

Rikuchō, Zui, Tō bukkyō tenkaishi 六朝隋唐仏教展開史 (The Evolution of Chinese Buddhism during the Six Dynasties, Sui, and Tang Periods). By Funayama Tōru 船山徹. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2019. xxiii + 512 + 18 pages. Hardcover. ISBN 978-4-8318-7724-6.

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On the surface, this book is a collection of twelve papers the author published between 2000 and 2014 on various aspects of Buddhist thought and practice in China during the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Sui 隋 and Tang 唐 periods, with some additional discussion newly written for the book (pp. vi–viii). The merits of the individual papers collected in this book require no further explanation. Since their original publication, they have come to constitute a foundational part of our current knowledge of medieval Chinese Buddhism and have become a must-read for any scholar working in this field.

However, it is also important to note that this book is more than a simple collection of revised versions of the author's earlier publications, as the book brings them together coherently to put forth a consequential thesis about the history of medieval Chinese Buddhism. This thesis is aptly foreshadowed by the phrase “*Bukkyō tenkai shi*” 仏教展開史 (whose English translation is given as “the history of the ‘Evolution’ of Buddhism”) in the title of the book. As the author himself explains in the preface and the conclusion, this word choice represents his understanding that the history of Chinese Buddhism cannot be seen as being separate from the history of Indian Buddhism. The phrase “*tenkai shi*” is thus meant to capture the dynamic development Buddhism went through in medieval China as it interacted with the cultural environment of the Sinosphere while maintaining strong historical and ongoing ties with Indian Buddhism (pp. ii–iii, 464).

Indeed, all of the chapters in this book, organized into three parts that focus respectively on Buddhist scholarship, the systems of Buddhist practice, and the discourse surrounding individual Buddhist practitioners, have something to contribute to this overarching argument of the book. Below, instead of attempting to summarize each chapter comprehensively, I highlight the ways in which these chapters support the author's continuity thesis that Buddhism achieved its unique expression in medieval China through the continuous “evolution” of Indian Buddhism.

The first part focuses on the development of doctrinal studies and hermeneutics in medieval Chinese Buddhism. The first chapter offers an introductory overview of Buddhist scholarship during the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557), when the author argues that the systematization of distinctively Chinese Buddhist scholarship can be said to have begun in earnest by digesting the Indian Buddhist texts translated until then. The second chapter shows how the development of the seminal philosophical categories of *ti* 體 and *yong* 用 (substance and function) must be seen as the product of both traditional

philosophical discourse in China and the resonance the two terms uniquely had in relation to translated Indian Buddhist texts. The third chapter discusses different ways of parsing and understanding the phrase “thus I have heard, at one time . . .” 如是我聞一時 that were current in early medieval China (Does the phrase “at one time” here refer to the time of the event described in the sutra or the time of the hearing of the sutra by the reciter?) and disproves the earlier misconception that Chinese Buddhists departed from their Indian coreligionists on this matter by taking the phrase “at one time” only as the reference to the time of the event recounted in the sutra. The fourth chapter studies the developments in the practice of authoring commentaries on Indian Buddhist texts by focusing on the now-lost *Chengshi lun dayi ji* 成實論大義記 by Zhi-zang 智藏 (458–522), and shows how the Chinese Buddhist notion of the “three types of provisional existence” (*san jia* 三假) grew out of what were initially translated Buddhist terms. The fifth chapter focuses on the figure of Paramārtha (Ch. Zhendi 真諦; 499–569), whose scholarship, as the author persuasively demonstrates, defies reduction into being either Indian Buddhist or Chinese Buddhist.

The chapters of the second part deal with the ways in which medieval Chinese Buddhists theorized the systems of Buddhist practice, with theories about Buddhist precepts being the central topic of the part. The first chapter of the second part gives an overview of the history of the introduction of Indian Buddhist precepts into China. The second chapter then discusses the continuous development of bodhisattva precepts in India and China. For example, the author demonstrates how the Sinitic apocryphal bodhisattva precepts of the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (composed in the mid to late fifth century) remedy a crucial deficiency shared by the sets of Indian Buddhist bodhisattva precepts made available in China until then, and how another important Sinitic apocryphal text, the *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經, elevated the status of bodhisattva precepts in East Asia through a reinterpretation of the Indian Yogācāra notion of *trividhaśīlaskandha* (Ch. *san ju jie* 三聚戒; the three collections of pure precepts). The third chapter studies the development in Chinese Buddhists’ perception of their Indian pedigree by focusing on the now-lost *Sapoduo shizi zhuan* 薩婆多師資傳 by Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518), and shows how this work influenced Chan 禪 Buddhist theories of the Buddhist patriarchal lineage. The fourth chapter provides doctrinal context to what would appear to be flagrant violations of precepts by monks in China by examining Indian and Chinese Buddhist discourse on precept violations, and also traces how Indian and Chinese Buddhists independently developed comparable theories for the justification of such behavior.

The third part of the book moves the focus to the discourse on the religious achievements and religious expressions of individual Buddhist practitioners in medieval China. The first chapter of part three treats the discourse on the sainthood of Buddhist practitioners, and studies how this discourse developed in China in connection with translated Indian Buddhist sources, apocryphal Chinese Buddhist sources, and

Daoist and Confucian discourse on sainthood. The second chapter discusses deathbed miracles typically depicted in the biographies of practitioners who were believed to have attained sainthood, and shows how these narrative elements draw widely from both Indian scholastic and traditional Chinese discourses of sainthood. The last chapter examines the theories and practices of self-immolation (*she shen* 捨身) in Chinese Buddhism and demonstrates that the religious significance of various types of this practice in medieval China should be appreciated in the context of traditional Chinese ethical assumptions as well as in relation to the development of comparable practices in contemporary South Asian Buddhism. This approach again complicates the earlier understanding that self-immolation practices were just another example of Chinese Buddhism's departure from its Indian roots.

In this way, the chapters of this book reveal over and again the patterns of continuity and innovation in the history of Buddhism across India and China that become clear only when we examine medieval Chinese Buddhism in close connection with not only the religious and cultural environment of the Sinosphere but also with that of the larger Buddhist world beyond medieval China. The grand picture of medieval Chinese Buddhism that emerges from the author's study is thus that of a truly international and transcultural religion whose historical evolution unfolded less through a passive and categorical assimilation into its host culture and more through an active and dynamic exploration of its theoretical and practical implications, albeit in a different language and under constraints imposed by different cultural presuppositions. The author's view of medieval Chinese Buddhism then echoes the view advanced by such recent monographs as *A Distant Mirror: Articulating Indic Ideas in Sixth and Seventh Century Chinese Buddhism*,¹ whose chapters (one of which is contributed by Funayama himself) also bring to our attention previously overlooked patterns of continuity between Indian and Chinese Buddhism.

However, the reader also wonders if the book's treatment of the history of medieval Chinese Buddhism is at times limited by what could be termed as its Indo-centric premise regarding the possible origins of Buddhist practice and thought. For example, as the author himself writes, the book's investigation is carried out under the assumption that developments in Chinese Buddhism can be categorized into either one of two patterns: the faithful inheritance of Indian Buddhism or innovative adaptation of Indian Buddhism, both of which are based on a degree of "continuity" (*renzokusei* 連続性) between Indian and Chinese Buddhism (pp. ii, 464). Here, we might set aside the methodological issue often entailed by an approach such as this, as famously pointed out by Gimello,² that a scholar's decision to rule a new development in Chinese Buddhism

¹ Lin and Radich 2014.

² Gimello 1978.

as either a faithful continuation, or a Sinitic reinterpretation, of Indian Buddhism seems to hinge more on the “hermeneutical presuppositions” of the scholar herself than on anything that is objectively assessable. Nonetheless, a question may still be raised on the more naïve level of empirical evidence: Couldn’t there exist elements of Chinese Buddhism that emerged independently in China, neither as an inheritance from Indian Buddhism nor as a product of adapting Indian Buddhism? If such indigenous elements furthermore played roles in the development of Buddhism in China that the elements that were inherited or adapted from Indian Buddhism could not have played, the author’s continuity thesis would have only limited applicability and thus could not be used to generalize the history of medieval Chinese Buddhism as a whole. This suggestion, however, is only to point to possible further directions we could explore by following the example of this book’s careful and detailed study of previously overlooked aspects of medieval Chinese Buddhism.

REFERENCES

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Chūsei bukkō kaiga no zuzōshi: Kyōsetsu emaki, rokudōe, kusōzu 中世仏教絵画の図像誌：経説絵巻・六道絵・九相図 (A Genealogy of Imagery in Medieval Buddhist Paintings: From Six Realms of Rebirth to Nine Stages of Decay). By Yamamoto Satomi 山本聡美. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2020. ix + 461 + xv pages. Hardcover. ISBN-13: 978-4-642-01663-6.

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Images of the grotesque in medieval Japanese Buddhist paintings have long fascinated artists and viewers alike. These depictions depart from conventional representations of benevolent deities and instead pictorialize conceptions of Buddhist suffering and the six samsaric realms of existence. While paintings of hell arguably comprise the largest and most diverse corpus of imagery dedicated to this theme, the other five realms, including those of hungry ghosts, animals, *ashura* 阿修羅, humans, and celestial beings, also found expression in Japanese visual culture. Yamamoto Satomi’s book, which is the culmination of decades of research, presents an expansive investigation of