similar ones developed later in the northern plains, as well as the emergence of a landscape governed by the law of perspective.

As the first attempt in a Western language to analyze the sixth-century production of this genre in terms of content and style, Wong's *Chinese Steles* is a welcome and accessible book, in spite of the shortcomings indicated above. The complexity and vastness of the evidence at hand help explain both the strengths and weaknesses of this work. As a positive aspect, I indicate her valuable inquiry into the rise and evolution of steles, a monument rooted in ancient China's rituals. Also commendable are her summaries of the very intricate historical events of the Nanbeichao period (317–589) and her analysis of Indian Buddhism's adaptation and evolution in Medieval China.

A Few Good Men: The Bodhisattva Path According to the Inquiry of Ugra (*Ugraparipṛcchā*). Jan Nattier. Studies in the Buddhist Traditions. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003. xvi + 383 pages. $24.00 paper, ISBN 0-8248-3003-2.

HIRAOKA SATOSHI

Jan Nattier's work is always stimulating and instructive not only to Western but also to Japanese scholars of Buddhism. This book is no exception. This is a study and an annotated English translation of the *Ugraparipṛcchā* (hereafter, *Ugra*), one of the most important early Mahāyāna sutras. In this work, Nattier sheds new light on the bodhisattva figure.

Since Buddhism, particularly Mahāyāna Buddhism, first took firm root in Japan, the origin of the Mahāyāna has been widely debated. In his attempt to discover these origins, Akira Hirakawa, one of Japan's most eminent Buddhist scholars, suggested that "Mahāyāna arose not within a traditional monastic environment, but in lay-centered communities of bodhisattvas who congregated at stūpas" (p. 89). For the time, it seemed as if his theory offered a solution to this long-discussed, knotty question, and it was widely accepted. However, in the last twenty years it has been questioned by a younger generation of scholars, both Eastern and Western, in attempts to understand the origins of the Mahāyāna within the context of traditional monastic Buddhism. Nattier's research challenges us to rethink Hirakawa's theory.

This book consists of two parts: Part One is a study and analysis of the *Ugra*, and Part Two, an annotated English translation. I will first introduce the translation potion of the text. As is the case with most Mahāyāna sutras, no Indian language ver-

sion of the *Ugra* is extant, other than a few passages preserved in the *Śikṣāsamuc-caya*. Instead, we have three Chinese translations (1–3, below) and a Tibetan one (4):

(1) *Fa-ching ching* 法鏡経 (Dharma-Mirror Sutra), translated during the period 180–190 C.E.
(2) *Yü-ch'ieh chia-lo-yüeh wen p'u-sa hsing ching* 郁伽迦羅越問菩薩行経 (The Sutra on the Inquiry of Ugra the *Gṛhapati* Concerning Bodhisattva-Conduct), translated during the late third or early fourth century C.E.
(3) *Yü-ch'ieh chang-che hui* 郁伽長者会 (The Section on Ugra the *Gṛhapati*), translated in the early fifth century C.E. or later.
(4) *'Phags-pa Drag-shul-can-gyis zhus-pa zhes-bya-ba'i theg-pa chen-po'i mdo* (The Noble Mahāyāna Sutra titled *The Inquiry of Ugra*), translated during the late eighth or early ninth century C.E.

These translations are separated by more than just a few centuries, hence the historical and cultural background of each translation must be considered individually. Moreover, and perhaps as a natural consequence, their contents are not the same. Nattier, then, is faced with a serious problem: Which text is the *Ugra*? Which one should she translate and study? Given that Tibetan translations are generally truer to the Indian original, but were also done much later than the Chinese ones, one could, for instance, take the Tibetan as the main text, detailing divergences in the Chinese in footnotes. Others might translate the oldest Chinese translation as the main text, giving top priority to its antiquity. Some might even choose to combine passages from multiple texts in a single translation, as Edward Conze did. The style Nattier has come up with, however, is quite remarkable. She has devised a new style of translation that allows readers to envision the relationship among the texts. Under Symbols and Conventions, she writes: "Small type (nine-point font) indicates sentences, phrases, or words found in later translation(s), but missing from at least one early version of the text (and thus presumably an interpolation). Small type in braces indicates words found in one or more of the early versions, but absent from later ones, and which may either have dropped out in the course of transmission or may be a peripheral development in one branch of the textual family tree. Full-size type indicates portions of the text that are found in all extant versions of the text. Where variants in wording occur in one or more versions, these differences are indicated in the notes" (adapted from pp. 205–206). This helps the reader differentiate multiple texts in a single translation at a glance, and may well become the standard for a translation of this kind of text.

On the basis of her translation, Nattier analyzes this sutra from various standpoints in Part One. Following the study of the formation of the *Ugra* and its possibilities as a historical source, she discusses the institutional setting (Chapter 4), bodhisattva practices: guidelines for the Path (Chapter 5), the structure of the bodhisattva career: implicit assumptions (Chapter 6), telling absences: what is not in the

Ugra (Chapter 7), and finally the Mahāyāna in the mirror of the *Ugra* (Chapter 8). The main topic of her study is the bodhisattva path and the depiction of bodhisattvas in the *Ugra*.

The term bodhisattva is traditionally applied to Śākyamuni before his enlightenment in his last life. He had undertaken difficult practices, repeating one reincarnation after another since making a vow to become a Buddha in front of the Buddha Dīpaṃkara. This much is generally accepted by most scholars. In Japan, however, mainly based on the studies by Hirakawa and Shizutani, the notion of bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna Buddhism has been understood as follows: After the death of the Buddha, his relics were enshrined in stūpas and laymen began to worship them. The stūpa-cult is said to have been carried out by lay followers, not by monks. The lay followers congregating at stūpas called themselves bodhisattvas and they originated Mahāyāna Buddhism. Here, there was a noteworthy shift in the conception of a bodhisattva from a proper noun to a common noun, or, in other words from singular to plural. These common bodhisattvas constituted a group distinct from the monastic community, and were critical of traditional monastic Buddhism. In sum, since Hirakawa and Shizutani, we, Japanese, have generally understood bodhisattvas explained in Mahāyāna texts as follows:

(1) The stūpa-cult is extremely important for bodhisattvas.
(2) The lay group of bodhisattvas existed outside the traditional monastic community.
(3) Calling themselves Mahāyānists, bodhisattvas criticized the Śravakas and Pratyekabuddhas as Hīnayānists.
(4) Bodhisattvas are common bodhisattvas different from the great bodhisattva as a proper noun.

The bodhisattvas that Nattier finds in the *Ugra*, however, provide a striking contrast to the bodhisattvas so far conceived. First of all, she points out that the *Ugra* describes neither the stūpa-cult nor the book-cult. In short, the *Ugra* does not put any emphasis on devotion to religious objects like stūpas, sutras, or celestial Buddhas (for example, Amithābha/Amitāyus in the West and Akṣobhya in the East).

Moreover, this sutra contains no description of the three vehicles, and therefore criticizes neither the Śravaka nor the Pratyekabuddha path. While it is certain that the bodhisattvas are to be differentiated from the Śravakas, the difference is not the quality of enlightenment but the path they choose in attaining it. The bodhisattvas exist within the traditional monastic community, and try to undergo austere practices, following exactly in the footsteps of the Buddha. Here, the Buddha is not an object of worship or faith but a model to be emulated. The *Ugra* does mention lay bodhisattvas, but they are held in less regard than the monastic bodhisattvas and urged to renounce lay life.

In sum, the bodhisattvas described in the *Ugra* are definitely not the type of bodhisattvas that any lay practitioner could become, but are individuals engaged in very difficult monastic practice. They dared to follow the same hard path as Śākyamuni, who became enlightened in his last life after ninety-one kalpas of reincarnation since making his vow before Dīpaṃkara. Because such a path cannot be followed by all bodhisattvas, but only by a very limited number, they are referred to as "a few good men." How different is this image of bodhisattvas from what we have had!

Accurately reading this text, Nattier presents us with a new understanding of bodhisattvas. The presentation of this new image of bodhisattvas, however, gives rise to new questions. First, bodhisattvas as "a few good men" are supposed to follow the same path as the Buddha. Their hard practices include the four "noble traditions" (*āryavaṃśa*), wilderness-dwelling, avoiding contact with others, and maintaining humility, which are reminiscent of ascetics or pratyekabuddhas living and practicing in solitary places. In this sutra, however, we do not find altruistic acts such as the self-sacrifices performed by the Buddha when he was a bodhisattva. Why did they not devote themselves to such practices in spite of their determination to follow in the path of the Śākyamuni?

While Nattier discusses the bodhisattva path "according to" the Inquiry of *Ugra*, the question remains how universal was this image of bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna Buddhism. How many Mahāyāna texts share this image with the *Ugra*? If we can confirm the existence of many texts that share the same idea of the bodhisattva as the *Ugra*, we could call the bodhisattva image presented there relatively universal. If, on the other hand, this image of bodhisattvas were unique only to the *Ugra*, it would have to be admitted that there were various—and perhaps even competing—images of bodhisattvas at the same time.

While bodhisattvas as "a few good men" existed, as Nattier points out, there are also many bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna sutras who are purported to have been in attendance when the Buddha preached the Dharma. The *Ugra*, for example, explains in its opening that five thousand ("five hundred" in the oldest Chinese translation) bodhisattvas attended the assembly when the Buddha preached the Dharma.

In addition, many bodhisattvas appear in various situations in the Mahāyāna sutras. The oldest Chinese translation of the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha*, for example, describes countless bodhisattvas in the Land of Bliss. They are not a few good men, but many good men. How should this gap be bridged? Even in the *Ugra* itself, we find some gaps among three different types of bodhisattvas, namely, the five thousand bodhisattvas explained in the opening of this sutra, the lay bodhisattvas, and the monastic bodhisattvas worthy of being called a few good men. They are all called bodhisattvas. How, then, can we define the term "bodhisattva"?

Clearly, we still have a long way to go in clarifying a number of problems in Mahāyāna Buddhism. There is no doubt, however, that Nattier's study of the *Ugra*

brings us much closer to a fuller and more nuanced understanding of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nattier has once again distinguished herself as one of "a few good scholars."

Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism. Richard K. Payne and Taigen Dan Leighton, eds. New York: Routledge (Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism), 2006. 288 pages. $120.00 cloth, ISBN 0-415-35917-1.

MICHAEL CONWAY

Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism provides glimpses at the contours of religious discourse in medieval Japan from a variety of perspectives. This collection of essays, consciously moving away from an explication of the fundamental doctrines of both the established and the newly-arising schools of Buddhism of the Heian and Kamakura periods, examines both the role and the conception of language in the doctrinal innovations of the period. Because of the broad range of topics covered by the authors of the work, it is difficult to make a statement that accurately reflects the concerns and arguments of each essay presented there. The authors seem to share a constellation of concerns—including the modes of discourse, the linguistic innovations, and the philosophies of language in the religious thought of the period—which each brings to bear on their disparate objects of study.

In the introduction, Richard Payne and Taigen Dan Leighton attempt to lay out the theoretical foundations that inform all the essays in the work. Drawing on the thought of Kocku von Stuckrad, Robert Wuthnow, and other theorists, Payne sketches the outlines of the terms "discourse" and "ideology" as employed in the text, taking up both concepts as essential to a method that transcends the limitations of the one-dimensional, formulaic constructions that have informed much of the preceding scholarship on the religious landscape of medieval Japan. Describing the vast aspiration that underlies the work, Payne states, "One of our goals for this collection is to focus on what Buddhism—its practices and doctrines, its traditions and institutions—meant for Japanese peoples themselves, rather than what it means for ourselves in the present day. . . . [This] means attempting to view medieval Japanese Buddhist praxis in terms of its own social, historical, and cultural location" (pp. 5–6). Although this is an enormous task that a single book cannot possibly complete, *Discourse and Ideology in Medieval Japanese Buddhism* is a necessary first step in this process of interpreting medieval Japanese Buddhism from a perspective that emphasizes the concerns of the historical actors themselves, rather than the concerns of modern scholars.