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Marsha Weidner, ed. *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001. ix + 234 pp. $47.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8248-2308-5.

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Changing the Paradigm

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This is a superb collection of essays, skillfully edited by Marsha Weidner and beautifully produced (with sixty-four monochrome illustrations) by the University of Hawai'i Press.

Weidner writes that the authors' shared objective was "to expand the inter-disciplinary conversation that allows us to see post-Tang Buddhism as a force that flowed across social, ethnic, and gender boundaries and fostered the development of cultural riches comparable to if not greater than those celebrated as the fruit of the Confucian social order" (p. 3). Embodied in this mission statement is a noteworthy intellectual agenda, and Weidner is not at all shy about defining the stakes involved:

"Traditionally, Chinese 'literati culture' was equated with Confucian culture, with the literati identified as male scholars who shared a cultural space by virtue of their common schooling in the Confucian classics and their secular career goal, namely, service to the state. Others, such as clerics, women, eunuchs, and non-Chinese appeared in this frame slightly, if at all. That many literary and artistic Chinese men were also practicing Buddhists and that many Buddhist monks were well versed in the scholarly arts were deemed circumstances of little cultural consequence. Recognition of Buddhist aspects of the aesthetic lives of the literati has generally been limited to unavoidable cases, such as those of a relatively small number of celebrated monk-writers and -painters and the laymen with whom they associated, and even in these cases the religious elements of their associations and productions have often been played down in favor of literary or aethetic issues." (p. 5)

How well does the volume fulfill the goal of countering the unfortunate emphases of past scholarship? In terms of the breadth of coverage and intellectual sophistication demonstrated by the various essays, extremely well. The scholarship is excellent throughout, and the subject matter rich and detailed. Of course, additional steps will be necessary to achieve complete success in this important academic agenda, but this volume is a more than worthy companion to its predecessor, Weidner's *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism, 850-1850.*[1]

Weidner's treatment of the very first contribution demonstrates her editorial skill. T. Griffith Foulk's "Religious Functions of Buddhist Art in China" (pp. 13-29, with 11 illustrations) is a stimulating thought piece, which describes eight different uses to which Chinese Buddhist art may be put other than iconic worship. These are decorations, sources of merit-making, surfaces for textual inscription, repositories for sacred objects (including texts), talismans, devices for visualization, material investments, and objects of social capital. (These are my labels, based on material in the text.) Foulk provides a certain number of visual examples, but these are primarily of suggestive value. The absence of an in-depth look at some aspect of the art associated with post-Song Chan Buddhism is the most significant omission of the volume. However, rather than bemoan the absence of such material, Weidner has brilliantly chosen to elevate Foulk's contribution to lead-off status, making its useful reminder–that art historical objects may have been used in various different ways in their original contexts–a guiding principle for the balance of the volume. Yet one measure of the lack of Foulk's impact throughout the volume, in spite of its praise in Weidner's introduction, is the small number of cross-references to it. I have only noticed two on pages 33 and 179, and one implicit reference on pages 58-59. In comparison, I have noticed one cross-reference to Hammond's article (p. 126) and three to Stevenson's (pp. 120, 126, and 203).

Daniel B. Stevenson's "Text, Image, and Transformation in the History of the *Shuilu fahui*, the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land" (pp. 30-70, no illustrations but with references to images repro-

duced later in the volume) is a complex yet eloquent report on a long-term research project. The *shuilu fahui* (known from the writings of Holmes Welch as the "plenary mass") is a major ritual tradition that developed from the very end of the Tang. Stevenson's masterful study summarizes the textual and artistic evidence for this ritual tradition; traces its historical development at different Chinese monastic centers; and analyzes its procedures, pantheon, and altar spaces. This is a masterful presentation, with careful attention both to evidentiary and methodological issues. For example, Stevenson makes good use of the ritual studies analyses of Catherine Bell. I hope that this essay is the forerunner of a book-length treatment of this important topic.

Amy McNair's "Buddhist literati and Literary Monks: Social and Religious Elements in the Critical Reception of Zhang Jizhi's Calligraphy" (pp. 73-86, with 8 illustrations) analyzes "tensions between Confucian and Buddhist interpretations–even differing Buddhist interpretations–of this artist's [Zhang Jizhi (1186-1266)] achievement in the Yuan and Ming dynasties" (p. 73). Her goal is to "illuminate an intriguing case of socially and religiously based conflicts in perception" (p. 73). McNair makes various observations about calligraphic style which, even though I am unqualified to judge their technical validity, are well documented by judiciously selected illustrations. Although there is a tentative feel to McNair's inferences (e.g., "These Buddhist artists may have rejected the classical repertoire of brushstrokes in the interest of self-expression, or they may have engaged in calligraphy or painting as a religious exercise" [p. 80]; also see pp. 84-85), her judgments are sound and insightful throughout. One of the important implications of this article is its sensitive appraisals of the intellectual agendas of traditional Chinese art critics in their evaluations of previous work. In this sense her contribution precisely fits the editorial goal set for the volume as a whole.

Beata Grant's "Through the Empty Gate: The Poetry of Buddhist Nuns in Late Imperial China" (pp. 87-113, no illustrations) is the only essay in the volume not to consider art historical issues or material. Here the goal is to examine the scattered literary remains of Chinese Buddhist nuns, given the recognition that for understanding their lives "these poems, together with scattered fragments of biographical and anecdotal information, are really all we have to go by" (p. 89). Grant is sophisticated in her use of this material, always remaining sensitive to the limitations of the evidence and the impact of traditional poetic and hagiographical forms. Although I have not been able to check her translations for accuracy, her renderings are both graceful and evocative. Consider the following:

"White clouds at heaven's edge hover low like this melancholy: / This fathomless feeling in my heart I blame on the dawn birds. / Misty willows by the river bridge, how small the new moon: / Sporadic bells from an old temple, how cool the dawn breeze. / Shadows of a life's illusions, the flowering branch now old: / Twenty years of a floating life wandering grass-covered roads. / A single reed at river's end is so easily snapped in two. / When you leave for the West, wait and we'll go hand in hand." (pp. 90-91)

I wish that Grant had not left the poems to speak for themselves; in the preceding poem of parting, for example, I detect in the first quatrain an ironic intimation of the pain of nature's cycle of rebirth, and in the second quatrain a poignant longing for companionship at the end of a life of self-cultivation. Perhaps these observations are commonplace, but they might have contributed to an even deeper appreciation of the authors' lives. Elsewhere, I suspect that the annotation of allusions and cross-references within the poetry would have led to a similar appreciation of the authors' poetic genius. For example, even without being able to check the original I suspect that the line "Blue it grows, the bamboo of True Suchness" [p. 91] evokes a line in Dadian Baotong's commentary on the *Heart Sutra.* And, of course, the rhetorical rejection of "divid[ing] into female and male" reminds one of the opening of the *Platform Sutra.* As with Stevenson's paper, one hopes that this excellent survey is only the prelude to a more comprehensive study.

Marsha Weidner's "Imperial Engagements with Buddhist Art and Architecture: Ming Variations on an Old Theme" (pp. 117-44, with 13 illustrations) is designed to show that

"Buddhism still flourished in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). In one form or another, the religion attracted believers from all segments of Ming society–elite and nonelite, male and female, ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese. Whatever judgments may be passed on its spirituality, doctrinal rigor, and institutional purity in comparison to the Buddhism of earlier ages, Ming Buddhism was a major social force, buoyed by imperial patronage early in the period and by both imperial patronage and a resurgence of gentry support toward the end of the dynasty." (p. 117)

In demonstrating this thesis, Weidner describes the use of "Chinese imperial visual culture" (p. 119) by Buddhist monasteries, palatial examples of which "colonized" "Mount Wutai and other sacred Buddhist mountains,

places of wilderness retreat and abodes of foreign and indigenous gods" (p. 120). Her discussion traces a "Buddhist cultural trail" from the imperial center westward to Shanxi and Qinghai, tracing the imposition or appropriation of imperial imagery. In the process she analyzes the stylistic innovations of a number of artists and the configurations of several important temple complexes. Although there is no conclusion per se, the thick description masterfully presented illustrates Weidner's overall thesis of the vitality of Buddhism during the Ming.

Patricia Berger's "Miracles in Nanjing: An Imperial Record of the Fifth Karmapa's Visit to the Chinese Capital" (pp. 145-69, with 8 illustrations) analyzes the art historical and textual evidence emanating from the visit of an important Tibetan monk to the court of Ming Emperor Yongle in 1407. This is a delightfully complex moment in cross-cultural interchange, which was reported (both visually and textually) in very different terms in China and Tibet. In her discussion, Berger introduces a wide range of relevant material, from Tibetan and Chinese paintings, to Dunhuang cave paintings, to accounts of visions on Mount Wutai, to Chinese inscriptions. In the process she provides sensitive portrayals of a kaleidoscope of Tibetan and Chinese political and religious concerns, and toward the end of the essay even manages a re-evaluation of the Tang Confucian official Han Yu (786-824) as inflexible in "his refusal to allow that the emperor's virtue could be celebrated by any phenomenon not validated in pre-Buddhist antiquity" and blind to "a society that was drenched in Buddhism" (p. 161).

Therese Tse Bartholomew's "*Thangkas* for the Qianlong Emperor's Seventieth Birthday" (pp. 170-88, with 14 illustrations) is a well-illustrated account of a spectacular event that occurred in 1780, when the Sixth Panchen Lama traveled to Chengde (Jehol) to celebrate the Qianlong emperor's birthday. Tragically, the honored guest died of smallpox only a month or so into his visit. Although brief (perhaps the equivalent of nine pages of text, given the illustrations and notes), Bartholomew's account analyzes the circumstances and ramifications of this visit with a sensitivity similar to Berger's treatment of a similar visit during the Ming. Bartholomew's research report reads a bit like a good mystery story, since she was able to identify a number of works scattered in different collections around the world as deriving from this important imperial event.

Kenneth J. Hammond's "Beijing's Zhihua Monastery: History and Restoration in China's Capital" (pp. 189-208, with 10 illustrations) is something of an exception in terms of content, since it devotes attention not only to the important role played by Zhihua si in Ming-dynasty Buddhism but also to its reconstruction in the second half of the twentieth century. Sometimes his narration seems out of sequence, for example, the two paragraphs prior to the section heading on page 202 seem like a general conclusion and the description on page 203 of the restoration of the temple's important musical tradition from 1988 on precedes the account of the temple's reconstruction from 1957 on. Hammond's description of the temple's restoration is intriguing, but it brings up issues unrelated to the central thesis of the volume.

The following general comments apply to the volume as a whole. First, try as I might, I found no significant errors and there were very few minor problems. That I could only find four such trivial problems in the entire volume (and the second item below is an issue of documentation) is testimony to the excellence of its scholarship. First, it seems unlikely to me that *Dafu lingjiu si* means "Great Belief Numinous Vulture [Peak] Monastery," rather than "Great Buddha Numinous Vulture [Peak] Monastery" (p. 129). (The character *fu*, Morohashi no. 6948, 3:824a-c, must be a transliteration for "buddha." Also, perhaps trivially, the character *jiu* does not refer specifically to vultures but to eagles and perhaps raptors in general; its rendering to match the Sanskrit *G.rdhraku.ta* is virtually standard in Hybrid Buddhist English.)

Similarly, I have trouble believing that use of the genitive marker *zhi* (when it could easily have been omitted, as in *xx zhi si* for "xx's monastery") actually "suggests the primacy of the visionary ... over its material reproduction and memorialization as an architectural structure" (p. 155). Berger presents this approvingly as an insight by Dorothy Wong, whose work I respect greatly, but in this case I would have appreciated additional evidence to prove the point. Then, on one occasion (p. 159) *sambhogakaaya* is rendered "bodies of communal enjoyment," which is surely an over-translation of the prefix "sam." Finally, the rendering of *zhihua* as "transforming wisdom" is grammatically backward; without any reference to justify an idiosyncratic local reading it should presumably be taken as "transformations of wisdom."

Second, I do not understand why Sanskrit diacritical marks were omitted throughout this volume. Was there some consideration that they would render its contents somehow less attractive to a general audience? Given the incredible wealth of scholarly detail provided throughout, I find such a justification (if such there was) to be utterly pointless. Perhaps there was a desire not to vary from accepted museum-style references to art historical

objects (see fig. 1.1 on p. 15, for example)? But why provide marking for some long vowels and not others, nor for other special characters, resulting in such oddities as "Sutra on the Dhaaranii" (p. 31)? Also, the rendering of the same Sanskrit sounds is sometimes inconsistent, e.g., "Asoka" and "Manjusri." Third, in a similar vein, I wish that Chinese characters had been included in the annotation provided for each article. This would have made bibliographic references easier to understand and track down!

Fourth, although the contributors offer copious references to English- and Chinese-language scholarship, they seem less well acquanted with Japanese writings. This is manifested both in infrequent references to Japanese secondary sources and in the occasional omission of markings for long vowels. (See pp. 64 n47: kankoo kyookai; 67 n81: Sankiboo; 86 n18: Yuujiroo [Yujiroo?]; 187 n1: Shinshooji [?]; and 188 n24: Tookyoo.)

Fifth, although the authors have adopted a very positive tone toward the work of previous scholarship, there is one obvious exception. This is Weidner's sharp criticism, in two lengthy footnotes (pp. 139 n1 and 140 n7), of Timothy Brook's *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China.* The basic issues are that Brook "embraces the old formulation of Chinese Buddhist history as put forth by Kenneth Ch'en, according to which post-Tang Buddhism is evaluated by Tang-dynasty standards" (p. 139 n1).[3] Moreover, Brook is seen as misusing Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic capital" to generate "dichotomies [that] are misleading in regard to the [Ming-dynasty] court."[4] Both of Weidner's criticisms are valid, and they serve as a catalyst for a deeper consideration of the ramifications of her intellectual agenda regarding post-Ming Buddhism. That is, to what extent have the essays in this volume (and those in *Latter Days of the Law*) served her stated purpose? And what other types of scholarship will be required for a full defense of her thesis?

Notes

[1]. Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas and Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994.

[2]. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

[3]. Citing Brook, pp. 29-31.

[4]. See other references to Brook's work on p. 67 n88 and p. 199.

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