

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.
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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

Buddhist modernism, is not entirely empirical as a matter of objective history. In counterreaction, one scholarly trend since the latter part of the twentieth century has been to try to put Shinran back within his own sociohistorical context and re-read him as a late Heian or early Kamakura character. However, debate continues – circling around the now universally recognized *kenmitsu-taisei* theory of historian Kuroda Toshio – concerning just what this Heian-Kamakura sociohistorical and religious context really was.¹ Lee’s basic project in this study, founded on his Ph.D. dissertation from Columbia University, is to adopt one of the emphases from that context, the Heian-Kamakura period’s intense orientation to *honji suijaku* culture – a focus associated with historian Satō Hiroo among others – and use *honji suijaku* to argue for an enhanced appreciation of the role played by (the probably mostly mythic figure of) (Prince) Shōtoku Taishi in Shinran’s religious experience.

The book contains five chapters. Chapter One surveys in detail the position occupied by Shōtoku in Shinran’s thought-world. In the first place, Shōtoku was apparently at the center of Shinran’s famous Rokkaku-dō visionary experience, which is understood as the turning point in Shinran’s development which led him subsequently to leave Mt. Hiei to join Hōnen’s circle. Thus Lee argues persuasively that through the prince, Shinran became a participant in the normative *honji suijaku* of his time. Afterwards, although later doctrinal developments in Shin Buddhism focused little on them, 190 of Shinran’s 500 plus *wasan* (Japanese language verses for recitation) referred to Shōtoku, who was also identified with Kannon, suggesting a central lifelong role for Shōtoku/Kannon in Shinran’s personal devotion. (This chapter also contains a discussion of the sexual implications of Shinran’s visionary episode at Rokkaku-dō). Next, in order to fully background the Shōtoku figure, Lee’s Chapters Two, Three and Four provide an exhaustive survey of what can be known about Shōtoku: as putative historical personage, as legend, and as cult of worship. (In volume, the book is actually more about Shōtoku than Shinran.) The treatment here is detailed, factual, and straightforward. Chapter Five returns to the Heian period and reconsiders the biography of Shinran and its ambiguities, with some attention to Shinran’s attitude toward emperor and *kami*. The overall message is that Shinran had a much more “medieval” religious sensibility than has been represented by later apologetics, a sensibility closer to *honji suijaku*, visions, and shamanic culture than the one later Shin Buddhist culture represented. There is also a very strong political angle in Shōtoku, because Shinran was centrally concerned about authority problems in Buddhism, and borrowing or participating in Shōtoku worship was – at least in Shinran’s own time – a key expression of this reconfiguration of Buddhist authority in the direction of popularization. In this way Shinran’s worship of the prince manifested simultaneous aspects of both old and new Buddhism in the Kamakura period, serving as a distinctive bridge between the changing configurations.

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1. *Kenmitsu-taisei* refers to Kuroda’s theory of how the dominant forms of early medieval Buddhism were elite-led networks of institutions, ideas and political power which were evolutes of the Heian period. This approach corrected an earlier drastic overemphasis on the role played at the time by Kamakura New Buddhist movements, including Shin Buddhism.

The book reflects wide research, supplies a great deal of information in English, and is quite engaging, though its arguments seem a bit scattered and lacking in a certain integration. Lee seems to be well aware of, and reiterates, points from much of standard Shin teaching and from current historiography on Shinran (see especially Chapter 5 and notes throughout). However, his chosen primary image of Shinran in this text (trying in part to achieve a certain scholarly innovation?) is a narrow one, focusing on the single Shōtoku-faith dimension while relatively marginalizing the psychological and philosophical interests which dominantly attracted the later Shin tradition. For Lee, Shōtoku was close to being a powerful *kami*, whose presence in Shinran's life contradicts modern Shin's attempt to represent itself as being free of cults. Hence Shinran was not an *itan* ("heretical") character in the Kamakura environment (an interpretation suggested by Kuroda Toshio) for the simple reason that his own *bonji suijaku* culture made him instead normative for his time.

The odd thing one initially notices about the argument is not so much the stress that Shinran was a participant in the imaginative field of his time – what serious historical scholar would disagree? – but Lee's complementary insistence that the later Shin tradition positively *misunderstood* Shinran by neglecting to sustain the role that Shōtoku played for Shinran himself. Now, that question is an essential one: why did the deity-world of Shin Buddhism move away from *bonji suijaku* later? Why was Shōtoku eventually less useful to the mainstream Shin imagination than he had been to Shinran himself? Why do the central later symbolic figures instead become restricted to Amida Buddha and Shinran, as well as the simple Chinese characters of the *honzon* scroll? Typical answers in Shin Buddhism might be as follows: the real core issue in Shin was the *tariki* sense of (spontaneous, uncontrolled) authority in Buddhism; also, Shinran and his biography soon provided a powerful mythic resource which consolidated the tradition (perhaps replacing Shōtoku); further, over a period of time (and long before the twentieth century) there was a thoroughly sophisticated "protestantizing," abstracting trend in Shin to make it less "medieval" and relatively simplified in terms of its deity representations.

However, Lee is uninterested in that question or in anything that happened to Shin Buddhism between circa 1400 and 1900. His perspective is merely that sometime soon after Shinran's demise the principal (Hongan-ji) leaders of the Shin tradition simply failed to grasp the teaching of Shinran because they did not recognize that the essence of that teaching lay in the concrete specificity of Shōtoku worship. The dropping of special interest in Shōtoku then was not a matter of historical evolution, but of illegitimacy and even intolerance with regard to the proper polydeistic pluralism of Japanese religious life. (p. 8)

As the reader has been thinking through the provocative quality of this claim, finally at the end of the book it becomes clear that consciously or unconsciously Lee is merely supporting what is actually a not-so-alternative conventional agenda – and just as modernist and conventional in its own way as any Shin Buddhist modernist agenda – about the unity and "essential nondiversity" of Japanese religions. The book verges on interpreting Shinran in such a way as to support classic cultural nationalist tropes about "one true" reified Japanese religious consciousness: the idea

that sectarian pluralism in Japanese Buddhism was never “real,” that instead all of the sects “should” realize a commonality based on the similar ground of their blended Shinto-Buddhist roots – including a common pan-sectarian Shōtoku worship. (pp. 8, 134–138) Perhaps the kernel illegitimacy in post-Shinran Shin Buddhism for Lee and the pan-sectarian school of thought, then, is that later Shin Buddhism requires that Japanese civilization be understood as having a history of serious internal diversity with regard to its spiritual mentalities! This might be one persistent perspective on Shin, but in view of the record of *kokugaku* and *minzokugaku* in Japan, it is hardly an apolitical one.

There is a better way to approach Shinran. It was perhaps not that later thinkers in the Shin tradition misunderstood Shinran, but rather that their hermeneutical interests in the religious resources provided by the founder underwent constant adjustment over the course of seven hundred years of the tradition. It might be true in its own reified way that a methodological weakness of the modernist *representation* of Shin in the twentieth-century has involved too often a fundamentalist misconstruing of “Shinran” as a static, primordial founder. (On this construction see also James Dobbins, *The Letters of Eshinni*, Hawai’i, 2004). But it is not hard to understand that in reality Shin was a religious system – like any other whose thought has remained alive for a long period of time – whose ideas were involved in a dynamic process of ongoing reselection, reworking, reapplication and revivification. Lee thinks Shōtoku worship was somehow at the heart of Shinran’s doctrine (pp. 2–3), but it might be better to say that several important issues *at the time* were refracted through the function of Shōtoku: Shinran’s original medieval imagination, his original search for independent legitimation of his Buddhist intuition, and (much more speculatively) original sexual motives in Shinran’s departure from Mt. Hiei. (These are varied themes, but Shōtoku in Shinran is apparently a quite polysemically operating figure!) Yet the religious interests in Shinran which related to Shōtoku were hardly the only religious interests in Shinran. So it is one thing to propose that it is not easy to get a fix on how Shinran was really a *different* sort of Buddhist thinker in the Kamakura period, but it is another thing to say that the question can be resolved by referring everything to *honji suijaku*.

Moreover, in conclusion, in the broader flow of Japanese history, it is not quite clear to this reviewer how an increased recognition of the *honji suijaku* aspect of Shinran in his own time would significantly change the conventional recognition of Shinran’s long-term contribution. Perhaps, an increased emphasis on the role of Shōtoku might be roughly like the discovery, in European Christian studies, that an intense, vivid form of independent visionary Marian worship turned out to be of deep significance to Martin Luther. This would be interesting in some ways. It would reinforce our understanding of the medieval side of Luther. Yet how would it really change our overall understanding of the impact of the five hundred year long Protestant Reformation?

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