

However, this wish for additional content arose due to the fact that, as a modern scholar of Buddhism, I myself came to understand clearly the significance of the presence and influence of Unitarianism in modern Japan thanks to this monograph. In the new horizon cleared by Mohr's work, various analyses from new perspectives regarding modern Japanese religion and thought await.

Plotting the Prince: Shōtoku Cults and the Mapping of Medieval Japanese Buddhism. By Kevin Gray Carr. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. 245 pages, numerous illustrations. Cloth \$40.00.

MICHAEL PYE

This fascinating work by a professional art historian seeks to chart the development and the complexities of the cult of Prince Shōtoku (572–621), who is broadly credited with having played a major role in the introduction of Buddhism to Japan. While other Buddhist leaders have also been the center of immense later reverence and hagiography (though little comparison is adduced here), the particular significance of Shōtoku lies in the fact that he could not be claimed exclusively by any one single Buddhist denomination in the later tradition, and that he also became a figure of national, civil significance. The legends about him grew steadily, finding expression in texts, sculpture, cultic buildings, and in particular in narrative painting. The latter developed notably in the Japanese “middle ages” when Buddhism was woven into a more or less coherent, complex cultural pattern integrating many notions of indigenous provenance. This book takes us on a grand tour of all of this, with particular concentration on the screens of the Picture Hall of Hōryūji, which can be dated back to precisely 1069. These, but not only these, are excellently reproduced, so that the art-historical analysis can be followed in detail. The colored illustrations, though in a non-massive format, evidently worked best on a certain kind of rather glossy paper (105gsm Gold East matt art), which makes the ordinary text in the book a little difficult to read. At least, being acid free, the work can be consulted for many years to come, as it should be.

Following an essay-style introduction, and a certain amount of agonizing over terminology such as the very use of the word “cult,” the book is set out

in two major parts. The first is entitled “Faces of Shōtoku: Cultic Identities through Time” and consists of three chapters (1–3), while the second is entitled “Mapping Shōtoku’s Tale: Cultic Identities in Place” and consists of two further chapters (4 and 5). It may seem a little disconcerting that chapter 4, part 2 is entitled, “The Birth of a Legend: Inscribing Shōtoku at Shitennōji and Hōryūji,” for one might expect this to come somewhere near the beginning of the book. It is almost as if the author is guessing that some of his readers will know about such beginnings beforehand, and that he cannot wait to get straight into his substantial analysis of later hagiographical constructions. This is probably because the idea has become so influential in recent years that everything is invented, re-designed, re-presented, and manipulated, depending on changing points of view. In this mode, the sheer exuberance of hagiography and artistic elaboration seems all the more irresistible.

True to this perspective, Carr strikes a note of caution about the uncertainty of any historical knowledge concerning Prince Shōtoku. It is indeed worth pointing out that a pre-cult Shōtoku is hard to access, as is explained with reference to recent literature on pages 3–6. And, the developing cult is so much more interesting. It is almost a sign of having become a successful religious figure in human history, that one’s existence should be doubted. And yet, there is not really any doubt that Prince Shōtoku in fact existed and that he played a pivotal role in the establishment of Buddhism in Japan, as a political act. Was it not originally the need to secure and maintain the communication and influence of this patronage which led to his being so praised and spiritually elevated in the first place? Without such a bed-rock of fact there would probably have been no later cult at all.

However, the author, and no doubt the reader, is interested in the cult. As he writes in the “conclusion” to part 1, “The uncountable stories and images of Shōtoku created throughout Japanese history constitute a web of interlocking, mutually supporting conceptual systems that, while sometimes contradictory, added up to a consensus about Shōtoku’s divine identity” (p. 103). The word “divinity” is used intentionally, for Shōtoku was not just created and venerated as a bodhisattva. This process was conflated with a divinization quite typical of the indigenous Japanese way of enshrining great figures of the past. On the one hand he was made into a guarantor of the coherence of Buddhist transmission across East Asia to Japan, by being identified with Huisi (515–577, J. Eshi), a key patriarch of the much encompassing Tendai tradition, but also with none less than the bodhisattva Kannon, a symbol

of pan-Asian Buddhism in general. On the other hand, his “continuing identity” within Japan was focused in his *tama* or *tamashii*, meaning something like “spirit”—a term which Carr correctly distinguishes from the more wooden *reikon* which may be found in Buddhist contexts (cf. pp. 78–79). Thus, the position of Shōtoku as a revered guide and guardian of the Japanese people in general could come to be established. This did not deny the Buddhist luggage and messages which the cult carried forward, but it became self-defining and self-authenticating through its own perceived spiritual power.

Plotting the Prince is an inspiring guide through the highways and byways of an iconography and hagiography that developed their own dynamics. Some readers might be assisted by a slightly more pedestrianized sequence from history to legend to unbridled hagiography, and by an earlier location of the relative significance of the tenth century narrative *Shōtoku Taishi denryaku* (“The Chronological Legend of Prince Shōtoku”) and the *Shōtoku Taishi eden* (“Illustrated Legends of Prince Shōtoku”), which is not really explained until the beginning of part 2. Others however, will enjoy the rather more thematic presentation, be happily dazzled by an astonishing array of varied detail, and allow themselves to be guided into sheer appreciation, both visual and intellectual, by a skilled art specialist.

Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan. Topics in Contemporary Buddhism. By John K. Nelson. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2013. 320 pages. Paper \$33.00.

MONIKA KISS

It is a pressing matter for all religions throughout the world that the modern way of life, as a result of rapid changes in society, draws the attention of ordinary people away from religiousness and spirituality. It is even more so in Japan, one of the most advanced countries in the world. So what can a religion like Buddhism, or rather the religious organizations of Buddhism, do in response? This book does not give a direct answer to that question. However, it does give plenty of examples of what could be done in order to stop Buddhism from disappearing completely from the everyday lives of Japanese people and their communities.