

reading added to the “conventional understanding” of the traditional *kōan* literature in order to take into account some of the cultural background – contributes to the understanding of the *kōan*; I suggest understanding would better arise from looking at the way *kōan* are used in the daily practice of Zen. Nevertheless this book does seem to be an important step towards reading the Zen records more within the context of the broader cultural environment that generated them. The work will hopefully inspire more thorough investigations of the many themes that have been hinted at, but not developed and analyzed in this book.

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Localizing Paradise – Kumano Pilgrimage and the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan.

Harvard University Asia Center: Cambridge (Mass.) and London 2005. 297 pp.

This book treats the complex of the Three Kumano Shrines (*Kumano sanzan*), the Hongū, Shingū and Nachi, which are located in the southern part of what is called today Wakayama prefecture. This place was, as the author in the beginning writes, “the most visited pilgrimage site in Japan, attracting devotees from across the boundaries of sect, class and gender.” (p. 1) This statement already indicates the importance of the subject introduced here at book length (to my knowledge) for the first time in a Western language. It is a thorough study of the multi-layered phenomenon “Kumano,” which historically developed from a native cosmology to a Buddhist worldview. The book, consisting of five chapters and a conclusion, is richly illustrated with pictures (including color) and maps.

The first chapter “Situating Kumano” introduces the geographical location of the shrines and explains the pilgrimage route between Kyoto and Kumano. It then describes the institutional structures of pilgrimage sites and the shrines as well as their economic basis, i.e. the “religious economy” represented in prayers and donations of land, etc. (p. 23) This chapter also contains an account of the diverse groups involved in pilgrimages, such as itinerant ascetics, abdicated emperors and their entourage, women, and regional communities. Here the author treats the relationship between religious cosmology and society. As in subsequent chapters, he extensively explains the Nachi Pilgrimage Mandala (at the same time a “devotional and promotional” picture) whose composition leads viewers through the sacred precincts of Kumano in a narrative movement and functions like a map. (pp. 26, 34 ff) This mandala contains “multiple perspectives,” depicting the religious places and practices at the same time. (p. 36)

Chapter 2 “Emplacements” traces the history of the Kumano shrines in their development from three local places of indigenous *kami* worship to a single Shinto-Buddhist cult complex. Originally, these shrines were dedicated to deities related to

mountains and forest, healing and fishing, and fertility and childbirth. Mythology portrays Kumano on the one hand as land of death (*yomi*), and on the other hand as the legendary birthplace of the imperial family. Later, as Heian period literature shows, this ancient picture is supplemented by a Buddhist layer which characterizes Kumano as a location for ascetic practice by *hijiri* and later *yamabushi*, as well as a sacred place related to the Lotus Sutra. Hence, Buddha and *kami* cults were here – like elsewhere in Japan – combined (*honji suijaku*), which is documented in legendary shrine genealogies (*engi*). Amida, Kannon and Yakushi were identified with these local deities, and the religious landscape was re-interpreted in Buddhist terms. Owing to the increasing popularity of Pure Land beliefs since the mid-Heian period, Kumano came to be perceived as an entrance gate to the Buddhist paradise.

Chapter 3 “Mortuary Practices” thus treats the evolution from the indigenous belief that Kumano represents a place of death to the Buddhist belief of its being a place for birth in a paradise. In this combination, Kumano became known among Buddhist believers as a place for ritual suicide achieved by drifting on a boat without rudder and provisions from Nachi into the sea. The goal varied according to individual belief; it was either a trip to Kannon’s paradise (*fudaraku tokai*) or a journey to Amida’s Pure Land (*jusui ōjō*). According to records, such cases occurred between the ninth and nineteenth centuries.

The author considers that the Kumano pilgrimage as such was already believed to be a journey through death to salvation since it was a dangerous trip across steep mountains and rapid rivers. This is also indicated by the pilgrims’ white garments which normally were used as dress for the deceased. In this chapter, the author also explains other death and memorial rituals related to Kumano. During the late Heian period it became a popular place for sutra burials which were to be preserved through the time of the end of the dharma (*mappō*) until the arrival of the future Buddha Maitreya.

Chapter 4 titled “The Theater of State” treats the distinguished pilgrimage group of abdicated emperors (*in*) among whom especially the journey to Kumano became popular. The first documented pilgrimage of this kind was undertaken in 907 by the retired emperor Uda. It became a “regular custom” during the last hundred years of the Heian period. (p. 140) Such pilgrimages were huge endeavors since they required a large entourage of consorts, court officials, priests, and servants, as well as a considerable amount of provisions for the journey. At these occasions, the retired sovereigns donated precious gifts as well as estates (*shōen*) to the Kumano shrines in exchange for the prayers and rituals on their behalf as part of the religious economy. The retired emperors of the late Heian period (Insei) left the throne early in order to regain political power over against the Fujiwara regents by directly controlling their young sons. In such imperial attempts to achieve a “new position of authority,” the author argues convincingly, the Kumano pilgrimages played a crucial role. (p. 148) Kumano became rich with landed estates, controlled huge areas of the Inland Sea, and at times provided warriors for the court. Apart from its economic and military resources, Kumano offered religious legitimization to the court since it was believed to be the foundational place of the imperial house. Kumano’s symbol, the

divine crow, which led the first legendary emperor Jimmu to a decisive victory, is painted in the Nachi Pilgrimage Mandala directly above the retired emperor visiting the shrine. Thereby a close connection between the first monarch and the retired emperor is drawn. This mandala also depicts a retired emperor receiving the wish-fulfilling jewel from the dragon god which indicates that Buddhist factors at Kumano also played a significant role in the attempts to regain imperial power. Those imperial pilgrimages boosted Kumano's economic, organizational, cultural and religious development considerably.

Chapter 5 "A woman's place" treats Kumano as one of the few sacred places in pre-modern Japan which permitted women to enter. Whereas sacred mountains such as Mt. Hiei and Mt. Kōya were surrounded by ritual boundaries (*kekkaï*) preventing women from entering, at Kumano they had unrestricted access to worship; hence it was called "Mt. Kōya for women." The narrative in the Nachi Pilgrimage Mandala features a noble woman at various stations of worship who had been identified as the famous Heian poet Izumi Shikibu. Its accessibility made Kumano popular especially among female pilgrims. This was closely connected with the ancient veneration of the deity for fertility and childbirth at Nachi. Also the *Kumano bikuni* ("nuns") played an important role in this cult, especially in its countrywide dissemination through sermons explaining the Kumano mandala (*etoki*). However, since they also spread the Buddhist teaching that women were impure and their bodies had to be transformed into male forms through reincarnation in order to achieve ultimate liberation, according to the author Kumano leaves us with a "final paradox." (p. 230) As he explains: "Kumano was in many ways a site of liberation for medieval women, a place unburdened by the restrictions found in other religious landscapes..." (Ibid.) "Although free from the *nyonin kekkaï*, Kumano was not free from the terms that informed the taboo. It was in fact one of the principal sites for the production of this ideology of abjection." (p. 231) Subsequently, the author calls his concluding chapter "An ambivalent utopia." Here he elaborates the "utopian tension between freedom and restraint." (p. 239)

The book contains an extensive bibliography as well as a helpful list of Japanese terms with Chinese characters and an index. The publisher provides footnotes that make the reading much easier than the endnotes which unfortunately are still widespread in publications in East Asian studies.

A few critical remarks aimed at stimulating the scholarly discussion on some subjects may be added here. First, the author shares with some Japanese and American scholars the opinion that *hongaku* thought is "crucial to medieval Japanese exegesis." (p. 237) Since *hongaku hōmon* (not the modern historiographic term *hongaku shisō*) was a "secret transmission" (*hiden*) within certain Tendai circles only, its role for Japanese Buddhist history should not be overemphasized. As long as there is not yet a comprehensive history of Japanese Buddhism during the transition from the Heian to the Kamakura period available (which locates *hongaku hōmon* in its proper context), one should refrain from such historiographic exaggerations.

Second, the author quotes a passage from Hōnen where he allegedly "praised" the practice of *nyonin kekkaï* (ritual borders for women). (p. 201) Hereby the author takes

the text completely out of context. This is one of the typical mistakes in academic work which have the tendency to live on forever in spite of any corrections. The quotations are taken from Hōnen's critical *description* of the discriminatory practices in contemporary Buddhism. In the end, however, Hōnen explicitly deplors them, and then he proceeds to explain his teachings of "birth [into the Pure Land] in equality" (*byōdō ni ōjō*). In another text, a lengthy *mondō* with a woman, he responds to questions concerning ritual impurity by simply stating that in Buddha's teachings are no taboo. Hōnen certainly cannot be counted among those Buddhists who "link[ed] discrimination with liberation." (Ibid.)

Third, two mistaken notions in English works about Buddhism unfortunately are also perpetuated in this work. The translation of *ōjō* 往生 as "rebirth" should be corrected to "birth in(to)" because the *ō* of *ōjō* signifies not return or repetition, but a unilateral direction and therefore should be kept distinguishable from "rebirth" in the sense of "reincarnation" (*rinne tenshō*, etc.). Further, *satori* should not be translated as "enlightenment" (it has nothing to do with Christian mysticism from which this term is derived), but simply as "awakening."

Altogether, this study is a significant contribution to research on religions in Japan. It elucidates the interpenetration of native and Buddhist beliefs in Kumano and elaborates the centrifugal and centripetal movement of this pilgrimage. By understanding pilgrimage as "transactional activity" (p. 240), the author explains convincingly the religious, social, political and economic roles of this important shrine-temple complex. Occasionally, the author also applies theoretical and interpretative models from other areas of research or thought, such as Medieval Catholic pilgrimages, etc. The illustrations of this book and the detailed explanation of the Kumano Mandala contribute considerably to the interest felt in reading this study.

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Kenneth Doo Young Lee
The Prince and the Monk: Shōtoku Worship in Shinran's Buddhism.
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007, 231 pages.

Shin Buddhism, the complex of institutions deriving from the ideas of Shinran (1173-1262) has played an important role during much of Japanese Buddhist history. Because there are elements in Shinran's thinking that can validly be understood as somewhat protomodern, and because the Shin tradition has been powerfully motivated to make an adaptive apologetic for itself since the Meiji period, twentieth-century Shin thinkers succeeded in promoting a widely influential interpretation of their tradition which selectively emphasized elements which seemed to display the most appealing contemporary image of Shinran (such as Shinran's resistance to *kami*, his egalitarianism, or his distance from folk or vernacular religion) This interpretive tradition, which scholars such as James Dobbins have described as Shin