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

found it a curious choice to devote no part of the book's opening pages to introducing the concept that there exist multiple entities that can be called "the Buddha."

This is because, regardless of what is occurring in the main text, the images selected tell their own story. One is presented with a cover image identified as "Seated Amida Nyorai" 阿弥陀如来 (on the reverse of the title page). A photo of the grand altar at the temple Seiryōji 清凉寺 shows a "five-foot standing image of the Buddha" (p. 3, fig. 2). A mural depicts "a renowned statue of Śākyamuni Buddha" (p. 4, fig. 3). A sculpture identified as the "Buddha of Infinite Life and Light (Amida)" is referred to as an "archetypal image of the Buddha" (p. 9, fig. 5). A photo caption for the Great Buddha Hall at Tōdaiji 東大寺 describes the hall as the one "in which the Great Buddha of Nara is enshrined" (p. 14, fig. 6). The main text notes that this Great Buddha may be called Daibutsu 大仏. As the first chapter winds down, one finds that in "its most literal sense, 'seeing the Buddha' might refer to meeting the historical Buddha in person" (p. 21). But then, "another way of beholding the Buddha was in the form of an icon . . . [and] icons were as much an embodiment of the Buddha as his visionary appearance in meditation and his original physical incarnation were" (p. 22). To support this statement, the reader is then directed to an image of "the meditating Buddha Amida" at Zōjōji 增上寺 (p. 23, fig. 10).

If one is paying attention to the figures' titles and their captions, and wishes to follow along with confidence, it will be helpful to have come to the book with the knowledge of who Amida and Śākyamuni are. Otherwise, one might ask, why does the Buddha have two names? Are they the same entity? Does Amida reside at Seiryōji and Tōdaiji? Is Amida "the historical Buddha"? Is Amida Nyorai different from Amida? Is the Daibutsu someone else? What is a mandorla, and why can you have miniatures of "the Buddha" in it? Should we be talking about "a buddha" instead of "the Buddha"? If the goal of pairing these particular figures with the text was to recreate the sensation of encountering the icons in the course of visiting temples and museums without much knowledge, and a partially thwarted desire to understand each one as it is apprehended, then it is successful, as the questions that arise propel one forward into the subsequent chapters. Of course, the goals of the introduction and first chapter are not primarily to jump directly into making sense of Buddhist iconography in Japan, but rather to discuss a contemporary and a premodern consciousness, generalized Western and Japanese cultural positions over time, the differences between a variety of temple and museum settings, as well as colonialism and the expropriation of cultural properties in the enterprise of creating museums. The discussion of cultural properties might be criticized for not sufficiently describing the particular and distinct history of Japan in the narrative of provenance. In addition, the parameters presented in the text for the fields of inquiry of the discipline of art history could be argued to be overly narrow.

Everything comes into much better focus in the second chapter, when the topic turns to the underpinning religious narrative of Buddhism, that of the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni. In this chapter, each of the selected images has a completely logical association with the main text. The penultimate paragraph of the chapter resolves to a great extent the questions raised by the images in the introduction and first chapter: "As Buddhism spread and diversified, Śākyamuni came to be identified as the historical Buddha of this world, a status that left open the recognition of other mythic Buddhas. . . . Śākyamuni was merely following the prototypical trajectory—quest, enlightenment, and compassion—that all Buddhas take whenever they appear in the world. This assumption is conveyed in the word Tathagata (Jp. *Nyorai*), a common substitute for the term Buddha. Tathagata, according to one interpretation, means 'the one who has thus come,' indicating someone whose life course has been 'thus'—that is, like that of all other Buddhas" (p. 50). The chapter is extremely well-written and could easily be a small publication on its own. The interpretive strategy of "quest, enlightenment, and compassion" (p. 50) is brilliant, and one looks forward to knowing how it will be applied over the remaining chapters of the text. The discussion of meaning and interpretive communities is both concise and impactful. The chapter has a solidity reflecting years of thought devoted to the topics it covers, and thus a hard-won clarity that is a gift to the reader.

The third chapter relatively quickly resolves an outstanding question from the first; "*daibutsu*" are defined as "colossal Buddhas" (p. 55). However, at this point, especially with another image of "the Buddha Amida" typifying the basic iconographic features of "the Buddha" at the outset of the chapter, one begins to desire some clarification as to Amida's identity beyond a "mythic" Buddha. Instead, the author provides a brief lesson on distinguishing between "a Buddha" and "a Bodhisattva" (pp. 52–53). The replacement of "the" with "a" is a welcome development, as is the expansion of the definition of the term "bodhisattva" beyond the first chapter's parenthetical "figures on the path to Buddhahood" (p. 16). Indeed, defining "bodhisattva" concisely so that more of a limited word count can be devoted to other information is another of the basic challenges one encounters as a writer of didactics for Japanese Buddhist objects placed on view in encyclopedic museums outside Japan. "Figures on the path to Buddhahood," though, is insufficient. Dobbins hits the nail on the head when he points to the trouble of asserting enlightenment as a "pivot" between quest and compassion. The quest for a worthy, brief definition remains ongoing for the writer of this review.

Dobbins embarks in this third chapter on a sustained discussion of iconography. It may be a bit picky, but as an image-oriented reader, I wondered why the sentence on page 53, "For instance, a meditating Buddha invariably assumes a sitting position," is followed by a reference to "fig. 10" which appears on page 23, with the title "Seated Amida Buddha," when figure 22, "Meditating Buddha," is right there on the facing

page, page 52. Otherwise, the explanations and illustrations of physical marks and hand gestures are well presented and contextualized. Yet, it would have been satisfying to see an image demonstrating the Dharma-wheel-turning mudra in this section, too. Dobbins also includes a brief and helpful overview of objects being held by buddhas and bodhisattvas. The final section of the chapter, "Multivalent Religious Meanings," begins with an extremely useful conception of the nature and function of Buddhist icons that Dobbins notes he has adapted from that presented by Donald F. McCallum in his *Zenkoji and Its Icon: A Study in Medieval Japanese Religious Art* (Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 181–82). This formula, that the icons are commemorative (representations), symbolic, and "the instantiation of the Buddha in this world" (p. 71) can be pocketed away with the handy three-fold "quest, enlightenment, and compassion" tool of the second chapter. The clear explanation of Mahayana Buddhism at the very end of the chapter as it relates to the "representation, symbol, and instantiation" formula is especially welcome, as it provides a blueprint for discussing sculptures as material manifestations of the thought behind their creation.

Chapters 4 and 5 cover buddhas and bodhisattvas, respectively. Here, one finally gets the answer to all the images of Amida that appear in the first few chapters, and clarity regarding the Great Buddha at Tōdaiji as well as the multiple emanations of buddhas in his mandorla. Both chapters are clear and informative. One passage that could have perhaps been extended begins and ends as follows: "One important strategy is to identify the different types of manifestations that a Buddha can have, as articulated in the Mahayana doctrine of the 'three bodies' of the Buddha. . . . The great variety of Buddhas depicted in Japanese iconography presupposes this philosophy of multiplicity amid shared identity" (pp. 78–79). While a grounding in Buddhist iconography prepares one for the descriptions of the sculptures and paintings included in the fourth chapter, those with less background in Mahayana thought could have benefitted from a further exploration of the physically incarnated body (*ōjin* 應身), the formless Dharma body (*hosshin* 法身), and the miraculous and radiant body (*hōjin* 報身) as they pertain to how a premodern Buddhist would have beheld statuary and paintings of Buddhist figures. Perhaps this could have been framed as a meditation upon the intersections between "representation, symbol, and instantiation" and "incarnated, formless, and miraculous." That said, the discussion of Mahayana thought here, in combination with that provided at the end of chapter 3, goes a long way toward making something highly complex incredibly accessible and is to be commended.

Chapter 6 delves into "allies, protectors, and extensions" (p. 126) of buddhas and bodhisattvas. It covers *myōō* 明王 (fierce wisdom kings, or kings of brightness) and the *tenbu* 天部 (beings of the heavenly realm). It also provides a cursory discussion of *kami* 神. There is a nice description of the gentle and aggressive forms of compassion demonstrated by the bodhisattvas and the *myōō* respectively that may call to mind for

some the rough and gentle aspects or forms of a *kami*. The six realms of transmigration (*rokudō* 六道) make a brief appearance in the explanation of the four heavenly kings (*shitennō* 四天王), Benzaiten 弁財天, Kichijōten 吉祥天, and Enma 閻魔, intertwined with some basic information about Indian antecedents and iconography derived from Chinese prototypes. Overall, the chapter is a good breakdown of the auxiliary Buddhist figures one is most likely to encounter in a temple or museum. While a more explicit guide to the six realms or a more robust overview of what Indian religious traditions were involved in the generation of some of the figures incorporated into Buddhism could possibly have been worked into the chapter, such additions may have diluted the crisp presentation, ultimately reducing its efficacy.

For this reader, the seventh chapter required multiple readings to internalize. The chapter traverses a great deal of ground in the quest to provide concrete examples of what it means to "behold the Buddha." It may perhaps be summarized as follows: (1) a description and analysis of the "eye opening" ceremony at Tōdaiji in the eighth century; (2) an illustrative comparison between a deceased relative's ashes, a letter left behind, and a photo with the relics, sutras, and icons of the Buddha; (3) a description and contextualization of the items placed within the Seiryōji Shaka 釈迦; (4) a presentation of the contrasting engagements with icons offered by the anecdote of the monk Danxia Tianran 丹霞天然 (739–824) and the Shakakō 釈迦講 (the Śākyamuni Fellowship) at Ryōzen'in 霊山院 in the eleventh century; (5) a general description of adornments of spaces of enshrinement; (6) a general presentation of temple layouts and altars; (7) a brief overview of the nature of interactions with Śākyamuni Buddha as described in sutras; (8) a general inventory of daily and annual observances at temples, including offerings, differentiated to an extent by the school of Buddhism; (9) a discussion of *hibutsu* 秘仏 (concealed or "secret" Buddhist deities); and finally, (10) an example of how sacred tale literature, through the case of *Shigisan engi emaki* 信貴山縁起絵巻 (The Illustrated Miraculous Origins of Mount Shigi), produced in the second half of the twelfth century, enhances our attempts to understand how people once beheld the Buddha.

Following the third chapter's observation of the challenges of positing enlightenment as a "pivot" between quest and compassion, the summation presented just before the discussion of the episode in *Shigisan engi emaki* was most helpful, and while it is long, it bears repeating here:

> Rituals pervade temple life in Japan, many of them involving interaction with "living" Buddhist images. Though it may not be obvious on the surface, these rituals are considered perfectly consistent with and expressive of the threefold paradigm of quest, enlightenment, and compassion that defines the Buddha. There has been a tendency in the modern period to

> showcase enlightenment among the three—interpreted mostly as a sudden, personal, and transformative awakening. Certainly in the history of Buddhism this event has been crucial to the religion. But Buddhist life has always encompassed a wider, more diverse, and more routinized array of experiences. . . . In ritual engagement with an icon people feel that they have entered the world of the Buddha. The temple is a physical setting that can provide this sacred space to encounter and commune with the Buddha, and thereby to experience the compassionate, enlightened, and questing dimensions of his identity (p. 172).

Dobbins provides a rich array of the permutations of ritual life in the chapter, including ritualized aspects of the creation of icons, the ritual activation of icons in their enshrined spaces, and the larger spatial matrixes they activate for their communities in the form of temples. An extended discussion of sacred tale literature could have perhaps been included to show other aspects of the ritual experience. For example, there are tales of how particular sites came to be selected for the enshrinement of sacred images, as well as stories of how dreams led specific icons to be created. In addition, the idea that certain materials—special trees or other entities—have been seen to be inherently inhabited by Buddhist divinities, simply waiting for people to recognize them through the act of revealing them, also appears with some frequency in Japanese Buddhist narratives. Finally, tales of icons moving about to perform compassionate actions exist as well. Stories like these are an important part of the expression of the consciousness of Buddhists, clerical and lay, before the modern era.

The eighth and final chapter has the goal of making sense of Japanese Buddhist practices that revolve around sacred images that are not straightforwardly corporal presentations. While not discussed in the chapter, the varieties of the *ryōkai mandara* 両界曼荼羅 (Mandala of Both Worlds) come to mind as potentially helpful tools in introducing some of the same concepts. In addition to the mandalas that depict each of the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other sacred entities appearing in the mandalas as humanoid, there are also examples that show all the figures as embodied in their Sanskrit seed syllables, or as the ritual implements associated with them. Iconographic manuals in the handscroll format often collect all three—corporal, textual, and implement-based—along with brief descriptions derived from sacred texts, including sutras, to aid in identification and replication of these Buddhist figures. While these are the concerns primarily of esoteric Buddhism within the Shingon 真言 and Tendai 天台 traditions, they inform and provide context for the mandalas used in the Pure Land and Nichiren 日蓮 traditions.

The introduction of the visual culture peculiar to the Nichiren school at the outset of the chapter sets the stage for the chapter's focus on relics, calligraphic icons and

mandalas, the enshrinement of scripture, memorial portraiture in its varied forms, and what might be called tombstones and touchstones—the former being monuments to ancestors and the latter being places in the community where people can have a public yet at the same time intensely private and personal moment with "the Buddha." This is because the view of a Nichiren school altar at Kuonji 久遠寺 is in essence a marvelous example of the intersection of many facets of Japanese Buddhist practice covered in the chapter. The final chapter also contains a number of impactful, and perhaps unexpected, observations, such as a thoughtful overview of the role of *bokuseki* 墨跡 ("ink traces," or calligraphies by monks) in and beyond the temple, as well as a well-crafted analysis of the overlapping of relics and *nyoiju* 如意珠 (wish-fulfilling jewels) in the context of wielding power. The parallel discussions of rituals related to relics (*shari kōshiki* 舎利講式) and Obon お盆 were especially well-constructed and relatable.

Dobbins concludes his volume with an afterword entitled "Museums Revisited." The introduction features an image of sculptures on view in Hōryūji Hōmotsukan 法隆寺宝物館 (The Gallery of Hōryūji Treasures), a special building on the grounds of Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan 東京国立博物館 (Tokyo National Museum). The structure is interesting in and of itself, because it was designed by architect Taniguchi Yoshio 谷口吉生 (b. 1937), the son of Taniguchi Yoshirō 谷口吉郎 (1904–1979), architect of the Tōyōkan 東洋館 (Hall of East Asia) on the same museum campus. The works housed in The Gallery of Hōryūji Treasures were gifted to Japan's imperial family in 1878, which explains to some extent their present location, somewhat far from Nara. The selection of the architect also has meaning in terms of lineage and continuity of cultural enterprise beyond a single individual, in some respects echoing the themes of this book. Taniguchi Yoshio also designed the new wing of the Kyoto National Museum.

The first image in the afterword, however, depicts instead the original, French Renaissance-style building built in 1895 and designed by Katayama Tōkuma 片山東熊 (1854–1917) in the background, with a stone Buddhist sculpture in the foreground. Neither the sculpture nor its provenance is identified in the book, and the website of the Kyoto National Museum provides no help in this regard—although it does identify some of the objects found in the East and West gardens of the museum's grounds. With some internet sleuthing, it was possible to locate a number of photos of the sculpture. Although the array of photos shows the sculpture in a different location, and without an offering box placed before it, the label was clearly captured. The museum identified it as a twelfth-century image of Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来 formerly on the grounds of the temple Gyōganji 行願寺 in Kyoto. The label explains that Dainichi differs from many images of buddhas in that he has adornments, such as a crown, and an unusual mudra, and explains what those differences mean. It goes on to explain that this is the representation of Dainichi that would be found in the *taizōkai* 胎蔵界 (Womb

World). One also learns that because the temple's founder Gyōen 行円 (fl. early 11th c.) customarily wore robes of hide, the temple is also known as Leather Hall (Kōdō 革堂). Although not included in the label, a sad and touching legend about Gyōen exists explaining the association with hides. He apparently awakened to the Buddhist path in the course of performing his profession as a hunter; having shot a deer in the mountains, he saw that a fawn emerged from its felled mother. The temple still exists, but its current primary buildings date to the early nineteenth century. It was initially built at the site of a temple that had fallen into disuse, then moved due to the city-planning campaigns of Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537–1598) and was later badly burned in the early eighteenth century. It is now located about forty-five minutes away from Kyoto National Museum by foot. The story of how this stone Buddha came to be placed in its present location may or may not be possible to discover with certainty, but a number of paths are probable. As Dobbins relates, Kyoto is a city full of temples. One can surmise that a visit to the museum could inspire a visit to a temple from which an icon came—or at least the contemporary incarnation of that temple.

Dobbins's review of some of the accessible literature produced over the past couple of decades is interesting, and this reader would add the *Sugu wakaru* すぐわかる (Understand Right Away) series, published by Tokyo Bijutsu. The series offers great ways to understand things and explain them to others. Rather like *Behold the Buddha*, they are written by noted scholars in their fields, and make serious efforts to break things down without losing the most salient features of any given topic. With respect to popular trends, rather than simply responding to the interests of visitors, museums both inside and outside Japan make ongoing and conscious efforts to promote public interest in their holdings, and works borrowed from other institutions, be they from secular or religious institutions. Museums' special exhibitions in Japan often track closely to observances of anniversaries of the founding of temples or entire schools of Buddhism, the death anniversaries of patriarchs and eminent monks, and so forth. There is significant overlap between an audience visiting a museum to see art, and an audience attending an exhibition as an act of participating in Buddhism. There is not always, or perhaps ever, a need to distinguish between the two. To some extent, the same idea applies to other museum spaces. At the Cleveland Museum of Art, there is a bench placed before the case that holds the sculpture of Hottō Enmyō Kokushi 法燈円明国師 (1203–1298), in part out of deference to members of the local community who wish to sit in meditation with him.

The consideration of spaces that engage concretely or notionally with original temple settings is also interesting. One way to achieve this on a basic level is to be sure that iconographically inconceivable ensembles are not manufactured in galleries. When last visited by this reviewer, a gallery featuring Buddhist images near the entrance to the large suite of galleries devoted to Japanese art at the Minneapolis

Institute of Art had a low-volume loop recording of Buddhist monks performing sutra recitation, a welcome addition of aural context, and a hint that Buddhism should not be unhelpfully reduced to the word "contemplative." Photographs of architectural spaces can sometimes serve as proxies for actual spaces, whether smaller images appended to permanent gallery labels, or larger images for special exhibitions. Ambitious projects utilizing HoloLens technology also exist. Examples of gallery spaces in the United States that emulate to varying degrees the architectural spaces of temples do not constitute a new trend. The Buddhist Room at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was designed in 1909. The Philadelphia Museum of Art has an entire Buddhist hall, a building from a subtemple of Hōryūji, which was acquired by the museum in 1928 following its dismantling in Japan in that same year. The *butsudan* 仏壇 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art has been a feature of the Arts of Japan galleries since their opening in the late 1980s. If anything, more recently redesigned and installed spaces in United States museums could arguably indicate a trend away from these kinds of projects, or perhaps simply a continuation of an institutional decision to not make cohesive architectural elements part of a building-wide strategy.

In sum, *Behold the Buddha* is a book that many will find more frequently on their desks or in their hands than on the bookshelf, and will often recommend to others when one's own didactic powers are lacking. A great deal of willpower and tactical thought must have gone into deciding what to put where, and in what order, and the result is a well-paced, balanced presentation of Japanese Buddhist icons. With a fair number of the figures serving as illustrations for multiple passages in the text, image selection must have been a challenge, even beyond the typical struggles with image rights and expenses, and for the most part the selections work well. The suggestions made in this review for potential additions may well have already long-ago been considered and discarded in the interest of clarity and brevity. There should be more books like this that bridge the sometimes wide gap between the specialist volume and the gallery didactic.