

*Yume to jōdokyō: Zendō, Chikō, Kūya, Genshin, Hōnen, Shinran, Ippen no yume bunseki* 夢と浄土教：善導・智光・空也・源信・法然・親鸞・一遍の夢分析 (Dreams and Pure Land Buddhism: An Analysis of the Dreams of Shandao, Chikō, Kūya, Genshin, Hōnen, Shinran, and Ippen). By Najima Junji 名島潤慈. Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 2009. xvi + 307 pages. Hardcover ¥2,800.

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This book has a layered agenda. It is a recapitulation of Pure Land history for a contemporary Japanese audience; it is a detailed examination of the theme of dreams and dreaming in seven specific Pure Land figures (Shandao, Chikō, Kūya, Genshin, Hōnen, Shinran, and Ippen); and it is framed as an exploration of how dreaming in historical Buddhism can be approached from the standpoint of modern clinical psychology (*rinshō shinri gaku*).

The main body of the work is a straightforward series of evaluations of these classical Buddhist figures and the texts concerning their experiences of dreaming. Each of the chapters begins with data on each figure and on the texts involved, then moves to description and analysis of the dreams. Extensive references to secondary literature make the work a trove of background bibliographical information. The book includes a basic index for the whole work and bibliographies for the individual chapters.

It is useful to survey the chapters and note a few sample details from Najima's rich discussions as follows:

Chapter 1 focuses on Shandao, particularly a cluster of so-called "three night dreams" and their possible numerological import. Najima summarizes the contents of the dreams, questions whether the "dreams" were actually in sleep, and discusses the symbolism. Referring to Jung and Erikson, he finds expressed in this record of Shandao themes of needs for religious approval which however end in profound self-confidence and a newly defined religious self.

Chapter 2 treats a dream in which Amida Buddha gave Chikō a vision of the Pure Land. Featuring a survey discussion of classical Heian-period Buddhist Pure Land mandalas that focuses on three types which were long held to be of Japanese origin, the chapter explains how the first of these was named the Chikō Mandala because the monk's personal experience was probably the basis for its design. A biography of Chikō and a discussion of his written works are included.

Chapter 3 deals with a dream in which Kūya saw a Pure Land realm-world sitting atop a lotus flower, an event which forecast his Pure Land

birth. Najima details the itinerant's biography, which he sees as part of the line of teachings leading to Hōnen and Shinran because it demonstrated a popularization and increasing individualization of Pure Land teaching. The short dream record was expressed in *waka* verses by Kūya. This dream was a typological variant called an "incubation dream," that is, one engendered through sleep in a sacred place.

Chapter 4 studies dreams by Genshin, author of the *Ōjōyōshū*. In one dream, a monk brought a clouded mirror to Genshin at Yokawa and asked him to polish it. In another Kanzeon Bosatsu and the god Bishamonten appeared. In another Saichō performed *gasshō* to Genshin; Najima provides this dream with a long technical discussion of the visualization and meditation parameters of Genshin's idea of *nenbutsu*, suggesting that Genshin in any case extended the Mahayanist implications and made a doctrinal innovation in his overt focus on Pure Land rebirth as an after-death phenomenon. Finally, in other dreams, a monk came to Genshin at the moment of death, and Genshin saw the awakening of a disciple.

Chapter 5 describes a dream seen by Hōnen, about which the most detailed account was later written down by Shinran. In this dream Hōnen conversed with Shandao, the teacher who was Hōnen's pivotal inspiration; Shandao's figure appeared as half a "fleshly" body, half a Buddha-like body. Yet the dream seemed to be ambiguous about the success of Hōnen's Pure Land rebirth.

Chapter 6 concerns Shinran, who actually had four recorded dreams. The first was at the age of nineteen and involved Shōtoku Taishi; the second was at the age of twenty-eight and involved Nyoirin Kannon. The third dream, which was famously manifested to Shinran at the end of his retreat in the Rokkakudō in Kyoto at the age of twenty-nine and apparently confirmed his exit from Mt. Hiei to join Hōnen's group, is perhaps the most familiarly known of all the Pure Land dream material in part because of its pivotal role in Shinran's biography and in part because of a famous verse to the effect that the practitioner will "transgress with women." While a sexualized interpretation has been emphasized in English-language accounts by James Dobbins and Bernard Faure, the interpretation is quite debatable: needless to say a modern "Freudian" context is much different from a medieval Japanese one where the issue was a reformulation of Buddhist authority in a much broader institutional and even cosmological sense. Indeed, Najima briefly introduces the approaches of thirteen different Japanese commentators on the meaning. However, while he himself focuses on the idea of a positive embracing quality of Kannon towards Shinran, otherwise

he engages the “transgression” verse only peripherally. Here, as in other chapters, the author provides useful, precise commentary on details such as the time and place of the dream encounter.

Chapter 7 treats Shinran’s fourth dream, a less well-known episode of dream-communication of a *wasan* verse composed at the age of eighty-five and written in the original manuscript of his *Shōzōmatsu wasan*. It consists of a brief statement of Shinran’s basic doctrine of trust in Amida’s Primal Vow. Najima handles the writing down of the verse in terms of the presumed late-life crisis in Shinran involving the divergent doctrine of his son Zenran as well as Shinran’s mature idea of the ultimate equivalence of the *nenbutsu* practitioner with all Buddhas.

Chapter 8 is about a dream by Ippen in the year 1288 which confirmed for him the dreamlike quality of existence and the special liberative quality of the *nenbutsu*. Najima’s commentary explores related details of Ippen’s thought, including its asceticism, its oracular quality based in *shimbutsu* religiosity, and the influence of Kūya.

Finally summing up, Najima’s chapter 9 offers an overview reviewing together the function(s) of dreaming in these seven religious figures. In a comparison chart, he lays out schematically various details covering the total of the seventeen dreams he has introduced: title of the dream(s); age at which the dream(s) occurred to each figure; venue or location where the dream(s) occurred; the characters (i.e., especially Buddhist deities) appearing in the dream(s); and finally the function(s) of the dream(s). The category of function is perhaps the most interesting. For Shandao, functions included guarantees of birth in the Pure Land, approval of Shandao’s religious direction, and elucidation of the *Contemplation Sutra* with attestation of Shandao’s commentary on it. For Chikō, it was arousal and motivation towards Pure Land doctrine and visualization. For Kūya, it was recognition of his Pure Land birth. For Genshin, it was desire for approval of his writings, reverence and intimacy towards Saichō, and anxiety about his post-mortem birth in the Pure Land. For Hōnen, dreams urged on his awareness and insight. For Shinran, dreaming provided messages about meeting and trusting the true teacher and perhaps manifestations of some psychological dependency on Hōnen. Finally, in Ippen, dreaming reconfirmed his religious mentality.

Amidst such diversity Najima identifies some common features of the dreams: the occurrence of conversations between the dreamers and the characters (deities) in the dreams; messages delivered from the deities; deepening of the dreamers’ religiosity through the process of the dreams;

the grasping of new perspectives and interpretations; and the arousal of unprecedented actions in the religious person. In a sense, then, the dream has the function of a psychotherapist. Through the dream the religious person overcomes religious challenges; like nothing else, the dream has a power of mediation with the transcendent.

A supplementary chapter covers a historical text of Hōnen, the *Sanmai hottoku ki*, which deals with Hōnen and *samādhi* states of consciousness from the standpoint of *rinshō shinrigaku*.

The book is an excellent example of contemporary Japanese writing on Buddhism with an academic, secular tone. However, even if it were available in English or a language other than Japanese, this book would pose challenges for the non-Japanological reader. There is a heavy focus on Japanese Buddhism with a wealth of relevant but Japan-specific detail. There is limited discussion of its distinct theoretical perspective, one rooted in the special way some modern Japanese therapists with Buddhist orientations have engaged aspects of Western psychology. The author spends only a few pages (pp. 15–17) making this explicit; the method is called Active Dream Analysis, and comes originally from American practices in counseling sessions which emphasize the individual dreamer's independent, autonomous interpretation of dream events with minimal intervention from the therapist. (Professor Najima, the author of several works on clinical psychology, studied in the United States in 1991 and 1992 where he became involved in dream analysis at a New York research center [p. 305].) Beyond this, through the book Najima refers only in a limited way to the voluminous world literature of all genres on dreams and dreaming (pp. 46, 47, 109, 265, 302).

An obvious methodological problem in the structure is the extent to which an analysis rooted in modern clinical psychology can be applied to ancient Buddhist texts. No living exchanges of any kind can be had with the past figures, leaving the therapist especially prone to applying his own interpretations. Najima is well aware of the objection (p. 16) and proposes to compensate for it by close study of the world of the dreamer, but it is not clear how sufficiently the objection is met.

The overall result is a variant modernist perspective on Buddhism, not untypical, perhaps, of many writings for contemporary Japanese audiences. The work compiles an imposing amount of historical, Buddhological, and textual detail with references to a plethora of names and writings (all made available to a non-professional Buddhologist through the guidance of the scholarship in the exhaustive Japanese secondary literature), yet it seems not so much a historical or anthropological work *per se*, but to be more a

product of creative humanist-Buddhist analysis. In that sense it is reminiscent of mythological studies in the tradition of Joseph Campbell or historical psychoanalysis along the lines of Erik Erikson, and for that same reason it is hard to reach a satisfactory decision about whether and how the performance is persuasive. Also, what most struck this reader in the end is how much, despite the clinical psychological gloss, Najima's discussion largely resembles and reverts to—even if it reinforces or updates—rather familiar postwar, twentieth-century Japanese discourse about premodern Buddhism. Not much new ground is broken and no startling conclusions appear; there is still an implicit evolution towards Shinran's teaching and the common reference to the blending of kami and Buddhas, and so on. The comparative and historical viewpoints are restricted. Thus the author is not interested in what some might see as other potential target inquiries, such as how and why the prominence of dreams in classical authors marks a difference between them and our modernity.

Despite any such caveats, the book is an ideal entry point for anyone interested in delving into dreaming in a major sector of historical Japanese Buddhism.

