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

Gimello, Robert M. 1978. "Random Reflections on the Sinicization of Buddhism." *Society for the Study of Chinese Religions Bulletin* 5, pp. 52–89.

Lin, Chen-kuo, and Michael Radich, eds. 2014. *A Distant Mirror: Articulating Indic Ideas in Sixth and Seventh Century Chinese Buddhism*. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press.

Chūsei bukkyō 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.

Miriam Chusid

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

this subject and contains significant new arguments and interpretations that will shape the way scholars engage this material in the future.

Yamamoto's study is divided into four parts and sixteen chapters. An English abstract can be found at the end of the main text. Part 1 introduces six handscrolls thought to have been commissioned by or produced within the environs of Retired Emperor Goshirakawa 後白河 (1127–1192). Three of these, *Jigoku zōshi* 地獄草紙 (hereafter, The Hell Scrolls), *Gaki zōshi* 餓鬼草紙 (hereafter, The Hungry Ghosts Scrolls), and *Yamai no sōshi* 病草紙 (hereafter, The Scroll of Illness), most directly express Japanese interpretations of samsaric rebirths. The *Hekijae* 辟邪絵 (hereafter, The Extermination of Evil) depicts apotropaic deities transmitted from China, and Yamamoto follows in the footsteps of previous scholarship by grouping it with the above three based on the calligraphy of the text and the artistic style of the paintings. The remaining scrolls discussed in this section include the *Ban Dainagon emaki* 伴大納言絵巻 (The Tale of Ban Dainagon) and the *Kokawadera engi emaki* 粉河寺縁起絵巻 (The Miraculous Origins of Kokawadera). While the latter two examples do not overtly portray philosophies of Buddhist doctrine, Yamamoto argues that artists incorporated a burgeoning visual culture representing karmic retribution to enhance the meaning of these illustrated stories and provide commentary on the behavior of certain characters in them.

In part 2, the author departs from Buddhist imagery to examine the afterlives of Goshirakawa's handscroll collection which, as is well known, became dispersed shortly after his death. Yamamoto investigates the ways in which later generations of viewers engaged with these objects through two different approaches. First, she traces the construction of the artistic identity of Tokiwa Mitsunaga 常盤光長 (fl. 12th c.). No verifiable works are extant by this artist, who worked as a painter during Goshirakawa's lifetime. As aristocrats over the centuries viewed Goshirakawa's handscrolls, however, they began to attribute them to Mitsunaga until he posthumously became known as the artist responsible for producing the retired emperor's original commissions. Second, Yamamoto examines the humorous handscroll entitled *Hōhigassen emaki* 放屁合戦絵巻 (hereafter, The Battle of Breaking Wind). Centuries after its initial creation in the twelfth century, Prince Sadafusa 貞成親王 (1372–1456) copied and amended the images while adding his own dialog directly to the narrative vignettes, creating a wholly new and original composition.

The latter half of the book focuses on depictions of Buddhist suffering. In part 3, Yamamoto examines the development and expansion of paintings that initially drew upon descriptions of the six realms of rebirth as expounded by the Japanese monk Genshin 源信 (942–1017) in his famous manuscript, *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集 (hereafter, The Essentials of Rebirth; 985). Yamamoto takes a similar methodological approach in part 4, but instead concentrates on a genre of imagery illustrating the nine stages

of decay of the human body, a topic established in a text based on a series of lectures by the Tiantai 天台 monk Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597) called *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止観 (The Great Cessation and Contemplation, 594). Images of the nine stages of decay were initially conceived of as a meditative tool for monks to sever attachment and sexual desire but also became a means for others to recognize the body's inherent impurity. Through these four broad topics, Yamamoto traces the way cultural environments and contexts of artistic production influenced the creation and understanding of a visual culture related to Buddhist suffering and affiliations. Since the scope of Yamamoto's research is so extensive, I will summarize what I feel are her most important arguments below.

First, issues relating to relationships of text and image form the core of Yamamoto's study. As she notes in her introduction, Akiyama Terukazu 秋山光和 (1918–2009) was one of the first scholars to identify the process by which priests or interlocutors adapted the meaning of canonical texts to lectures and sermons appropriate for lay audiences. This entailed providing commentary on a sacred scripture, paraphrasing or summarizing Buddhist teachings in an interesting and engaging way, and interpreting legends or historical incidents through a Buddhist lens even if these stories did not contain any inherent Buddhist teachings (p. 4). Yamamoto uses Akiyama's argument as a springboard for her own investigations. In doing so, she implicitly questions received narratives that posit singular relationships between text and image, namely, that artists produced the paintings under investigation to elucidate the meaning of sacred writings. Instead, Yamamoto demonstrates a diversity of text-image interactions, especially in her arguments that pictures could also function as the grounds upon which new knowledge is produced.

A second major contribution Yamamoto makes is in the analysis of *rokudō-e* 六道絵 (paintings depicting the six paths of existence). Illustrations of Buddhist hells and the other five realms produced in Japan have long been understood within the framework of *The Essentials of Rebirth* introduced above. However, as Yamamoto demonstrates, representations of the six paths were informed by a range of canonical texts, existing beliefs, and religious practices. As such, the content of these images could change and shift depending on the needs of the patrons.

The implications of these contributions are revealed through examples Yamamoto considers in parts 1 and 3. For instance, Yamamoto's discussion of *The Scroll of Illnesses* in part 1 is notable for the ways artists interpreted and visually represented aspects of Heian 平安 (794–1185) society within a canonical Buddhist framework. As the author notes, the composition of the handscroll was likely inspired by the *Shōbō nenjo kyō* 正法念処経 (hereafter, The Sutra on the Meditation of the True Law), a scripture that describes various human ailments as the result of karmic retribution. As Yamamoto observes, however, only a fraction of the illustrations in *The Scroll of Illnesses* have direct textual counterparts in the sutra. The remaining scenes, she argues, were more

likely expressive of the human condition as encountered in the streets of the capital. In particular, she shows that while the scene depicting two figures ridiculing an intersex medium in the handscroll may have links to the scripture's discussion of hermaphroditism, it also had strong visual connections to practicing male shamans, a marginalized class of people who worked as diviners in Kyoto at the time (pp. 57–66). The inclusion of such vignettes in *The Scroll of Illnesses* sheds light on how patrons and producers overlaid their understandings of punishments for deeds committed in previous lifetimes as described in Buddhist scripture onto contemporary Heian society.

The Scroll of Illnesses is unique in the corpus of extant Japanese paintings for its illustration of maladies, and scholars have long debated whether Goshirakawa commissioned this particular object alongside *The Hell Handscrolls* and *The Hungry Ghosts Handscrolls* as part of a set of *rokudō-e* paintings. Yamamoto believes this to be the case as all depict the theme of karmic causality and at least one version of both the hell and hungry ghosts handscrolls is also based on *The Sutra on the Meditation of the True Law*. This observation in and of itself offers a great deal to consider and, within these parameters, Yamamoto may indeed be correct in her argument. Her assertion however seems too neat, and it would have benefitted by addressing the difficulty of understanding these scrolls under one rubric. For instance, not all extant versions of the hell and hungry ghosts handscrolls that Goshirakawa commissioned are based on *The Sutra on the Meditation of the True Law*. Although Yamamoto further attempts to support her hypothesis of a coherent set of *rokudō-e* with her theory that *The Extermination of Evil* represents a Heian-period interpretation of the realm of the *ashura*, this scroll is likewise not rooted in *The Sutra on the Meditation of the True Law*. It also exhibits a different set of doctrinal concerns than the first three artworks, and thus seems to fall outside of the criteria for Goshirakawa's hypothetical set that Yamamoto laid out in the previous chapter (p. 98). Still, these shortcomings do not diminish the importance of her meticulous examination of these objects and her larger insights into the ways artists and patrons superimposed basic Buddhist concepts of retribution onto their own experiences and daily lives.

While part 1 focuses on portrayals of the six realms commissioned by Goshirakawa, part 3 pivots to a discussion of the monumental set of fifteen hanging scrolls of the same theme now owned by the temple Shōjuraigōji 聖衆来迎寺 in Shiga Prefecture. The thirteenth-century patrons of these paintings wished to create a series of images depicting the six paths that were closely related to *The Essentials of Rebirth* as evidenced by inscribed passages of this text found on each of the scrolls except for one. Yet even in this case, as Yamamoto shows, the producers still incorporated elements from a broader visual culture associated with rituals for care of the dead, a topic that *The Essentials of Rebirth* does not discuss. For instance, the Shōjuraigōji set dedicates one entire hanging scroll to the depiction of King Enma 閻魔, a figure generally recognized

as the lord of the underworld. Pictorially, Yamamoto suggests that artists drew upon depictions of Enma as an esoteric figure who provided worldly benefits. She also drew upon paintings imported from Ningbo 寧波 that illustrate him as a fierce judge of the deceased (pp. 247–53). Without documentation detailing these scrolls' ritual function, the role that Enma played within the set cannot be known with certainty. Nevertheless, the inclusion of this image suggests that the purpose of the Shōjuraigōji paintings went far beyond visualizing descriptions and elucidating concepts in *The Essentials of Rebirth*.

Yamamoto's argument that *rokudō-e* were neither fixed by text nor religious practice offers a significant revision of existing scholarship and, in so doing, creates great potential for new avenues of inquiry. She offers glimpses of innovative ways to analyze this imagery in the final chapter of part 3, which explores a set of sixteenth-century paintings incorporating visual elements of Shugendō 修験道 practice. Undoubtedly, the possibilities stemming from the thought-provoking methodologies that Yamamoto lays out will be more fully realized in future scholarship.

As is common with volumes that collect previously published materials (see, for instance, a list of Yamamoto's publications at the end of the main text), the content of the book does not always relate to the purported structure. Chapter titles such as "'Rokudō-e' no engen"「六道絵」の淵源 (The Origins of Paintings Depicting the Six Paths) to describe the construction of a worship hall dedicated to King Enma commissioned by Emperor Toba 鳥羽 (1103–1156; p. 210), or "'Rokudō-e' no shūen"「六道絵」の終焉 (The End of Paintings Depicting the Six Paths) to refer to the images produced by Shugendō practitioners (p. 325) imply a linear development of these paintings that did not exist. These chapters did share the agenda of moving past text-based analyses of *rokudō-e*, a theme that could have perhaps been further developed and captured in the titles instead, as images of the six paths found in China long predate Toba's Enma Hall, and they also continued to develop well into the modern period.

Finally, a third major contribution of the book is that it elucidates reception histories. Yamamoto astutely recognizes the necessity of diverse approaches to uncover the afterlives of these paintings, and dedicates three chapters to three different sets of imagery demonstrating that their significances were not frozen at the time of creation but that they continued to accrue culturally specific meanings over the centuries. For instance, in her chapter on the construction of Tokiwa Mitsunaga's artistic identity, Yamamoto argues that the act of viewing the handscrolls formerly in Retired Emperor Goshirakawa's collection and attributing them to this particular artist became a means for aristocrats to lay claim to these cultural properties, legitimizing their social status (p. 180). Yamamoto's chapter on *The Battle of Breaking Wind* handscroll was a delight to read, and there is something satisfying in knowing that even aristocrats like Prince

Sadafusa found the topic so comical that he endeavored to create an entire new artwork and story based on Goshirakawa's original commission. The last chapter that addresses the topic of afterlives is found in part 3 where Yamamoto, using meticulous detective work, traces the repair history of the Shōjuraigōji *rokudō-e* through the eight repair inscriptions left on the scrolls' rollers. She demonstrates how later generations viewed these paintings outside of ritual practice, and offers a compelling argument that sponsoring the repair of religious imagery could be equivalent to merit-accruing practices (pp. 281–86).

In conclusion, Yamamoto's study is ambitious, well-researched, and deeply engaging. It presents a wealth of documentation including both primary sources and summaries of secondary scholarship, and offers significant new insights. Other lines of reasoning found throughout the book are intriguing and deserve further investigation; one such example is the idea that images of the nine stages of decay—which feature the body of a dead, decomposing woman—were used not only as meditative tools for monks to help sever their attachment to the female form, but also for the religious edification of elite women (p. 413). Yamamoto's book is a welcome addition to the existing body of literature on images of the grotesque in Japanese Buddhist art, offering new methodological approaches and avenues of inquiry to consider and explore.

Behold the Buddha: Religious Meanings of Japanese Buddhist Icons. By James C. Dobbins. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020. 288 pages. Paperback: ISBN 978-0-8248-7999-0.

Sinéad Vilbar

The first thought that came to mind as I read the introduction and first chapter of *Behold the Buddha*: *Religious Meanings of Japanese Buddhist Icons* was the matter of defining "the Buddha," for this is among the basic challenges one encounters as a writer of didactics for Japanese Buddhist objects placed on view in encyclopedic museums outside of Japan. Author James C. Dobbins states on the final page of his introduction that the intended audiences for his book are "readers interested in Japanese Buddhism who may be attracted to its texts . . . while knowing less about its sacred imagery, . . . people traveling to Japan and visiting Buddhist temples [who wish to] identify and understand . . . images, . . . settings, . . . [and] museumgoers" (p. 10). He concludes his first chapter with the hope that his text may enable readers to "behold the Buddha" (through the lens of a post-700, pre-1800 generalized Japanese worldview). Given the emphasis on identification and understanding of imagery, however, I