formed of seven sheets of silver fixed together to form one long sheet (11.3 x 362.2) with a text entitled *Banruo boluomiduo xin jingboluomiduo jing* 波羅密多心經, i.e. the *Heart Sutra* (Sk. *Prajñāpāramitā hṛdaya sūtra*), along with three *dhārāṇī* in Chinese and Sanskrit, although it is not stated if these are also on silver-gilt sheets. No further details and no illustrations are provided.²⁷

3. In 1965 excavations at the Wangungri site in Iksan in southwestern Korea led to the discovery in the stone five-storey pagoda of nineteen gold plates (14.8 x 17.4) containing the inscribed text of part of the *Diamond*

Sutra (Sk. *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, Ch. *Foshuo jingang banruo boluomiduo jing* 佛說金剛般若波羅密多經) in the translation by Kumārajīva (334–413) completed in the early fifth century. The date of construction of the pagoda is uncertain, but Song Ilgi, the author of the only detailed report, has assigned the gold plates to the seventh century on the basis of the written forms of the characters and the variant characters used in the text.²⁸

Some light is cast on this find by a twelfth-century Japanese manuscript copy of a collection of Buddhist folk tales titled *Guanshiyin yingyan ji* 觀世音應驗記 (Responsive Manifestations of Avalokiteśvara), which is preserved in the Shōren'in 青蓮院 temple in Kyoto. The manuscript includes at the end a passage concerning King Mu 武 (r. 600–40) of Paekche. This passage, which seems to have been included in the original manuscript of which this is a copy, states that in the tenth year of the Tang-dynasty Zhenguan 貞觀 era (639), the Chesōksa 帝釋寺 temple at Iksan was consumed by fire, but that the pagoda was found to contain, amongst other Buddhist relics, “copper plates which had been used as paper on which to copy the *Diamond Sutra*.”²⁹ The specificity of detail in this passage is impressive, but the original source from which it was taken is not specified in the manuscript and the claim cannot be corroborated by any extant sources. Leaving aside those difficulties, it appears from this passage that the Chesōksa copper plates it refers to had been made some considerable time before the year 639. What connection they have with the recently discovered gold plates is unclear. Were they damaged in the fire and therefore remade using gold instead of copper?

4. Another Korean example is the *Thousand-arm Sutra*, which appears to have been inscribed on sixteen gold (or gold-plated) plates (11.1 x 12.8) held together by hinges. The first plate gives the title *Qianshoujing* 千手經 (possibly an abbreviation of *Qianshou qianyan*

25 Kornicki, “The *Hyakumantō Darani*,” 50–1.

26 Shen, *Gilded Splendor*, 244–45, 250; and Neimenggu Balin youqi bowuguan, “Liaodai shijia fo shelita nei chutu de *Wugou jingguang ta tuoluoni jing* liu jin yin ban,” *Beifang wenwu* 69 (2002.1): 52–3. Unfortunately, this very brief article consists mostly of a transcription of the text and provides very few other details.

27 Dong Gao and Zhang Hongbo, “Liaoning Chaoyang beita tian-gong digong qingli jianbao,” *Wenwu* 434 (1992.7): 6.

28 Song Ilgi, “Iksan Wanggung’tap *Kūmji kūmgang sagyōng ūi mun-hōnhakjōk chōpkūn*,” *Sōjihak yōngu* 24 (2002): 131–59. The gold sheets were on display at the “Cultural Relics of Iksan” exhibition from 28 October 2015 at the new Chōnju National Museum; for images see <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Culture/view?articleId=114304> (accessed 5 January 2017).

29 Makita Tairyō, *Rikuchō koitsu Kanzeon ōgenki no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1970), 4–6, 60; and Song Ilgi, “Kyōngdo Ch’ōngnyōnwōn chang *Kwanseūm ūnghōmgi sosu Paekche kisa ūi kyōndo*,” *Sōjihak yōngu* 30 (2005): 129–49.

guanshiyin pusa guangda yuanman wuai dabeixin tuoloni jing 千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼經). However, the text does not appear to coincide with any of the extant seven translations, so it is not possible to provide a *terminus ante quem*. The only published account of this sutra on gold plates provides illustrations but no information about when or where it was found, although it is said to have been “treasured by a Buddhist believer” for a long time and only recently made available for study, which suggests that it is in a private collection. The author of this account assigns it to some time before the middle of the Koryō dynasty (918–1392) on calligraphic grounds.³⁰

5. The Zentner Collection, an Asian antiques dealer in Emeryville, California, recently had for sale on its website what was said to be a Korean gilt reliquary with a gilt-metal sutra. The latter is described as follows: “flat rectangular gilt metal section with raised characters of Buddhist text and praying figure on the left, the other side of the display has a similar rectangular section of raised Buddhist text and two figures on silver, dates to about 11th to 13th century.”³¹ The grounds for assigning the gilt sutra to Korea and to the Koryō dynasty are not provided, but the visible text is the *Heart Sutra* in the Chinese translation by Xuanzang. Unlike many other examples, these characters are said to be in relief, probably using the repoussé technique.

6. In Japan a number of sutras on copper have been found, the oldest of which is a plate (83.3 x 75.0) from Hasedera 長谷寺 temple in Nara prefecture that contains an image and twenty-seven lines of inscribed text from the *Lotus Sutra* and dates from the seventh century.³² A great many others date from the Heian period (794–1185), including the thirty-three copper plates (21.0 x 18.0) inscribed on both sides with the *Lotus Sutra* and *Sutra of the Heart of*

Wisdom from the Kunitama 国玉 shrine at the summit of Mt. Kubote (Buzen city, Fukuoka prefecture), and the buried *Lotus Sutra* from Kinpusen in Nara prefecture.³³ Some other examples carry dates: a single copper sheet (21.0 x 18.0; 0.2 thick) with part of the *Lotus Sutra* inscribed on both sides, which was found in a sutra mound at the Chōanji 長安寺 temple in Oita prefecture, is dated 1141. Another (14.3 x 36.0; 1.0 thick), found inside a miniature stone pagoda, contains the text of the *Sutra of the Casket Seal* (Sk. *Karaṇḍamudrā-dhāraṇī*, Ch. *Baoqieyin tuoluoni jing* 宝篋印陀羅尼經), which was closely connected with practices involving relics. This is dated to 1773, showing that the practice continued in Japan up to the eighteenth century.³⁴ Some if not all of the Japanese examples seem to have been prompted by the notion of the degeneration of Buddhism encapsulated in the concept of the ‘Latter days of the Law’ (Ch. *mofo*, Jp. *mappō* 末法), which became a widespread belief in Japan in the eleventh century, and by the concomitant desire to ensure the preservation of the Buddha’s words in the form of written texts for future ages. In addition, however, inscriptions reveal that donors were simultaneously motivated by the desire for personal rebirth, either for themselves or for those in whose interest they sponsored the preparation of the sutras for burial. Particularly from the thirteenth century onward, *mappō* was replaced as the principal motive by a desire for personal salvation.³⁵

30 Yi Chaejun, “Kümje *Ch’ōnsugyōng* e kwanhan sogo,” *Munhwasa-hak* 21 (2004): 519–36.

31 The item has been sold according to the company’s website. Images and description are posted there: <http://www.zentner-collection.com/items/1253385/Korean-Ancient-Buddhist-Gilded-Sutra-Reliquary> (accessed 16 June 2016 and 2 January 2017). The author will provide screen shots of the images on request should the item be removed from the website.

32 For illustrations and a good account, see <https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/長谷寺銅板法華説相図> (accessed 19 June 2016). For further details, see Kataoka Naoki, “Hasedera dōban Hokke sessōzu no meibun ni tsuite: Kōtei, kaishaku chōkoku gihō,” *Niigata Sangyō Daigaku Keizaigakubu kiyō* 40 (2012): 1–17.

33 Institut de philosophie orientale and Association culturelle Soka de France, eds., *Sūtras bouddhiques: un héritage spirituel universel. Manuscrits et iconographie du Sūtra du Lotus* (Paris: Les Indes savants, 2016), 142; Teishitsu Hakubutsukan, ed., *Kinpusen kyōzuka ibutsu no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1979; facsimile of 1937 edition), 31–33, 92–94, and plates 25–29; Ishida Mosaku, “Wagakuni hakken no dōbankyō ni tsuite,” *Bukkyō kōkōgaku ronkō*, vol. 3 (Kyoto: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1977), 377–408; Taguchi Eiichi, “Dōban Hokkekyō, tsuketaru dōbakoita,” *Kokka* 957 (1973): 44–53; and Yajima Kyōsuke, “Kinpusen shutsudo no dōbankyō,” *Yamato bunka kenkyū* 4, no. 3 (1957): 1–16.

34 For a fragment of a copper sutra found in Yoshino and attributed to the eleventh or twelfth century, see <http://www.narahaku.go.jp/collection/493-1.html>, for a *Lotus Sutra* inscribed in 1141 and found in Kyushu, <http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/heritages/detail/214903>, and for a *dhāraṇī* sutra inscribed on copper in 1773 found in Saitama, http://www.town.yoshimi.saitama.jp/guide_kongouin.html (all accessed 19 June 2016). On the role of the *Sutra of the Casket Seal*, see Norihisa Baba, “Sri Lankan Impacts on East Asian Buddhism: Transmission of a Dhāraṇī Sūtra,” in *Buddhism Without Borders: Proceedings of the International Conference on Global Buddhism*, eds. Dasho Karma Ura and Dendup Chopel (Bhutan: The Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2012; <http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/category/conference-proceedings/>), 257–67.

35 Jonathan A. Silk, “Canonicity,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 29. On



Figure 1. *Sutra on the Divination of the Effect of Good and Evil Actions* (*Zhancha shan'e yebao jing* 占察善惡業報經). H. 18.6cm, w. 12.7cm. Origin and date unknown. Private collection, UK. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 2. The beginning of the second chapter of *Ji dasheng xiang lun* 集大乘相論. Origin and date unknown. H. 18.6cm, w. 12.7cm. Private collection, UK. Reproduced with permission.

It should be noted that the buried sutras found in Japan have overwhelmingly been found in sutra mounds rather than in locations associated with stupas, where relics, mirrors, and other non-textual objects are much more common. What is more, the text interred is very often, but not exclusively, the *Lotus Sutra*. In these respects, it is clear that Japanese practices differed from those in continental East Asia.

sutra burials in Japan, see D. Max Moerman, "The Death of the Dharma: Buddhist Sutra Burials in Early Medieval Japan," in *The Death of Sacred Texts: Ritual Disposal and Renovation of Texts in World Religions*, ed. Kristina Myrvold (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 71-90, and the literature cited therein; and Heather Blair, *Real and Imagined: The Peak of Gold in Heian Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 175-89.

7. In addition to the above examples, which have already to some extent been individually reported and for which illustrations are mostly available, two more examples have recently come to light. They belong to a private collector in the United Kingdom who states that at the time of purchase the vendor declared that they were of Korean origin. These new examples both consist of short 'books' of seven double-sided pages (18.6 x 12.7) consisting of gilt-metal plates held together with hinges; thus each consists of fourteen plates combined in pairs to form seven 'pages.' The first book consists of part of the first chapter (beginning in the middle of a phrase) of the *Sutra on the Divination of the Effect of Good and Evil Actions* (Ch. *Zhancha shan'e yebao jing* 占察善惡業報經), which was translated into Chinese by 菩提燈 (Bodhidīpa?) in the seventh century (figure

1).³⁶ The other consists of the second chapter of the *Ji dasheng xiang lun* 集大乘相論 (Collected Treatises on the Characteristics of the Great Vehicle), which was translated by Dānapāla 施護, a monk of the Song dynasty (960–1279), in the tenth or eleventh century (figure 2). What is unusual about these two texts is that seal script is used, for which there is so far no parallel among other Chinese Buddhist texts on metal. The other connection between these two examples is the fact that the border designs are identical; it seems, therefore, that they were produced in the same workshop and probably at the same time. Given that the *Ji dasheng xiang lun* was not translated until the tenth century at the earliest, this means that they were both produced after that date, during the Koryō dynasty if they were in fact produced in Korea.

These two texts are contained in gilt-metal boxes that clearly do not belong with them, for the titles on the lids are different from those of the contents. In the case of the second book, for example, the title on the lid is 順權方便經卷, suggesting that it originally contained a copy of the *Sirīvivartavyākaraṇa sūtra* (Ch. *Shun quan fangbian jing* 順權方便經, Sutra on Following Provisional Expedients) translated by Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 (230?–316), and an inscription on the base of the box reads ‘Da Tang Zhenguan’ 大唐貞觀, suggesting that it was made in the Zhenguan era (626–649) (figures 3 and 4). Since the text actually contained in it, the *Ji dasheng xiang lun*, was not translated into Chinese until the tenth or eleventh century, it is obvious that the box has nothing to do with its current contents. However, if the box is what it claims to be, it may possibly be taken as evidence that Buddhist texts on metal were produced in China as early as the Tang dynasty, for the shape, which is similar to that of its present contents, suits a metal text in codex format rather than a paper roll, which in the Tang was still the usual format for Buddhist texts. There remains the possibility that the box was used to contain a paper book of the same size, for the Dunhuang Collection contains a number of paper booklets of similar size in codex, butterfly, or concertina format.



Figure 3. The title on one of the boxes is that of the *Sirīvivartavyākaraṇa sūtra* (*Shun quan fangbian jing* 順權方便經). Origin and date unknown. Private collection, UK. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 4. The inscription on the base of the box reads “Da Tang Zhenguan” 大唐貞觀, referring to the Zhenguan era (626–49). Origin and date unknown. Private collection, UK. Reproduced with permission.

These seem to be of local manufacture, however, and we have no examples of similarly shaped booklets of metropolitan quality suitable for inclusion in such a box as this.³⁷

³⁶ The text begins with the last three characters 生法忍 (T17n0839_ p0909a05) and thus begins *in medias res*. On the *Sutra on the Divination of the Effect of Good and Evil Actions*, see Whalen Lai, “The *Chan-ch’a ching*: Religion and Magic in Medieval China,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990), 175–206.

³⁷ See Colin Chinnery, “Bookbinding,” downloadable from the website of the International Dunhuang Project (<http://idp.bl.uk/downloads/Bookbinding.pdf>).

Origin and/or location	Text	Material and technique	Measurements	Date
White Pagoda, northeast China	<i>Sutra of the Dhārāṇī of Pure Unsullied Light</i> (extract?)	Gilt silver; inscribed	11.6 x 21.2; one plate	No later than 1049
White Pagoda, northeast China	<i>Sutra of the Dhārāṇī of Pure Unsullied Light</i>	Gilt silver; inscribed	9.0 x 102.5; one long plate	No later than 1049
White Pagoda, northeast China	One <i>dhārāṇī</i> from <i>Sutra of the Dhārāṇī of Pure Unsullied Light</i>	Gold; inscribed	Unknown; one sheet	11 th century
North Pagoda, Chaoyang, Liaoning	<i>Heart Sutra</i>	Silver; unknown	11.3 x 362.2	No later than 1043
Iksan, Korea	<i>Diamond Sutra</i> (incomplete)	Gold; inscribed	17.4 x 14.8; nineteen gold plates	7 th century
Iksan, Korea (according to 12 th -century Japanese manuscript copy of <i>Guanshiyin yingyan ji</i>)	<i>Diamond Sutra</i>	Copper; unknown	Unknown	Before 639
Korea (private collection)	<i>Thousand-arm Sutra</i>	Gold; inscribed	11.1 x 12.8; sixteen hinged gold plates	Koryō dynasty (918-1392)
Korea (Zentner Collection)	<i>Heart Sutra</i>	Gilt metal; repoussé	Several plates said to be 22-24 cm long	Koryō dynasty (918-1392)
Hasedera, Nara Prefecture, Japan	<i>Lotus Sutra</i> (partial)	Copper; inscribed	83.3 x 75.0; one plate	7 th century
Kunitama shrine, Kyushu, Japan	<i>Lotus Sutra</i> and <i>Sutra of the Heart of Wisdom</i>	Copper; inscribed	21.0 x 18.0; thirty-three plates	Heian period (794-1185)
Kinpusen, Nara Prefecture, Japan	<i>Lotus Sutra</i>	Copper; inscribed	20.0 x 15.0;	Heian period (794-1185)
Chōanji, Oita Prefecture, Japan	<i>Lotus Sutra</i>	Copper; inscribed	21.0 x 18.0; one plate	1141
Yoshimi, Saitama Prefecture, Japan	<i>Sutra of the Casket Seal</i>	Copper; inscribed	14.3 x 36.0; one plate	1773
Korea? (private collection in UK)	<i>Sutra on the Divination of the Effect of Good and Evil Actions</i> (incomplete)	Gilt metal; repoussé	18.6 x 12.7; fourteen plates paired to form seven hinged plates	10 th or 11 th century?
Korea? (private collection in UK)	<i>Ji dasheng xiang jing</i> (incomplete)	Gilt metal; repoussé	18.6 x 12.7; 14 plates paired to form seven hinged plates	10 th or 11 th century?

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All the examples described above show that the production of Buddhist texts on gold, silver, and copper was widely practiced in East Asia as well as in parts of the Buddhist ecumene further to the west. There are two features that they have in common and others that they do not, and it is now time to turn our attention

to these. For convenience the key data are laid out in table 1.

The first point that they have in common is that they were discovered as a result of archaeological excavation or of repairs to pagodas: in other words, these texts were not made for reading but rather were buried. The point of burying texts inscribed on gold or other metal plates might have been simply to preserve

the texts for future generations. However, they appear to have more in common with the practices described earlier in which material texts constituted ‘written embodiments of Buddhahood’ that were then subjected to ‘ritual burial’ by being placed inside stupas. The connection between texts and their entombment in stupas is made explicit in the *Sutra of the Dhārāṇī of Pure Unsullied Light*, and the practice of deliberately ‘burying’ texts, that is entombing them within stupas, goes back to the texts stamped on clay in the second century BCE, as mentioned at the beginning of this article. It can also be connected with at least some of the Gandhāran Buddhist texts written on birch bark, with much later birch-bark manuscripts found in what is now Mongolia, and possibly with sutra burials in Heian-period Japan. The Japanese sutra burials, however, are not closely connected with stupas and were instead principally motivated by a desire both to ensure the survival of texts and to achieve personal religious goals. What is more, many of them were copies made on expensive paper rather than metal, so they should probably be excluded from further consideration in connection with metal texts.³⁸

Tentatively, then, the production of Buddhist texts on gold, silver, and copper can be seen as an extension of the practice of the ritual burial of texts in stupas, with the difference that the use of precious metals was a means of doing the texts greater honor by writing them on precious materials, of preserving them in line with Ashoka’s reported practice, and of symbolizing the economic and spiritual power of those who sponsored these practices. Nevertheless, it must be noted that some of the texts mentioned above are of unknown provenance (nos. 4, 5, and 7) and that some of the Japanese items described in no. 6 do not appear to have any direct connection with burial inside stupas. Consequently, we cannot state with confidence that these metal texts were all produced for ritual burial in stupas.

The second feature that they have in common is the

use of precious metals, which applies to all the examples listed except those from Japan, which use copper. Some of them use solid gold or silver, while others are merely gilt. It is not clear how these differences are to be explained: are cost and the availability of precious metals the key factors? Alternatively, was gold chosen on account of its permanence and prestige? If permanence was a factor, why are so many of the texts incomplete or partial rather than complete sutras? Or again, was it a matter of texts on more precious materials being seen as more efficacious? In Mongolia it was considered that the more precious the material on which a Buddhist text was written the more efficacious it would be, and this may well reflect views current elsewhere in East Asia.³⁹ It is probably partly for the same reason that some Buddhist manuscripts in East Asia were executed in gold ink on indigo-colored paper: both the gold ink and the indigo-dyed paper were expensive commodities, and while their use suggests ‘aesthetic authority’ and conspicuous consumption, the stronger motive was probably that of efficacy.⁴⁰

One factor that these texts do not have in common is the choice of text. The ones from Japan consist mostly of the text of the *Lotus Sutra*, which so far has not been found elsewhere. Two of the Khitan texts from the White Pagoda come from the *Sutra of the Dhārāṇī of Pure Unsullied Light*, which, as we have shown, is closely connected to the practice of ritual burial of texts. The other texts so far found consist of the *Sutra on the Divination of the Effect of Good and Evil Actions*, the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Thousand-arm Sutra*, the *Heart Sutra*, and the *Sutra of the Heart of Wisdom*. Only some of these texts are connected to the apotropaic or ritual functions of texts, and with such a relatively small sample it is not clear what determined the choice of text. Nor is it clear why most of them are incomplete.

The second factor that they do not have in common is size. One is more than three meters in length, others are much smaller. Is this again merely a matter of cost and availability, or are other factors at work? At this stage it is too early to tell.

38 Ingo Strauch, “Looking into Water-Pots and over a Buddhist Scribe’s Shoulder—On the Deposition and the Use of Manuscripts in Early Buddhism,” *Asiatische Studien Études Asiatiques* 68 (2014): 797–830; Vesna A. Wallace, “Diverse Aspects of the Mongolian Buddhist Manuscript Culture and Realms of Its Influence,” in *Buddhist Manuscript Cultures: Knowledge, Ritual, and Art*, eds. Stephen C. Berkwitz, Juliane Schober, and Claudia Brown (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 82; and John M. Rosenfield and Shūjirō Shimada, *Traditions of Japanese Art: Selections from the Kimiko and John Powers Collection* (Cambridge, MA: Fogg Art Museum, 1970), 56–61.

39 Wallace, “Diverse Aspects of the Mongolian Buddhist Manuscript Culture,” 86.

40 Blair, *Real and Imagined*, 178; Charlotte Eubanks, *Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 142, 167; and Chang Ch’ung-sik, *Han’guk sagyōng yōn’gu* (Seoul: Tongguk taehakkyo ch’ulp’anbu, 2007).

The final question to address here is how these metal texts were produced, for here, too, there are clear differences to be observed. In many of the cases described above, it is clear that the text has been incised into the surface of the metal using a stylus. This is definitely true of the copper plates from Kunitama shrine in Japan and the other items of Japanese origin. These, as we have seen, also differ from the other cases in terms of choice of text and material.

In some of the cases from Korea, however, it is clear that a different technique has been used to transfer a whole page of text onto the gold, silver, or copper plate. The technique used in these cases is known as repoussé, which is of considerable antiquity. The oldest textual example known appears to be MS 5236 in the Schøyen Collection in Norway. This is a gold amulet carrying an embossed text. For palaeographic and linguistic reasons it is tentatively assigned to the sixth century BCE and was produced either in Euboia or Asia Minor.⁴¹ Although some controversy surrounds this amulet, the consensus now is that it is genuine. What is important about it, apart from the technique used for its production, which must have been capable of producing multiple impressions on gold or other soft metals, is that it was not a text for reading but a text designed to fulfill an apotropaic or ritual function, as were the Indian Buddhist clay sealings, some of the Sumerian clay impressions, and of course the *dhāraṇī* printed on paper in Japan and Korea.

The repoussé technique was certainly capable of producing a whole page of text at once, but exactly how it was done in each case is unclear. There are perhaps two possibilities: one is to carve a wooden block with the text in intaglio and reversed, and then press the gold leaf into the indented text, but this would not be possible in the case of gilt-silver or thicker metal plates.

41 The amulet is shown and described at <http://www.schoyencollection.com/pre-gutenberg-printing/21-1-blind-on-clay-gold/ms-5236-gold-invocation-apollo> (accessed 19 June 2016). At <http://epub.uni-regensburg.de/16319/> (accessed 19 June 2016) can be found further images and two unpublished studies: Herbert E. Brekle, "Analyse der Herstellungstechnik der Inschrift auf einem Goldamulett in der Schøyen Collection (London/Oslo)" (unpublished report, University of Regensburg, August 2010), and Dominic Montserrat, "Report on Early Greek Gold Lamella" (n.d.), which are discussed in Roland Cuthbert, *The Esoteric Codex: Amulets and Talismans* ([S.l.]: Lulu Press, 2015), 15-7. The only thorough study, however, is Giovanna Rocca, "Una lamina aurea dalla Collezione Schøyen (MS 5236)," *Alexandria/Alessandria: Rivista di glottologia* 8 (2014): 125-36.

The other is to carve a wooden block with the text in relief and not reversed, and then press the gold leaf or other metal plate over it so that the text in relief is transferred to the metal. Whether this is in fact how these examples were produced is now impossible to know. However, some form of pattern or mold would be necessary in order to transfer a whole page of text at once, and this would have at least the potential of producing multiple copies, whether or not it was in fact used to do so. Given the fact that so far in no case have two 'imprints' from the same pattern or mold come to light, we cannot be sure that multiple copies were ever produced from them.

It is unfortunate that few of the items carry a date or can be dated securely, for if wooden blocks were prepared for repoussé work in the seventh century it would be surprising if they were not also used for printing on paper. This may be a good reason for being cautious about the dating of all the items that have so far come to light, but the item in the Schøyen Collection might, on the other hand, reasonably suggest that repoussé texts do not necessarily generate the idea of printing on other surfaces.

Further, it is not clear what might have determined the choice made between stylus incision and repoussé imprints. Given that precious metals were being used, it is difficult to suppose that the repoussé technique was chosen for the purpose of producing multiple copies. That being so, why take the trouble to prepare the pattern or mold just to produce one or a handful of copies? Was repoussé technology preferable for religious or some other reasons? Finally, of the two items that have so far come to light from the territory of the former Khitan empire, one is inscribed and no images seem to be available of the other, from the North Pagoda in Chaoyang, so it is not known if this was inscribed or not. Consequently, all the available repoussé imprints appear to be of Korean origin. Was this technique, then, practiced only in Korea, and why does it seem not have been used in Japan?

It will be obvious to readers of this article that the examples from East Asia discussed here vary considerably in terms of text, material, technology, and date. Does that invalidate the attempt made here to treat them as part of one and the same phenomenon? In our view it does not, and that is for three reasons: because they all reproduce texts from the Chinese Buddhist canon; because other texts in the Chinese Buddhist canon mention these practices and thus conveyed them

to Japan, the Khitan empire, the Korean states, and Vietnam; and because of the association with stupas in all cases where the provenance is known. With regard to the third point, however, it is clear that the Japanese examples do not fit the pattern. Since in other respects, too, they differ from the continental examples, it would probably be appropriate to consider them as a separate phenomenon.⁴² The other East Asian examples clearly have points in common not only with each other but also with similar practices in South and Southeast Asia. The most likely hypothesis is that the preparation and burial of Buddhist texts on precious metals is a practice that was transmitted to China from South and/or Southeast Asia and then further to the Khitan empire and the Korean peninsula, but this remains no more than a hypothesis.

The problem with the continental East Asian examples is partly that we do not have consistent information about all of them, and also that the number of samples is still small. In fact, apart from the Japanese sutra burials, all the East Asian examples discussed in this article have come to light only in the last sixty years, and some much more recently than that. We must therefore await further discoveries in order to increase the size of the sample pool and then determine their common characteristics. At this stage, however, since most of the artifacts discussed in this article have hitherto been studied only in isolation, if at all, and since, what is more, the method of production has hitherto attracted no discernible interest, it has seemed to us worthwhile to present a preliminary account of these geographically dispersed and chronologically diverse artifacts with a discussion of the probable motives for their production and of the techniques used to produce them. If this article stimulates further research on them it will have achieved its aims.

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Turning “Sites of Remembrance” into “Sites of Imagination”: The Case of Hideyoshi’s *Great Buddha*

RADU LECA

THIS article analyses the significance of visual traces of certain historical visits and their relevance for an imaginary immersive digital reconstruction of a site fascinating for its historical and art historical significance and elusive in terms of potential reconstruction.

The city of Kyoto has led the way in Japan’s urban landscape conservation, beginning with the 1919 City Planning Law.¹ This has generated debates over how best to reconcile historical heritage with the needs of a large, modern city.² Scholars have paid little attention

to the relationship between landscape conservation and historical sources or the compatibility of landscape conservation and new technologies such as augmented reality. To explore these issues, let us suppose that on the eve of the 2020 Olympic Games, Kyoto Municipality has launched a strong campaign to promote tourism. Part of the campaign is a multilingual, immersive application software (henceforth, “app”) called “Shinraku,” 新洛 (“new capital”), which overlays historical buildings on the present landscape. In this hypothetical scenario, from the municipality’s perspective, the Shinraku app is one way to avoid the costs and criticisms of physically reconstructing historical buildings. Although such a technology might, in real application, offer alternatives to current debates about urban heritage, if the app were developed in line with historical sources it would face the same questions raised by any visual representation of a historical site, namely, how does the historical documentation (including the transcribed visual memory) of a physical site intersect with

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- 1 For an administrative overview, see Kyōtoshi Toshikeikakyoku Keikanbu Keikanseisakuka, ed., *Kyōto no keikan Landscape of Kyoto* (Kyoto: Kyōtoshi Toshikeikakyoku Keikanbu Keikanseisakuka, 2009), <http://www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/tokei/page/0000057538.html> (accessed January 12, 2017).
- 2 Günter Nitschke, “Protection of Urban Place in Kyoto,” in *Hozon: Architectural and Urban Conservation in Japan*, eds.

Siegfried R.C.T. Enders and Niels Gutschow (Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 1998), 160–87; and Christoph Brumann, *Tradition, Democracy and the Townscape of Kyoto: Claiming a Right to the Past* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

social practices and historical change? Also, does visual memory support or contradict textual sources? A virtual reality app would also raise a new inquiry: do digital representations in fact create a material archive parallel to the object represented, especially when that object has disappeared?

This article addresses the foregoing questions by focusing on a site that has largely disappeared but was once one of the main attractions in the capital (making it a prime candidate for an immersive, digital reconstruction). The Great Buddha Hall (Daibutsuden 大仏殿) within the precincts of Hōkōji 方広寺 temple was originally part of a series of large public works through which the late-sixteenth-century ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1536–98) left his mark on the urban landscape of the capital.³ At twenty-four metres high, the temple's main icon was nine metres higher than the Great Buddha in Nara, which it was meant to rival.⁴ It gave religious significance and positive political analogies to Hideyoshi's rule. The placement of Hōkōji on the slopes of the Higashiyama hills was part of a larger initiative of creating temple-towns (*teramachi* 寺町) on the outskirts of the historical capital.⁵ Its proximity to the twelfth-century Hall of the Lotus King (Rengeōin 蓮華王院), more popularly known as the Thirty-Three-Bay Hall (Sanjūsangendō 三十三間堂), helped integrate the new temple into a pre-existing religious and aesthetic paradigm. The placement of Hōkōji facilitated its emergence as a famous site (*meisho* 名所) visited by a range of visitors, both local and foreign.

The changing and degrading material state of the Great Buddha Hall due to frequent fires and reconstructions, combined with the unreliability of its visual record in artistic representations, renders the task of its virtual reconstruction difficult. The hall and its main icon were destroyed and replaced three times by 1798, when it in effect disappeared and was replaced by a half-size reconstruction that also eventually burned down.⁶

Today, very few material traces of the original building remain. Chief among them is the main bell carrying the inscription that inauspiciously divided the characters of Tokugawa Ieyasu's last name, providing the pretext for the Osaka campaigns of 1614–15 that destroyed the Toyotomi clan.⁷ As for the statue, only a scale model of the 1664 reconstruction survives.⁸ Although this fragmentary record might prove challenging for the purposes of an immersive app, the Great Buddha Hall—as we shall demonstrate—provides an interesting case study on cultural memory, and the Shinraku app may be seen as another layering on the visual history of this “site of remembrance.”⁹

At eighty-one metres long, fifty metres wide, and forty-five metres high, the Great Buddha Hall must have been an impressive sight. Archaeological reports and surviving architectural drawings allow us to imagine in basic terms its layout and appearance.¹⁰ To attempt to recover the shock a first-time visitor would have experienced, however, we can turn to other sources as well, for example, one of the first detailed accounts by a foreign visitor (figure 1).¹¹ Certain details can be gleaned from this account, such as the offering of coins, and these could perhaps be scripted within an app. This study focuses on visual sources, however, and as I will

<http://teapot.lib.ocha.ac.jp/ocha/handle/10083/4613> (accessed January 14, 2017).

- 7 Watsky, *Chikubushima*, 201–2.
- 8 Patricia Graham, *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art, 1600–2005* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 19–20.
- 9 From Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de memoire*, designating cultural elements involving the preservation of memory within a specific community. See Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.
- 10 Graham, *Faith and Power*, 19; Ami Nobuya, “Hōkōji,” *Kyōtoshi kōko shiryōkan bunkazai kōza* 219 (2010), <http://www.kyoto-arc.or.jp/News/s-kouza.html> (accessed December 1, 2016); and Kuroda Ryūji and Ishida Rie, “Tōdaiji daibutsudennai tateji itawari zu ni tsuite,” *Kuon zasshū* 6 (2004), 1–11, 23–25, <http://www.nara-haku.go.jp/archive/05.html> (last accessed December 2, 2016).
- 11 John Saris, “The eighth Voyage set forth by the East-Indian Societe, wherein were employed three Ships, the Clove, the Hector, and the Thomas, under the command of Captaine John Saris : His Course and Acts to and in the Red Sea, Java, Moluccas, and Japan (by the Inhabitants called Neffoon, where also he first began and settled an English Trade and Factorie) with other remarkable Rarities, collected out of his own Journall,” in vol. 3 of *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1905), 357–490, <http://archive.org/details/hakluytusposthu91purcgoog> (accessed December 2, 2016). The first account by a foreign visitor was that of Portuguese missionary Louis Frois, as discussed in Watsky, *Chikubushima*, 76–7; and translated in Murakami Naojirō, trans., *Iezusukai nihon nenpō*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Yūshōdō Shoten, 1969), 146–7.

3 Matthew McKelway, *Capitalscapes: Folding Screens and Political Imagination in Late Medieval Kyoto* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 179–80.

4 Andrew Watsky, *Chikubushima: Deploying the Sacred Arts in Momoyama Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), 76–83.

5 Matthew Stavros, *Kyoto: An Urban History of Japan's Premodern Capital* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 162.

6 For a study of the visual history of the post-1798 reconstruction, see Kurokawa Marie, “Surimono ni miru Hōkōji Daibutsuden kaichō ni tsuite,” *Ochanomizu ongaku ronshū* 9 (2007): 14–30,

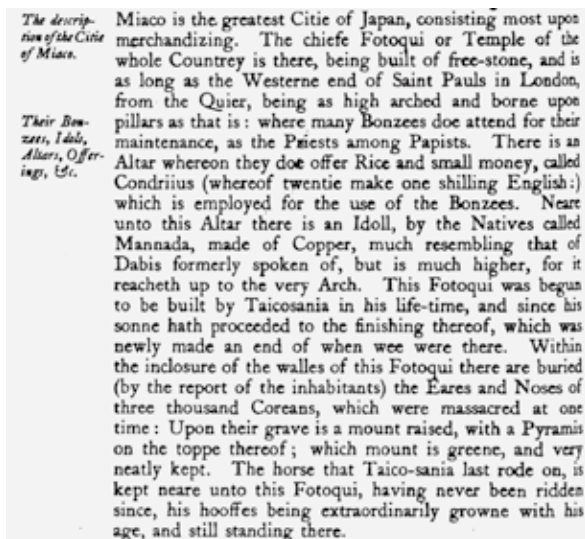


Figure 1. Fragment from John Saris, *The Eighth Voyage* [...], 1613. Source: Saris, *The Eighth Voyage*, 470.

show they are most problematic.

The name “new capital” of the Shinraku app is an oblique reference to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings on folding screens now grouped under the category of “Scenes of the Capital” (*Rakuchū rakugai zu* 洛中洛外図). The first visual depictions of Hōkōji appear on examples of such folding screens produced at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹² Among the most celebrated examples are the so-called Funaki 舟木 screens (ca. 1622–24), which mark the appropriation of capital imagery by the new Tokugawa ruling family.¹³ The temple’s precincts are shown teeming with visitors, including what appear to be two foreigners with characteristic capes, high collars, and

hats.¹⁴ The hall was still under renovation when the Funaki screens were being produced, and this discrepancy has been discussed in terms of a dichotomy between reality observed and reality desired.¹⁵ Rather than a strict dichotomy, we might better understand the screens as blurring the line between reality and fiction. As the Funaki screens demonstrate, the offset between physical reality and visual depictions would have been part of the experience of visiting the Great Buddha Hall from very early on in its history.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the range and reach of depictions of the capital, and of Hōkōji’s Great Buddha Hall in particular, diversified dramatically. This process has been discussed by the historian Beatrice Bodart-Bailey in connection with souvenir paintings of Kyoto in terms of a “diffusion of the cultural and artistic values formerly reserved for the aristocracy to a broader segment of the population.”¹⁶ This top-down diffusion model has been widely employed in research on Japanese art history; though useful, it presupposes strictly defined categories of elite and popular imagery. A more nuanced approach seems necessary, however, one that takes into account the diversity of images of this site as well as the multifocal agency of their audiences (travellers and administrators, and Korean, Ryukyuan, and Dutch visitors).

Some scholars have begun to address this issue. A 2008 article by historian Ronald Toby, for example, discusses the iconography of a nearby site associated with Hōkōji, the Ear Mound (Mimizuka 耳塚), where Hideyoshi buried the ears and noses of prisoners from his two Korean campaigns (1592–93 and 1597–98).¹⁷ The article is a historical analysis of the diplomatic and symbolic significance of the Ear Mound for both the shogunal administration and the Korean envoys. Toby

12 One of the first depictions is found in a set of screens of around 1606 by Kanō Naizen 狩野内膳 (1570–1616) currently held in the Toyokuni 豊国 shrine in Kyoto. For images and more detailed descriptions, see Sandy Kita, *The Last Tosa: Iwasa Katsumochi Matabei, Bridge to Ukiyo-e* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 180–1; McKelway, *Capitalscapes*, 184–5, fig. 7.3; Watsky, *Chikubushima*, 214–6, 219–20, fig. 136; and <http://www.kyotodeasobo.com/art/houmotsukan/toyokuni-shrine/01-toyokuni-by-oubu.html> (accessed February 20, 2017).

13 Attributed to Iwasa Matabei, these screens were handed down through the Funaki family of Echizen 越前 province (modern Fukui prefecture). For excellent details, including the Great Buddha Hall and the scenes noted here, see the digital reproduction at <http://www.emuseum.jp/detail/100318/001/045> (accessed January 18, 2017). See also Kita, *The Last Tosa*, 170–80; and McKelway, *Capitalscapes*, 193–5.

14 They appear on the left edge of the centre of the sixth panel of the right screen. For a discussion of foreigner iconography, see Ronald Toby, “The ‘Indianness’ of Iberia and Changing Japanese Iconographies of Other,” in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounter Between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Stuart Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 323–51.

15 Watsky, *Chikubushima*, 219.

16 Beatrice Bodart-Bailey, “The Most Magnificent Monastery and Other Famous Sights: The Japanese Paintings of Engelbert Kaempfer,” *Japan Review* 3 (1992): 43, <http://id.nii.ac.jp/1368/00000389/> (accessed January 14, 2017).

17 Ronald Toby, “Kinsei no miyako meisho: Hōkōjimai to Mizukura – Rakuchū rakugaizu, kyōezu, meisho annai o chūshin ni,” *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 842 (2008): 1–12.



Figure 2. Romeyn de Hooghe. *Temple de Diaboth*. 1680. H. 39cm, w. 28.5cm. Double-spread book illustration. Copperplate print. Bibliothèque National de France, Réserve. DS 808 A 49. Source: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b2300064h/f60.thumbnail> (accessed December 3, 2016).

draws attention to documents showing a reluctance on behalf of the Korean envoys to visit the Ear Mound as part of the itinerary prescribed by the shogunal administration. Japanese officials of the time, of course, claimed the opposite, and many artistic representations of the scene likewise showed enthusiastic Koreans visiting the site.¹⁸ One folding screen celebrates the Korean delegation of 1682 by depicting it cavalcading toward the Ear Mound, whereas previous versions of the same image showed only golden clouds in this area.¹⁹ In this case, the image seems to have functioned as a form of news and evidence of the Japanese elite's enthusiasm for the Korean visitors.

There remains a need for more in-depth considerations of the problematics of visual sources for historical analysis. For this study, I am interested in the Great Buddha's visual footprint—the visual archaeology of a monument no longer extant. One subset of the visual corpus that has received scholarly attention pertains to a visit by German physician Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716) as part of the delegation of the Dutch East India Company.²⁰ A detailed, hand-drawn sketch by Kaempfer survives.²¹ It shows the Buddha statue with unprecedented accuracy, even including measurements and a human figure for scale. It represented a significant advance from the fanciful depiction by Romeyn de Hooghe in Arnoldus Montanus' *Atlas Japannensis* of a few decades earlier (figure 2).²² But labelling de

18 For example, Matsudaira Nobutsuna 松平信綱 (1596–1662), the official responsible for entertaining the 1636 Korean embassy, asserted that the honourable guests were eager to visit the Great Buddha Hall. Matsudaira Nobutsuna, *Matsudaira Nobutsuna no shojō* (Kyūshū Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 2009), http://www.kyuhaku-db.jp/souke/introduce/O2_4.html (accessed December 1, 2016). See Toby, "Kinsei no miyako meisho," 4, for a partial list of depictions of the Great Buddha Hall and of the Ear Mound on *Rakuchū rakugai zu* folding screens.

19 Itakura Masaaki, ed., *Egakareta miyako: Kaihō, Kōshū, Kyōto, Edo* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 2013), 70, 136.

20 Bodart-Bailey, "The Most Magnificent Monastery;" and Yu-Ying Brown, "Kaempfer's Album of Famous Sights of Seventeenth-Century Japan," *Electronic British Library Journal* (1989), <http://www.bl.uk/ebj/1989/articles/article7.html> (accessed December 2, 2016).

21 Reproduced in Bodart-Bailey, "The Most Magnificent Monastery," 38.

22 Arnoldus Montanus, *Atlas Japannensis* (London: Thomas Johnson, 1670), 278–9, <http://shinku.nichibun.ac.jp/kichosho/new/>

Hooghe's image as erroneous, as I have implied in the preceding sentences, would not do it justice. It was a visual reconstruction of a text (*ekphrasis*) in line with the only equivalent experience accessible to the engraver: that of visiting a Gothic cathedral.²³ The issue of accuracy is minor compared to the regime of vision and the ideological agenda into which the image was co-opted.²⁴

In turn, it is tempting to think of Kaempfer's sketch of the Buddha as the straightforward result of a direct gaze. Its sketched-from-life look, captions, measurements, and sense of scale suggest a concern with accuracy. While his observational skills were superior, one should also keep in mind that Kaempfer's interest in details such as the curly locks of the Buddha's hair might have reflected his theory that the founder of Buddhism was African.²⁵ Moreover, the measurements given by Kaempfer in the sketch and the textual description of the statue are a blend of his own observations with figures copied from a contemporary Japanese map of Kyoto.²⁶ And the sketch shows an impossible view: Richard Cocks had already described the statue in 1614 as "being of a wonderful bignes, the head of it reaching to the top of the temple."²⁷ The surrounding building would, therefore, have obstructed a full view of the statue. Kaempfer's sketch is the result of the experience of seeing

the statue compounded with an elevated viewpoint that ignores the surrounding hall.

We can overcome the privileging of accuracy by focusing less on judgments of value and more on an understanding of the specificity of each visual representation. To do this, let us consider another set of images: a depiction of Hōkōji temple in an album painting acquired by Kaempfer during his trip to Japan and its adaptation on copperplate for an illustration in his 1727 *The History of Japan* (posthumously published). The original was a souvenir image made by so-called "town painters" (*machi eshi* 町絵師) that showed visiting pilgrims and commoners as well as the procession of a high-ranking official.²⁸ In Kaempfer's book illustration, however, the number of figures was reduced while their gestures were dramatically enhanced.²⁹ The result is an impression of artificiality and disconnected space, in large part because the illustration in Kaempfer's book transposed an already idealized depiction. Rather than valuing one as a more "truthful" image, it is desirable to consider the two images as testifying to different forms of visual representation.

As the foregoing makes clear, there was significant variation in the ways that visual sources could render the experience of visiting the site. One other example will further clarify this point. A lavish fan collected in an album now held by the Chester Beatty Library shows mostly pilgrims and locals enjoying a picnic in the temple's precincts (figure 3).³⁰ The Great Buddha statue's face is visible through the frontal window; however, surviving architectural drawings show that Hōkōji's Great Buddha Hall copied the style of the Great Buddha Hall in Nara's Tōdaiji temple, with one significant difference: while in the Tōdaiji building the window above the main doors allowed a glimpse of the main statue's face from afar, in the Hōkōji building the window was placed much lower, meaning that the statue's face would have been visible only from much closer.

books/01/suema00000000bd.html (accessed December 1, 2016). See also Antoon Ott, "Romeyn de Hooghe as a Designer of Prints for the Publisher Jacob van Meurs," *Delineavit et Sculptis* 34 (2010): 20-27.

- 23 A precedent is found in the illustration of a Japanese idol in Lorenzo Pignoria, "Seconda parte delle imagini de gli dei indiani," in Vincenzo Cartari, Cesare Malfatti, and Lorenzo Pignoria, *Le vere e nove imagini de gli dei delli antichi* (Padoua: Appresso Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1615), xxxvi, <https://archive.org/details/levereenoveimagioocart> (accessed December 1, 2016).
- 24 The illustration was then adapted for a book on religious pluralism. See Bernard Picart, *Illustrations de cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, vol. 5 (Amsterdam: J.F. Bernard, 1728), 142, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b23005558/f218.item> (accessed December 1, 2016).
- 25 Donald Lopez, *The Scientific Buddha: His Short and Happy Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 28-9.
- 26 Beatrice Bodart-Bailey, "Kyoto Three Hundred Years Ago," *Nichibunken Newsletter* 9 (1991): 11. I thank the author for sending me this article along with astute comments.
- 27 Edward Maunde Thompson, ed., *Diary of Richard Cocks, Cape-merchant in the English Factory in Japan, 1615-1622: With Correspondence* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1883), 200, <https://archive.org/details/diaryrichardcocoOunkngoog> (accessed January 12, 2017). Also cited in Watsky, *Chikubushima*, 218; and Michael Cooper, ed., *They Came to Japan: An Anthology of European Reports on Japan, 1543-1640* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1995), 337-8.

28 Reproduced in Bodart-Bailey, "The Most Magnificent Monastery," 37. See also Brown, "Kaempfer's Album," 94.

29 Jörg Schmeisser, "Changing the Image: The Drawings and Prints in Kaempfer's *History of Japan*," in *The Furthest Goal: Engelbert Kaempfer's Encounter with Tokugawa Japan*, eds. Beatrice Bodart-Bailey and Derek Masarella (Folkestone: Japan Library, 1995), 132-51.

30 See the black-and-white reproduction and description in Chester Beatty Library, *Chesutā Bīṭī Raiburarī emaki ehon kaidai mokuroku* (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2002), v. 1, 251; v. 2, 125. For a discussion of the evolution of fans with views of the capital, see McKelway, *Capitalscapes*, 33-45.



Figure 3. Hōkōji Temple. Seventeenth century. H. 24.8cm, w. 11.5cm (album folio h. 61cm, w. 31cm). Fan mounted on album. Ink, colour, and gold on paper. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. CBL J 1003. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

The fan thus combined two different views: a distant one showing the building from afar, and a close view of a visitor catching a glimpse of the Buddha's face as he approached the building—it amalgamated a distant view of authority and administration with a close view of personal experience. In this way, the image evoked a multi-dimensional visual experience.

This is even more obvious in another folding screen that depicts the temple precinct's walls as a hexagonal shape, not the rectangle reported in archaeological papers.³¹ This feature might be due to the fact that the statue was surrounded by an octagonal fence,³² making it seem to a visitor that the surrounding building was also octagonal. Moreover, in this folding screen depiction the walls of the lower part of the building were visually removed, leaving only the columns and a view of the lotus throne. Such depictions manifested an

embodied gaze that compounded sense impressions of the temple's large surface area into a single, composite visual space. As visual testimonies of the experience of visiting the site, they are important to consider.

Historical maps of the capital, another type of visual source, offer further insights. Kaempfer himself obtained one, now held by the British Library, which was later adapted into an illustration for his posthumous *The History of Japan* (figure 4). Kaempfer's visit coincided with a spike in the production of maps of the capital.³³ The version obtained by Kaempfer gives prominence to the Great Buddha Hall—besides the large hall itself, the map also includes information on the size of its various parts.³⁴ The itemization of the statue's individual components further enhances the perception of its gigantic character.³⁵ Even the description of the Thirty-Three-Bay Hall is prefaced by the characters for “Great Buddha,” suggesting that what is now a World Heritage Site was then considered an appendage to its more famous neighbour. The map of the capital included in Kaempfer's *The History of Japan* reflected the German visitor's

31 “Famous Sites in the Higashiyama District,” reproduced in Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, *Miyako no sugata: Rakuchū rakugai no sekai: Tokubetsu tenrankai Heian kento sennihyakunen kinen* (Kyoto: Kyōto Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 1997), 128–9.

32 Bodart-Bailey, “Kyoto,” 11.

33 Kinda Akihiro and Uesugi Kazuhiro, *Nihon chizushi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012), 160.

34 Donald Shively, “Popular Culture,” in *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 4, Early Modern Japan*, ed. John Whitney Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 738.

35 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 88–9.



Figure 4. Hayashi Yoshinaga. Hōkōji Temple, Sanjūsangendō, and Mimizuka. Detail of *Kyō ōezu*. 1686. H. 166cm, w. 125cm. Hand-coloured woodblock print. National Diet Library, Tokyo. Honbetsu 12-27. Source: <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1286223> (accessed December 3, 2016).



Figure 5. Ikeda Tōri and Nakamura Yūrakusai. Hōkōji Temple and Mimizuka. Detail of *Kaisei Kyō machiezu saiken taisei*. 1831. H. 174cm, w. 138cm. Multi-coloured woodblock print. C.V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley. F29. Source: <http://archivision-subscription.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/s/5kzqa2> (accessed December 4, 2016).

itinerary but also the features of its source map by including Hōkōji among the very few sites given visual prominence and captions.

Maps of the capital adopted one of two strategies to deal with the disappearance of the Great Buddha Hall in 1798. The first strategy was nostalgic: some of the maps showed the Great Buddha Hall in its former glory as a form of compensatory visual reconstruction.³⁶ The second strategy was elegiac: other maps acknowledged the fractured history of the Great Buddha Hall by showing an empty dais where the Great Buddha Hall once stood (figure 5). The text accompanying this image mentioned only the building's establishment in 1588 and its loss to fire in the seventh month of 1798—it read like the biography of a now-lost icon. Its representation of absence carried an elegiac tone that contributed to the aura of a “site of remembrance.”³⁷ We can find contemporary examples

of both strategies, too: the nostalgic in the forceful reconstruction of Gyeongbok Palace in Seoul, and the elegiac in Michael Arad’s *Reflecting Absence* memorial to the destruction of New York’s World Trade Center.³⁸ Strategies of dealing with loss matter considerably to heritage stakeholders, and an immersive app such as Shinraku would require that its developers take into account how it might contribute to this negotiation of site-specific memory.

Almost three centuries after John Saris, another English visitor witnessed a peculiar type of nostalgic reconstruction. Osman Edwards (1864–1936) describes watching “the Miyako-odori, a spectacular ballet with choric interludes.”³⁹ This “capital dance,” as it literally translates, constitutes a “site of remembrance” that was invented for the 1872 Kyoto Exhibition (*hakurankai* 博覧会) and aimed mainly at tourists in the wake of

36 For example, Yokoyama Kazan, *Karaku ichiran zu* (Kyoto, 1808), http://www.rekihaku.ac.jp/education_research/gallery/webgallery/karaku/karaku.html (accessed December 1, 2016), discussed in Uesugi Kazuhiro, “Karaku ichiran zu,” *Shiboroto ga Nihon de atsumeta chizu*, ed. Onodera Atsushi et al., special issue of *Chiri* 738 (2016): 81.

37 Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 19.

38 Robert Garland Thomson, “Authenticity and the Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Historic Sites,” *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 5, no. 1 (2008), 64–80, <https://www.nps.gov/CRM-Journal/Winter2008/Winter2008.pdf> (accessed December 1, 2016).

39 Osman Edwards, *Japanese Plays and Playfellows* (London: William Heinemann, 1901), 106.

the capital's move to Tokyo.⁴⁰ Edwards comments on alleged plans to construct a “monumental tomb” to Hideyoshi: “whether they succeed or not, the Hideyoshi monument was a subject so rich in suggestion, so popular in itself, so complex in its appeal, that the poet of the Miyako-odori could not wish for a better or more burning theme.”⁴¹ This was likely the 1899 edition of the dance, which was themed on the exploits of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and performed only four years after Japan successfully waged the first Sino-Japanese war in Korea.⁴² Edwards describes one scene, which depicted the Great Buddha, as “elegantly illustrative of the Buddhist theme of impermanence in transition.” The final climactic scene follows:

The Hideyoshi monument, as it partly is and wholly shall be, rises tier above tier on heaven-scaling stairs, approached by temples and groves which will one day vie in splendour with the carven gateways, the gigantic cryptomerias of Nikkō. In a joyous finale the dancers pose, wreathed about the central summit of the monument, while cascades of red and green fire play on them from the wings; then, strewing the steps with cherry-blossom and waving provocative clusters in the faces of the spectators as they pass, the double stream of geisha flows back with graceful whirls and eddies between banks of deafening minstrelsy; the curtains rustle down, the fires flicker out; the Miyako-odori is no more.⁴³

The former glory of Hideyoshi's architectural project was reimagined “out of cotton and paper and Bengal lights” at a time when Kyoto was seeking to reaffirm itself as the capital of Japan. Jotting down his impressions from “the strangers' gallery,” Edwards was inad-

vertently repeating a familiar pattern—his foreign gaze functioned as a pivot for the Japanese audience, adding value to sites in the capital and, by extension, to Japan itself.⁴⁴

Just as before, Kyoto will be keen to reaffirm its status leading up to the 2020 Olympics. This effort would be bolstered by commissioning an immersive app like the hypothetical Shinraku I have been referring to in this article. Nostalgic reconstruction has not lost its appeal, after all—the nationalist nostalgia movement currently gaining momentum in Japan's political realm may well see it very fit to convert the opening ceremony into a re-creation of Japanese history, which would include famous buildings and cultural icons. The pageantry format of the “capital dance,” for example, could very conveniently be adapted for the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics.

Still, digital apps, even when commissioned by the authorities, need not contribute to this nostalgia by “waving provocative clusters in the face of spectators.” An app might instead re-ritualize the space of Kyoto as a “medium of remembrance.”⁴⁵ It would be a step forward from academic research and conservation policies that only perpetuate the loss of a “site of remembrance” by archiving it. Instead of honouring the archive and adding to the parallel corpus of representations, an app such as Shinraku would insert a new layer of interaction at the intersection between memory and architecture. It would allow users to engage with the historical experience of visiting a famous site such as the Great Buddha Hall. The app could even populate the sites with people dressed in historical garb and simulate the courtyard bustle suggested by many historical images.⁴⁶ Users could be given the option of being a Korean, Dutch, or

40 Eiko Hiroi, “The Creation of Exotic Space in the Miyako-odori: ‘Ryūkyū’ and ‘Chōsen,’” in *Music, Modernity and Locality in Prewar Japan: Osaka and Beyond*, eds. Alison Tokita and Hugh de Ferranti (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 269.

41 Edwards, *Japanese Plays*, 111.

42 This was also part of a larger state program of re-affirming the legacy of Hideyoshi that included the 1875 reconstruction of Toyokuni shrine, which enshrined Hideyoshi's deified form within the precincts of Hōkōji, as well as the 1897 construction of Kyoto National Museum on a site immediately south of Hōkōji. See Takagi Hiroshi, “Kindai Nihon to Toyotomi Hideyoshi,” in *Jinshin sensō: 16-seiki Nitchōchū no kokusai sensō*, eds. Tu-hūi Chōng and Kyōng-sun Yi (Tokyo: Meiji Shoten, 2008).

43 Edwards, *Japanese Plays*, 114–5.

44 An early-Meiji-period view of the Great Buddha Hall for a foreign audience is found in Yamamoto Kakuma, *The Guide to the Celebrated Places in Kiyoto & The Surrounding Places* (Kyoto: Niwa, 1873), <http://db.nichibun.ac.jp/en/d/GAI/info/GG031/item/020/> (accessed January 13, 2017). See also Sherry Fowler, “Views of Japanese Temples from Near and Far: Precinct Prints of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Artibus Asiae* 68, no. 2 (2008): 276. Buddhist statuary had been used to promote Japan's image overseas as early as the Vienna Exhibition of 1873, for which a life-size replica of the Great Buddha of Kamakura was built. Noriko Aso, “New Illusions: The Emergence of a Discourse on Traditional Japanese Arts and Crafts, 1868–1945” (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 1997), 32.

45 Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 7, 12.

46 J. Kang, “AR Teleport: Digital Reconstruction of Historical and Cultural-Heritage Sites Using Mobile Augmented Reality,” in 2012 *IEEE 11th International Conference on Trust, Security and Privacy*

Japanese visitor and follow historical routes particular to each demographic. The map interface could also imitate the look and signs of old maps of Kyoto while still being customizable.⁴⁷ Overall, it could be less about an accurate reproduction of how the Great Buddha Hall looked and more about how it might have felt to experience it—the Shinraku app could help turn “sites of remembrance” into “sites of imagination.”⁴⁸

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BOOK REVIEW BY BRYAN D. LOWE

IF twenty-first-century scholars of Japanese religions were to adopt a catchy slogan, it would surely be “going places.” No topic has enticed more recent scholarship than place and pilgrimage; more than a dozen recent monographs and dissertations have employed a site-specific approach since 2000, typically focusing on mountain practice and pilgrimage.¹ Heather

Blair’s *Real and Imagined*, a study of the Heian-period (794–1185) pilgrimage site Mt. Kinpusen 金峯山, joins these works that try to “go places,” but it also manages to take the field somewhere new. It achieves what all books should but few do: it is historically and philologically rigorous, determinedly interdisciplinary, theoretically sophisticated, and lucidly written. This brilliant book should go down as a classic, serving as a model for how place and pilgrimage should be studied both in Japanese religions and beyond.

1 For twenty-first-century site- or region-based monographs on mountain practice and/or pilgrimage, including those that focus on modern and contemporary Japan, see Ellen Schattschneider, *Immortal Wishes: Labor and Transcendence on a Japanese Sacred Mountain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Sherry D. Fowler, *Murōji: Rearranging Art and History at a Japanese Buddhist Temple* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005); D. Max Moerman, *Localizing Paradise: Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005); Ian Reader, *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005); Sarah Thal, *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan 1573–1912* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Barbara Ambros, *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008); and Allan G. Grapard, *Mountain Mandalas: Shugendō in Kyushu* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). For recent dissertations, see Gaynor Sekimori, “Haguro Shugendō and the Separation of Buddha and Kami Worship (Shinbutsu Bunri), 1868–1890” (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2000);

Ethan C. Lindsay, “Pilgrimage to the Sacred Traces of Kōyasan: Place and Devotion in Late Heian Japan” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012); Caleb S. Carter, “Producing Place, Tradition and the Gods: Mt. Togakushi, Thirteenth through Mid-Nineteenth Centuries” (PhD diss., UCLA, 2014); Lindsey E. DeWitt, “A Mountain Set Apart: Female Exclusion, Buddhism, and Tradition at Modern Ōminesan, Japan” (PhD diss., UCLA, 2015); Andrea Castiglioni, “Ascesis and Devotion: The Mount Yudono Cult in Early Modern Japan” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015); and Frank W. Clements “Worldly Ascetics: Managing Family, Status, and Territory in Early Modern Shugendō” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2016). Embargoes prevented me from reading these final two promising dissertations. As will be noted below, the site-specific study of Japanese religions owes a great deal to arguments advanced in Allan G. Grapard, *The Protocol of the Gods: A Study of the Kasuga Cult in Japanese History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 4–7.

The title of the book draws from Edward Soja's notion of three types of space: real, imagined, and real-and-imagined, a model that also builds upon the work of Henri Lefebvre.² Real space refers to the physical and material world. Imagined points to conceptions of space that do not necessarily derive from the "real." The third form, real-and-imagined space, captures the dynamic interrelation between the first two; in other words, it recognizes the fact that the material world shapes and is shaped by our ideations. While these categories are useful, any effort to separate the real and imagined invites a host of ontological, hermeneutic, and epistemological problems. Perhaps with such dangers in mind, Blair argues that the real and imagined are "interdependent" and "in practice ... interfused"; as such, "it is the historical, human reception and construction of Kinpusen as a real-and-imagined place that is the focus of this book" (p. 4).

Blair divides her study into three parts. The first, "The Mountain Imagined," looks at representations of Kinpusen. Chapter one stresses the generative tensions between the perceived civilization of the city and the divinely dangerous but simultaneously powerful lure of the mountains. The imagined otherness of Kinpusen stimulated a desire to travel there, but it also, according to Blair, midwived the famous ban on women, a discourse that emerged to sustain the alterity of the mountain at a time when it became increasingly accessible. Since pilgrimage gained much of its meaning as a journey to a different world, the proscription against women served to preserve the fantasy of spiritual sojourn for male travelers. By linking the necessary conceptual binaries of capital and mountain with *nyonin kekkai* 女人結界 (women's boundaries) discourse, Blair contributes to a highly debated topic with an original interpretation that moves beyond classic explanations tied to pure misogyny or adherence to *vinaya* rules governing Buddhist monks and nuns.

Chapter two focuses on Zaō 蔵王, the resident deity of the peak who "dwelt in the interstices between the categories of 'kami' and 'bodhisattva'" (p. 64). It also pays some attention to a few other members of the local pantheon such as Mikumari 水分/Komori 子守. Blair examines what she calls "narrative theology," the vernacular stories propagated mostly by laypeople that

address the identity of a deity. The flexible and multifaceted nature of these narratives challenge the supposedly fixed and systematic theologies found in the monastic treatises that form the basis of much scholarship on the "*honji-suijaku* 本地垂迹 paradigm," a model commonly used to understand the relationship between Buddhist deities as a source and Japanese *kami* as a trace. In this chapter, Blair also asserts that Zaō functioned as a "localizing deity," one that constructed Kinpusen as a powerful place with a unique religious landscape.

In the third chapter, Blair develops the notion of "ritual regimes," a tripartite structure of sites, rites, and texts. These resembled a signature; different individuals inaugurated particular combinations that they could in turn pass on to their descendants. To give but one example, Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長 (966–1027), a central protagonist of this chapter, initiated a signature ritual regime composed of the following elements: Hōjōji 法成寺 and Kinpusen as sites, the *Lotus Sutra* and the complete canon as texts, and *Lotus* lectures in the capital and sutra burial on the mountain as rites. Much of the structure of this regime was consistent within the regent's house in subsequent generations with some minor modifications. As the power of the regents was challenged, however, new regimes emerged; perhaps most prominently, Retired Emperor Shirakawa 白川 (1053–1159) shifted pilgrimage to Kumano 熊野, a move that Blair interprets as an effort to establish a unique repertoire free from any traces of the Fujiwara. Shirakawa's success in creating this new signature is evidenced by the remarkably numerous pilgrimages to Kumano by subsequent retired emperors in place of Kinpusen.

Part two transitions from the mountain as imagined to the "real peak," though the imagined continues to populate this part of the book much as the real mountain never fully vanishes from the opening chapters. Chapter four outlines the preparations and journey of Michinaga and Fujiwara no Moromichi 藤原師通 (1062–99). Blair, never satisfied with mere description, usefully analyzes the "spatial soteriology" of the journey. While most scholarship on the Ōmine range focuses on the mandalization of the landscape, Blair contends that eleventh-century sources do not render the mountain through this esoteric framework. Instead, pilgrims conceived of their journey as enacting the bodhisattva path, their spiritual progress mapped neatly onto the landscape itself. Intriguingly, this conceptualization of Buddhist practice as spatial rather

² Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996).

than temporal enabled aristocrats to rapidly advance in their religious pursuits without necessarily having to dedicate their entire lives to arduous training. It would be useful for future scholars to compare this soteriology with other efforts to “shorten the path” in the Buddhist tradition, including the non-linearity of original enlightenment discourse characteristic of the medieval age, as articulated by Jacqueline Stone.³

Chapter five turns to the practices performed by Michinaga and Moromochi upon reaching the mountain. These include preliminary rites, a large public dedication of sutras and other objects, and a smaller, private sutra burial. While the previous chapter demonstrated how pilgrims traversed space, this one adds a temporal dimension. According to Blair, sutra burial, in particular, followed the logic of “trace-ism” that linked past, present, and future. Deposited manuscripts functioned as “physical doubles” of their sponsors; as such, sutra burial meant that the patrons too could remain eternally at this sacred site intimately bound with the buddhas and deities of the mountain. This interpretation reveals the inadequacies of standard *mappō* 末法 explanations that claim patrons’ anxieties over a perceived age of decline motivated them to bury texts to await Maitreya’s descent.

The sixth chapter is perhaps the most archivally impressive, because it deals with a relatively unknown manuscript that Blair uncovered in two copies: one owned by the Imperial Household Agency and the other by the University of Tokyo’s Historiographical Institute.⁴ She uses this text, a fragment of Ōe no Masafusa’s 大江匡房 (1041–1111) diary, to explore Shirakawa’s 1092 pilgrimage to Kinpusen. Here, Blair illuminates the retired sovereign’s delicate negotiations between compet-

ing interests of monks in the mountain and those in the capital. Kinpusen clergy petitioned Shirakawa for independence from Kōfukuji, a temple that had been asserting administrative rights over the mountain in the 1090s. While other scholars have highlighted the ways pilgrimage provided theatrical and ideological rewards to retired rulers, this chapter gives a new perspective by also illuminating how monks themselves benefited from an audience with a powerful figure who could respond to their demands.

Shirakawa’s trip, however, marked the end of an era and the start of a new order at the mountain, the subject of part three. Chapter seven narrates this transition. Outright warfare began soon after Shirakawa’s pilgrimage; Kōfukuji attacked the mountain and burned down the Zaō hall. Contestations continued for subsequent decades resulting in an integration of Kinpusen into Kōfukuji’s power bloc. This naturally changed the institutional landscape on the mountain. For Blair, it represents the start of a medieval age defined by the rise of the *kenmon taisei* 権門体制 (power bloc system). As such, this chapter offers another case study generally supportive of the thesis that the medieval era began with the *insei* 院政 (defined by Blair as 1086–1221) not the Kamakura period (1185–1333), an argument advanced by Kuroda Toshio in the mid-1960s as a central part of his *kenmon taisei* model, and one that has received significant attention in Anglophone scholarship.⁵

Chapter eight contends that it was precisely this context of integration into power blocs that birthed the genre known as *engi* 縁起 (origin narratives) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While *engi* are typically understood as tied to the places they describe, Blair emphasizes the role lowland monks played in producing and disseminating texts related to the southern mountains. As such, *engi* helped serve not only the sites of mountain practice, but also the powerful monasteries in Nara and the capital that administered them. These exchanges produced some of Japan’s most famous mountain traditions such as many beloved leg-

3 For shortening the path, see Paul Groner, “Shortening the Path: Early Tendai Interpretations of the Realization of Buddhahood with This Very Body (*Sokushin Jōbutsu*),” in *Paths of Liberation: The Mārga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*, eds. Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Robert M. Gimello (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1992), 439–74. For original enlightenment, see Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999).

4 Blair goes into the history of this manuscript in greater depth in Heather Blair, “Mountain and Plain: Kinpusen and Kōfukuji in the Middle Ages,” in *Nara, Nanto bukkyō no dentō to kakushin*, eds. Nemoto Seiji and Samuel C. Morse (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppan, 2010), 4–11. One scholar, Miyake Toshiyuki 三宅敏之, had written briefly about the Imperial Household Agency’s copy after it was displayed at an exhibition in 1962, which led Blair to seek out the manuscript.

5 For an introduction of Kuroda’s work in English, see James C. Dobbins, ed., “The Legacy of Kuroda Toshio,” special issue, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23, no. 3–4 (1996). For an assessment of the *kenmon taisei* thesis, see Mikael S. Adolphson, *Gates of Power: Monks, Courtiers, and Warriors in Premodern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000).

ends of En no Gyōja 役行者 and the well-known manadalization of the mountains. *Engi* were so successful in inventing these traditions that they have come to be seen as timeless, despite being the products of a very particular historical moment.

The epilogue sustains the book's attack on ahistorical approaches. It questions dominant ways of defining Shugendō 修験道, views that have often used folklore or structuralist models to assert an unchanging essence to mountain religious practice rooted in Japanese religiosity. In contrast, Blair defines Shugendō as a combination of organizational hierarchies, institutions, rites (especially "peak entry"), and texts that would have been recognizable as a distinct mode of practice by both insiders and outsiders. She argues that this recognizable religious movement coalesced in the thirteenth century in response to the changing political and religious configurations brought on by the medieval period. She also provides a brief overview of the growth and flourishing of Shugendō in the Edo period (defined by Blair as 1603–1867) and its proscription and perseverance in Meiji (1868–1912) and beyond. Blair's succinct but compelling treatment will hopefully force future researchers and teachers to abandon the popular definitions of Shugendō advanced by still-influential scholars such as Miyake Hitoshi 宮家準 (1933–) and Gorai Shigeru 五来重 (1908–93).

Blair's book successfully rewrites the history of medieval Japanese religions. It contributes new interpretations and data on some of the most central and hotly debated topics in the field including *nyonin kekkai*, *honji-suijaku*, mandalization of mountains, sutra burial, pilgrimage, *kenmon taisei*, *engi*, and Shugendō. Moreover, its seemingly obvious but often ignored methodology of using Heian-period sources to tell a Heian story should be a model for scholarship going forward. Finally, it offers a number of theoretically useful, if at times underdeveloped, frameworks for understanding Japanese religion. While some readers may be turned off by the number of terms Blair coins (e.g. affective landscape, narrative theology, cardinal ideology, trace-ism, and spatial soteriology to name a few), I found their usage, including some of the new "ologies," to be both provocative and applicable for scholars working in religious studies more broadly.

Take one of these neologisms: "trace-ism" This concept of "trace" (*ato*, *seki*, *jaku* 跡) appears frequently in Heian sources, where it can refer to precedent in terms of law and ritual, the manifestations of buddhas and

bodhisattvas as *kami*, and to handwriting in manuscripts. This notion is powerful, because it shows that Heian individuals viewed their sacred spaces and texts as saturated with resonances of humans and deities, who were always to some degree present in the manuscripts and landscapes of Japan. As Blair notes, the term trace "designated physical entities that provided access to the past and the divine ... not so much a representation as a condensation or replication of the person or god who produced it" (p. 8). This notion of trace-ism, in which people and gods are present in the materials and landscapes of Japan, helpfully collapses temporal, spatial, and ontological divisions between human and divine spheres. As such, it undermines linear narratives and sacred and secular distinctions. It reminds readers that deities are, to borrow a phrase from Robert Orsi, "really present" in the religious landscapes of Japan.⁶ Here, Blair accomplishes the best of theorizing; rather than applying a theory, typically one derived from continental philosophy, to her data, she works outward from concrete examples in the sources to construct a generalizable model, one usable by scholars working in other traditions.

This question of generalizability brings me to my final point. As indicated above, in recent years site-specific studies have come to dominate the field of medieval Japanese religions. Much of this has been inspired by Allan Grapard, who suggested that we ground our study in specific sites, much as the sources themselves commonly do. Yet, as Grapard himself argued, there is also much shared across sites:

We find in these sites—from the most complex cultic center to the most simple place of worship—common elements in their organization of sacred space, in ritual and sacerdotal lineages, in combinations, and in their social and economic aspects. Local differences, though important, do not hide the patterns along which the tradition was fundamentally organized. Thus, even though there were remarkable distinctions between, for example, the universe of meaning of the Dewa Mountains and that of the Kunisaki Mountains, those cultic centers were identical at the structural level.⁷

Now that the field of Japanese religions, largely thanks to those inspired by Grapard's groundbreaking

6 Robert A. Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), esp. 2–5.

7 Grapard, *Protocol of the Gods*, 7.

scholarship, has a large number of site-based studies, including those related to Mts. Iwaki, Haguro, Hiko, Kinpu, Kōya, Murō, Ōmine, Ōyama, Togakushi, Yudono, and Zozū (Kotohira), as well as the “Kumano Sanzan,” it is time to ask how stable the patterns and structures across sites may be, and how we can explain such stability, if it indeed exists. Other methodological questions arise as well. Put most bluntly: do commonalities undermine site-based studies? Perhaps more charitably: what other ways can scholars frame their projects from the outset beyond a site-based approach? How would our perspective on Japanese religions and mountains change if, rather than starting with a site, we chose a particular trope or practice, and explored it across sites? At the very least, this reviewer feels that the field has reached a saturation point with site-based studies. Greater synthesis across sites is required. It is a testament to the merits of a book when it raises questions of whether the whole field needs to adopt a new approach, because the present site-based one has been so masterfully executed. But such is the success of Blair’s important new study, a must-read for all students of Japanese religions, sacred space, and pilgrimage.

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Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Visit to Fukuoka and the History of China-Japan Academic Cooperation at Kyushu University

TAKESHI SHIZUNAGA

ON 18 March 1913, Dr. Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (1866–1925) arrived in Fukuoka and visited the recently established Faculty of Medicine at Kyushu Imperial University (today's School of Medicine, Kyushu University). That day, he was shown the university campus and gave a lecture; he also produced a piece of calligraphy to commemorate the occasion. The framed plaque with his calligraphy, which reads “*Xue dao ai ren*” 學道愛人 (“Study the Way, Love People”), today hangs in the entrance hall of Kyushu University Library, Hakozaki Campus, Fukuoka, where it continues to watch daily over the staff and students of Kyushu University (figure 1). It is written with truly imposing strokes that are suggestive of Sun Yat-sen's personality. What sort of message did Sun Yat-sen intend for this work of calligraphy? And what thoughts were passing through his mind at this time? I would like to briefly address these questions below in tandem with the circumstances for his visit.

Among the calligraphic works by Sun Yat-sen that survive in various places today, the most commonly seen are probably those with the two characters “*bo ai*” 博愛 (“Philanthropy”). It is to be surmised that for Sun Yat-sen, who was born in Guangdong province and at the age of thirteen emigrated together with his mother

to Hawaii, where he received his education and grew up, these two characters would have represented a virtue common to all of humanity that brought together the traditional Confucian thought of China and Western ethical thought rooted in Christianity, and they would have been chosen as a word that could be understood by anyone regardless of their religion or beliefs. Sun Yat-sen was a revolutionary who continuously taught of “love” and its no surprise, then, that the word “love” (*ai*) appears in the plaque at Kyushu University, too.

But Japanese living in Kyushu will readily call to mind the name of another revolutionary when they see this plaque, namely, Saigō Takamori 西郷隆盛 (1828–77).¹ Famous among the pieces of calligraphy left

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¹ Saigō was a samurai from the Satsuma domain (modern-day Kagoshima and Miyazaki prefectures) who supported the Meiji



Figure 1. Sun Yat-sen. *Xue dao ai ren* 學道愛人 (Study the Way, Love People). 1913. Entrance hall, Kyushu University Library, Hakozaki Campus, Higashi Ward, Fukuoka. Collection, Kyushu University.

by Saigō are the four characters “*Keiten aijin*” (Ch. *Jingtian ai ren*) 敬天愛人 (“Revere Heaven, Love People”). It is very likely that Sun Yat-sen was reminded of this ill-fated revolutionary from Kyushu when he visited Kyushu. In section twenty-four of Saigō’s *Nanshū ikun* 南洲翁遺訓 (The Dying Instructions of the Venerable Nanshū, 1890) we read as follows:

The Way is that which is natural to Heaven and Earth, and people act in accordance with the Way in order to revere Heaven. Because Heaven loves me in the same way that it loves others, I love people with the same thoughts with which I love myself.²

It is known that there were many Japanese who supported Sun Yat-sen’s revolution, and one of the central figures among them was Miyazaki Tōten 宮崎滔天 (1871–1922). His elder brother Miyazaki Hachirō 宮崎八郎 (1851–77) had joined Saigō’s army in the Southwestern War (also known as the Satsuma Rebellion) of

1877 and had died in battle; it may be supposed that it was Tōten who acted as an important link between Sun Yat-sen and Saigō. In particular, this visit to Japan was Sun Yat-sen’s first visit since the success of the 1911 Revolution, and he would have been reminded all the more strongly of Saigō. Further support for this view is a trip that Sun Yat-sen made on the day after his visit to Kyushu Imperial University: he traveled by train from Fukuoka to Ōmuta and visited Tōten’s parental home in Arao.³ Thus, when interpreting the two characters *ai ren* (“Love People”) in the plaque at Kyushu University, the figure of a Japanese revolutionary should also be superimposed on them.

One further point that may be taken into account is the *Analects* (Lunyu 論語) of Confucius (552–479 BCE), Book Seventeen of which contains the following episode.⁴ Among Confucius’s ten leading disciples there was a young man named Ziyou 子游 (506–443? BCE). He had been appointed steward of the small town of Wucheng 武城 in the state of Lu 魯, and so one day Confucius visited Wucheng to see how he was going about his work. While there, Confucius heard the playing of stringed instruments together with the sound of singing. Ziyou had established for the first time a school in the town where he had been appointed stew-

Restoration of 1868. Disillusioned with the Meiji government, however, he led the Satsuma Rebellion in early 1877 and committed suicide later that year.

2 Saigō Takamori and Yamada Seisai, transl., *Saigō Nanshū ikun* (Tokyo: Iwanami bunko, 1939), 13.

3 Chen Xiqi, *Sun Zhongshan nian pu chang bian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1991), 787.

4 Hozumi Shigetō, *Shin’yaku rongo* (Tokyo: Shakai Kyo-toku Kyōkai, 1947): 499–501, <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1038698/256?viewMode=> (accessed February 2, 2017).

ard and was teaching people how to read and write, making them sing what they were learning, instructing them in the basic rules and morals of society, and also imparting to them wisdom for living. On seeing this, Confucius smiled and said, “Why use an ox knife to kill a chicken?” In other words, he teased Ziyou by suggesting that the schooling started by Ziyou might be unwarranted in a small town like Wucheng. But Ziyou, who was honest and intelligent, replied calmly as follows, citing a remark that Confucius had made on a previous occasion: “A gentleman, having studied the Way, loves people, and commoners, having studied the Way, are easy to govern.” He thus rebutted Confucius’s comment by declaring that such a school was necessary even in a small country town. In the face of this admirable response, Confucius excused his previous comment by saying that it had been spoken merely in jest. Ultimately, it becomes clear that the four characters “*Xue dao ai ren*” (“Study the Way, Love People”) on the plaque at Kyushu University are based on this episode in Book Seventeen of the *Analects*.

During the Taishō 大正 era (1912–26), when Sun Yat-sen visited Fukuoka, it was still a small provincial city with a population of less than 100,000 people. When he wrote the four characters, Fukuoka may have come to mind as analogous to the small country town of Wucheng in the state of Lu that figures in the *Analects*. This is not to suggest that he intended to disparage Fukuoka in any way; to the contrary, he put several messages for the future of this new university into the piece of calligraphy he gifted to it.

One of these messages would have been the spirit of universal love for humankind, which he habitually championed. Another message would have been his awe and respect for the land of Kyushu that had given birth to Saigō Takamori’s motto of “Revere Heaven, Love People.” Yet another would have been his hope that this new university, which was born in the same year as the 1911 Revolution, would fulfil its mission as a “gentleman” by producing talented people who would contribute to society. This plaque deserves a place among the most valuable treasures of Kyushu University since its foundation more than one hundred years ago.

I now wish to revisit the passage in Book Seventeen of the *Analects* and explore in a little more depth what Sun Yat-sen was thinking when he chose the words of the plaque. In the passage in question, the terms “gentleman” (*junzi* 君子) and “commoner” (*xiaoren* 小人;

lit. “small or petty man”) are used in contrast to each other, as they often are in other books of the *Analects* too, and the “commoner” is said to be “easy to govern.” It is possible that this may be a tacit allusion to Sun Yat-sen himself who, having stepped down as Provisional President of the Republic of China, was visiting Japan as minister plenipotentiary in charge of national railways. Among the many books of the *Analects*, Book Seventeen is not generally chosen when writing a piece of calligraphy on such an occasion, for Confucius’s young disciple plays the leading role in this book and it also records Confucius’s slip of the tongue with his question. It is likely that in the case of Sun Yat-sen this plaque at Kyushu University is the only example of his calligraphy based on Book Seventeen of the *Analects*. At the same time, it is reasonable to assume that the complicated state of mind of the calligrapher—Sun Yat-sen—is manifested in his choice. If he had been completely successful in his endeavours at this time, he would without a doubt not have chosen the four characters that appear in the calligraphy gift. His mindset at the time was not necessarily one with only thoughts of pure benediction for the birth of Japan’s newest university. As is well known, immediately after his return to China following this official visit to Japan, Sun Yat-sen took up the challenge of a fresh struggle with Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916), and several months later, in August, he secretly returned to Japan as an exile. This was the so-called Second Revolution of 1913.

Kyushu University has a long history among Japan’s national universities, going back to the time when it was an imperial university, but it lies at a great distance from the capital Tokyo and is not necessarily in a favourable location. Moreover, when it was established about a hundred years ago it was, as noted, a very small city. Yet in spite of this it was very fortunate in receiving a succession of outstanding visitors from abroad; these events could be said to have moulded the liberal atmosphere that distinguishes Kyushu University. If one divides its hundred-year history into two periods, the visitors of which it can be proudest during the first fifty years were Sun Yat-sen in 1913, followed by Albert Einstein (1879–1955) on 25 December 1922 and, thirdly, Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) on 17 December 1955. Each of these visits materialized as a result of a series of fortuitous circumstances, but what can be said with regard to the visits by all three is that, unlike their visits to the capital Tokyo or the Kansai region, which was the centre of the economy and Japan’s traditional cul-

ture, their visits to Kyushu were realized through direct personal ties.

In the case of Einstein, his visit came about as a result of his close friendships with Kuwaki Ayao 桑木或雄 (1878–1945), the first person in Japan to understand Einstein's theory of relativity and a professor in the School of Engineering at Kyushu Imperial University (today's Faculty of Engineering, Kyushu University), and Miyake Hayari 三宅速 (1866–1945), a pioneer of internal surgery in Japan and a professor in the School of Medicine at Kyushu Imperial University. Guo Moruo, on the other hand, had studied at the School of Medicine from September 1918 to March 1923 and through his encounter there with his teacher Nakayama Heijirō 中山平次郎 (1871–1956; professor at School of Medicine specializing in pathology) his interest in the study of archaeology and ancient Chinese history was awakened. This could be said to have led to his visit as head of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Academic Inspection Mission to Japan after the war.

If we now return to Sun Yat-sen's visit in 1913, this too materialized because of his close contact not only with Miyazaki Tōten, mentioned above, but also with the Nagasaki trading merchant Umeya Shōkichi 梅屋庄吉 (1868–1934) and the Fukuoka businessman Yasukawa Keiichirō 安川敬一郎 (1849–1934).

At this juncture I wish to look at the matter from a different angle and briefly mention two pioneers in Kyushu University's exchange with China. These were Mekada Makoto 目加田誠 (1904–94), the first chair of Chinese Literature in the Faculty of Law and Humanities (today's School of Letters), and his close friend Hama Kazue 浜一衛 (1909–84), who after the war likewise became a professor in the School of Liberal Arts at Kyushu University. Both of these men went to study in Beijing in the early 1930s and came in contact with many Chinese intellectuals who were living there at the time.

During his time in Beijing, Hama's prime interest lay in traditional Peking opera, and as well as authoring two pioneering works without parallel—*Chinese Drama in Beijing* and *Talks about Chinese Drama*⁵—he also rendered a great service by collecting all kinds of primary sources about Chinese traditional drama,

which are today extremely valuable. He bequeathed them to Kyushu University Library where they form the Hama Collection (Hama bunko 浜文庫). A study and analysis of Hama's achievements and the materials he collected is currently being energetically undertaken by Professor Nakazatomi Satoshi and others in the Faculty of Languages and Cultures at Kyushu University, and an extensive report will be published in the near future.

Mekada Makoto, meanwhile, was a pioneer in post-war Japanese research on Chinese literature who took a lead in the study of various fields such as the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes), Tang poetry, and the history of literary thought, and it was his period of study in Beijing (then known as Beiping) from October 1933 to February 1935 that determined the direction that he would take. He was at the time thirty years old and had only recently taken up the position of associate professor at Kyushu Imperial University.

Up until now only fragmentary information about Mekada's period of study in Beijing had been known through several essays that he wrote in his later years. Recently, however, all of his books, notes, and similar materials were gifted to the city of Ōnojō where his home was located. Among these materials a diary was found from his time in Beijing,⁶ as a result of which details of this period have all at once come to light. There are described in this diary his truly warm relations with, for example, the writer Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), who was the younger brother of Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), and Qian Daosun 錢稻孫 (1887–1966), a scholar of Japanese literature who was the first person in China to attempt a Chinese translation of the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves, 759), an eighth-century collection of Japanese poetry. In this diary we find, for example, the following entries:

25 September, Shōwa 9 [1934]⁷

In the evening there was a dinner party at [the restaurant] Tongheju 同和居 in Xisi 西四 [a district in Beijing]. People from the research institute in Tokyo, Mr. Qian Daosun, Zhou Zuoren, Yang Shuda 楊樹達, Zheng Yingsun 鄭穎孫, Fu Xihua 傅惜華, Xu Hongbao 徐鴻宝, the eldest son of Yang Zhongxi 楊鍾羲, and others; also Hashikawa

5 Hama Kazue, *Beiping de Zhongguo xi* (Tokyo: Shūhōen, 1936); and Hama Kazue, *Shina shibai no hanashi* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1944).

6 Mekada Makoto, *Hokuhei nikki*, currently held by the city of Ōnojō.

7 Sections on the morning and afternoon have been omitted; comments in brackets were added by the author.

Tokio 橋川時雄 [1894–1982], Odake Takeo 小竹武夫 [1905–82], Takaoka 高岡, etc. It was a merry gathering.

8 December, Shōwa 9 [1934]

In the morning I bought some sandpaper and polished my skates. I read some more of the *Xiaoshan ci* 小山詞 [a Song-period anthology]. In the afternoon, ... I asked Mr. Qian Daosun about some words in the *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢 and *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 [two Qing-period novels]. In the evening I went to Beihai 北海 [park]. Zhou Fengyi 周豐一 [Zhou Zuoren's eldest son], Hama Kazue, and Ogawa Tamaki 小川環樹 [1910–93] were there. We skated together for about thirty minutes.

In the evening I was invited to Zhou's home in Badaowan 八道灣 [a district in Beijing]. I took a bath, ate *sukiyaki*, drank Japanese *sake*, and listened to records such as [the popular Japanese songs] "Akegarasu" 明鳥 and "Asagao nikki" 朝顔日記. I felt homesick for Japan.

23 January, Shōwa 10 [1935]

In the morning I went to Zhongguo University and got the remaining prints. I went to the barber's. In the evening I arranged with Mr. Qian Daosun, Zhou Zuoren, Xu Zuzheng 徐祖正, and Zhu Ziqing 朱自清 [1898–1948] to invite us foreign students and hold a *sukiyaki* party. Fifteen people gathered, and it was extremely lively.

In the above I have quoted only some especially interesting entries for three days from the *Beiping Diary*, and as can be seen in these examples, the everyday life of foreign students in Beijing at the time and their warm relations with its intellectuals are recorded in considerable detail.

The period in question fell between the Liutiaohu 柳条湖 (or Mukden) Incident of 18 September 1931 and the Lugouqiao 盧溝橋 (or Marco Polo Bridge) Incident of 7 July 1937, and relations between Japan and China could hardly be described as amicable. But in spite of this, or rather, in truth, conversely because of this social situation, these pro-Japanese intellectuals (many of whom subsequently suffered oppression as "traitors to China") and foreign students studying in Beijing engaged in intimate exchange with firm convictions and resolve. This valuable record of overseas study is currently being transcribed by the Department of Chinese

Literature in the School of Letters at Kyushu University, and there are plans to publish it with the necessary annotations. At the same time, plans are also underway to translate it into Chinese and publish it in China.

An old Chinese saying refers to "Heaven-sent opportunities, Earth's advantageous terrain, and harmony between people." Because Kyushu Imperial University—today's Kyushu University—was born during a tumultuous period in 1911, it would seem to have not necessarily received Heaven's blessings to an adequate degree, especially with regard to relations between Japan and China. In addition, because it lies at a great distance from the Tokyo metropolitan area and the economic circles of Kansai, it has also enjoyed little in the way of geographical benefits, and because it lies closest to Japan's borders with China and Korea, it would seem to have been buffeted by sensitive reactions to political and social circumstances at various times and to have been susceptible to their direct influence. But it could be said that even under such conditions academic exchange at Kyushu University has until now been staunchly defended and sustained by ties between people.

In the original passage in which Mencius 孟子 (372?–289? BCE) explains "harmony between people" (Ch. *renhe* 人和) it says: "Heaven-sent opportunities are less important than Earth's advantageous terrain, and Earth's advantageous terrain is less important than harmony between people."⁸ It is close cooperation and harmony between people, rather than Heaven-sent opportunities and geographical advantages that are the secret of success in all matters. I firmly believe that it will be pure and beautiful exchange based solely on scholarship, neither influenced by political motives nor easily swayed by economic calculations, that will be able to promote true mutual understanding between the people of Japan and China and maintain it for future generations. The academic ties with China that were initiated by Sun Yat-sen's visit in 1913 have during the subsequent century most certainly continued to confer enormous benefits on Kyushu University, as is epitomized by the plaque reading, "Study the Way, Love People."

I would like to end with a little-known episode in the history of academic exchange between Japan and

8 天時不如地利，地利不如人和。Kojima Kenkichiro, *Ronmo shohon* (Tokyo: Kofukan shoten, 1916): 61, <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1242108/39?viewMode=> (accessed February 3, 2017).

China that is related to Kyushu University but did not come to fruition. It concerns Zhou Zuoren's elder brother, Lu Xun. There was a Japanese by the name of Masuda Wataru 増田渉 (1903–77) who greatly admired Lu Xun and travelled by himself to Shanghai to study under him. In his memoirs, *Impressions of Lu Xun*, Masuda writes that when he met Lu Xun around 1931, he told him that there was a vacancy in the Department of Chinese Literature at Kyushu University and asked him whether he might consider going to Japan as a lecturer.⁹ Upon receiving Lu Xun's reply that he would be prepared to go for about one year, Masuda immediately contacted Kyushu University. Masuda himself says nothing about why this never eventuated, but I imagine in my dreams that if this proposal for Lu Xun to come to lecture at Kyushu University had eventuated, Kyushu University, and perhaps Japanese academia as a whole, might have changed quite dramatically.

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⁹ Masuda Wataru, *Ro Jin no inshō* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1970), 262.



Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University

CYNTHIA J. BOGEL
Editorial Foreword

PAWEL PACHCIAREK
Kusama Yayoi in the Context of
Eastern and Western Thought

ELIZABETH TINSLEY
The Composition of Decomposition: The *Kusōzu*
Images of Matsui Fuyuko and Itō Seiū, and Buddhism
in Erotic Grotesque Modernity

ANNE VINCENT-GOUBEAU
Chen Zhen and the Obviousness of the Object

UGO DESSÌ
Recent Developments in the Japanese Debate
on Secularization

EVA SEEGER
A Tibetan Stupa within the Flow of Cultural
Transformations: The Opportunities and
Challenges of Transplanting Buddhist Architecture
from Asia to Europe

ELISABETTA PORCU
Tenrikyō's Divine Model through the
Manga *Oyasama Monogatari*

HENNY VAN DER VEERE
The Importance of *Kōden* in the Establishment
of Identity: The Title of the *Dainichikyō* in the
Opening Sequence of the *Hizōki*

PETER KORNICKI WITH T. H. BARRETT
Buddhist Texts on Gold and Other Metals in East Asia:
Preliminary Observations

RADU LECA
Turning "Sites of Remembrance" into
"Sites of Imagination": The Case of Hideyoshi's
Great Buddha

Review

BOOK REVIEW BY BRYAN D. LOWE
Heather Blair. *Real and Imagined: The Peak
of Gold in Heian Japan*. Cambridge, MA:
Harvard University Asia Center, 2015.

Kyushu and Asia

TAKESHI SHIZUNAGA
Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Visit to Fukuoka and the History
of China-Japan Academic Cooperation at Kyushu
University