



David Quinter. *From Outcasts to Emperors: Shingon Ritsu and the Mañjuśrī Cult in Medieval Japan.* Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2015. 340 pp. \$165.00, cloth, ISBN 978-90-04-29339-7.

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From Outcasts to Emperors sheds new light on the Shingon Ritsu movement led by Eison (1201-90), based at Saidaiji temple in Nara. The particular focus on the cult of Mañjuśrī at Saidaiji ties together many aspects of the order's thought, the process of constructing their icons and institutions, their outreach to outcasts (*hinin*, "nonhumans"), and the highly nuanced relationships the order maintained with the warrior and court elites. Quinter demonstrates that Eison and his order were no mere reformers but radicals, active in the socioreligious developments that mark out the Kamakura period within the history of Japanese Buddhism. The author positions his work in the following way: "This book thus stands firmly within the ongoing 're-visioning' of medieval Buddhism, and the emphasis on lived religion, undertaken by Faure and other recent scholars. At the same time, I extend that re-visioning through the spotlight on the Saidaiji order and its narrative, ritual, and iconic imagining of the Mañjuśrī cult" (p. 22).

The author has clearly thought carefully about the impact this volume will make to the field. The concern he expresses that the Shingon Ritsu order has "slipped through the historiographical cracks" (p. 5) is well addressed, making skillful and appropriate use of existing Japanese scholarship. Quinter also clearly intends to contribute to our understanding of the once-ignored Kamakura period in-

novations within Nara, Shingon, and Tendai Buddhism. He is successful in these aims, but it is its accessible and profoundly scholarly treatment of primary sources that makes this work an outstanding contribution to its field.

The prologue begins with a discussion of the significance of different roles held by the medieval monks and nuns this work focuses on, reminding the reader of the importance of understanding the figures of the hagiographies as real people: "I will never reach those real people of medieval Japan. But the knowledge that there were real people behind the texts and tropes and figments and fragments keeps me going. And as real people, these monks and nuns also incorporated their multiple roles and identities in their devotions" (p. 4). Quinter adds a certain contextual depth to the work by explaining the development of his own interest in Shingon hagiography from the time of Kūkai onward. Shingon Ritsu in the Kamakura period drew his interest, he tells us, and he set about addressing a range of questions concerning the formation of the school: "How did Eison's monastic order obtain the social and material support for its wide-ranging activities? How did Eison portray his activities in his writings, and how did other people—past and present—portray them? How about the activities of other leading monks in his order ...?" (p. 5).

The cult of Mañjuśrī, particularly at the Shingon Ritsu base Saidaiji, is then introduced as the other key theme of the book. By pages 6 and 7 we are enjoying photographs of a Saidaiji “living icon” of the Shingon Ritsu founder Eison (1201-90) and the numerous scrolls and other items deposited within it. Quinter then presents us with the living statue of Mañjuśrī at Saidaiji, further developing a picture of that temple as a ritual center of great interest to any student of religion. Perhaps this important content might have been better presented first, or elsewhere, or expanded upon even at the expense of some of the preliminary discussion.

The first chapter introduces the devotional activities of Eison and his disciple Ninshō (also known as Ryōkan, 1217-1303), the two best-known members of the Saidaiji order, focusing on a period of ten years or so beginning in the late 1230s. Quinter traces their early careers and scholarly training while exploring the context of Buddhist devotional cults at the time. He gives due attention to the importance of the mother-son relationship to both these monks’ religious motivations. This recurring theme in medieval Japanese Buddhism deserves broader attention, and Quinter does it justice here.[1] He tells us that Ninshō wept as he told Eison of his vow to enshrine seven Mañjuśrī images in seven outcast communities as a memorial to his deceased mother. This first meeting of master and disciple, in 1239, was to be the starting point for the Mañjuśrī assemblies and charitable donations to outcasts practiced by the Saidaiji order. The significance of the itinerant saint Gyōki as a model, particularly for Eison, is also introduced. Over time, the association with Gyōki gave way to a greater focus on the emulation of Mañjuśrī.

Chapter 2 considers the history of Mañjuśrī assemblies in Japan and the formative influences on those held by Ninshō and Eison. Quinter points to the Mañjuśrī Parinirvana Sutra, the Mañjuśrī cult at Mt. Wutai, the cult of Gyōki which extended to understandings of the latter as an incarnation of Mañjuśrī, and Japanese state-sponsored Mañjuśrī

assemblies that began in the early ninth century as the key precedents to his subject matter. Some discussion of China is usually a reliable indicator of how interesting research on Kamakura Buddhism is going to be, and the consideration of “Motifs in the Mt. Wutai Mañjuśrī Cult” adds interest and perspective to this work. Quinter gives particular attention to the Mañjuśrī assemblies sponsored by the Kamakura shogunate in the early thirteenth century as an important background influence on the establishment of the Saidaiji order assemblies, and also explores the links between that cult and the practice of Buddhist memorial rites for mothers at that time.

The focus for Quinter’s narrative in chapter 3 is the Hannyaji Mañjuśrī, a “living” statue in Yamato. Eison and his order held large-scale ceremonies for the enshrinement of this statue in 1267 and 1269. Quinter introduces the Mañjuśrī cultic texts produced by Eison as part of these ceremonies and discusses the exoteric and esoteric qualities of the various works. Living statues are a topic of the greatest interest to most students of medieval religion, but, for me at least, it was the involvement of outcast groups of icchantikas and “*hinin*” present in the area that dominated this chapter, and much in the subsequent sections on Eison.

Quinter establishes that the Yogācāra/Hossō five-nature theory (Jp. *goshō kakubetsu*) had a significant influence on Eison. According to this categorization of beings into five types distinguished by their potentials for achieving enlightenment, the icchantikas (often equated with the *hinin* outcasts) are those incapable of achieving enlightenment because they have cut off all virtuous roots. The intransigent and deterministic nature of the original five-nature theory is subverted in Eison’s thought, however. The power of Mañjuśrī to lead all to enlightenment is available to the outcasts through their (documented) participation in the Mañjuśrī ceremonies, Quinter tells us; this being supported by and reflected in Mañjuśrī’s appear-

ance as an outcast (see p. 114) and vow not to achieve enlightenment. Here, we gain a clear picture of Eison in relation to the Buddhist norms of his day and as a distinctive voice among the various Kamakura-period Buddhist leaders who preached open access to salvation.

The relatively radical openness of the soteriology, however, contrasts with the conservatism in Eison's thought and actions regarding the perpetuation of the outcast status. As Quinter would be the first to admit, the issue of Eison's relationship with the *hinin* begs questions which invite no easy answers. Quinter is duly wary of offering anything of that nature. He tries to limit himself to what a fair-minded reading of the materials—that being one that does not deprive Eison of the benefit of the doubt—will support. He never fails to acknowledge the question of whether the *hinin* were ill-treated in their associations with Eison, and we should forgive him if he is reluctant to put the subject of years of painstaking study on trial and judge a thirteenth-century monk by twenty-first century standards. Perhaps to balance this, he also seems reluctant to mount a full defense of Eison. Nonetheless, for the benefit of nonspecialists, he might have done more to stress the point that Ritsu monks of Eison's order stood out for their commitment to provide alms, medical treatment, and Buddhist salvation to *hinin* through the late Kamakura period and during the Muromachi period.

Unavoidably, in explaining all the various matters pertaining to the ceremonies in the same section, Quinter has had to adopt a certain attitude to questions of the way in which Eison himself may have understood the ethics and semiosis they entailed. Did Eison treat the *hinin* as integral or as instrumental to the ceremonies? The association of Mañjuśrī and the *hinin* is a question of the archetypal and the particular; that is, for how long might the Mañjuśrī archetype be applied to any particular *hinin*, or group thereof? Quinter chooses to emphasize an ongoing positive concern on the part of Eison toward the *hinin*, and the power of

the ritual imagery to enhance that concern. This may be the case, but it is a case that contrasts to that made by some leading Japanese scholars (see p. 114) and requires an argument delivered in a more developed form. This is an extremely carefully edited book in terms of the restrained use of footnotes and other potential digressions, and perhaps it is in order to prevent speculation dominating the discussion further that he does not make a fuller argument here. Though the historical materials available only offer enough to form an opinion rather than draw final conclusions, treating the issue of Eison's attitude to the *hinin* in a separate section at the end of this chapter would have done greater justice to the title of the work.

Instead, the various issues are dealt with piecemeal as comments within sections of the chapter such as “the 1269 ‘Non-Discriminatory Assembly’” (p. 101), “Doctrinal Context: Icchantikas and Universal Buddhahood” (p. 107), “Eison's 1267 and 1269 Votive Texts for the Hannyaji Mañjuśrī” (p. 113), and “Icchantikas, Outcasts, and Other Transgressors” (p. 114). At each point, Quinter defends Eison in the following manner: “Passages in the 1269 text highlighting the transgressions of lepers and the disabled have received the most scholarly attention largely because of what they suggest about Eison's negative views of the very *hinin* he is trying to help: *hinin*'s current karmic conditions are retribution for their own past transgressions. Focus on such passages in the 1269 text outside the broader narrative context of both texts, however, obscures the fact that as dramatic as these examples of retribution are, they are exemplary rather than unique” (p. 115).

This is convincing enough. By Quinter's own logic of examining things in a properly broad context, however, we would understand the case better if it were presented as a whole. He returns to the *hinin* problem again in the conclusion of this chapter, acknowledging the variance among scholarly portrayals of Eison in this connection and providing very welcome arguments for his

own understanding of Eison's treatment of *hinin* as based on typical mainstream Mahayana views. This material should have been the basis of the aforementioned separate section, as it introduces much new material and not all of the conclusions it draws relate directly to the Hannyaaji Mañjuśrī and the rest of the chapter.

Chapter 4 examines fundraising activities for the restoration of Hannyaaji and its Mañjuśrī statue. Here, Quinter “suggest[s] that the ideal and practical aspects of fundraising and patronage in the Saidaiji order Mañjuśrī cult are as interpenetrating as the symbolic and material realities of the Hannyaaji ‘living Mañjuśrī’” (p. 128). He ably guides us through the ways in which cultic activities based on the statue and the fundraising campaigns were woven together in the Saidaiji order, and especially in the case of Hannyaaji temple repairs. The chapter also provides an interesting discussion of the Saidaiji order's *muen* (without attachment to social connections) status. They would refuse some donations, especially from warrior leaders, because of the social entanglements that came with them. The order nonetheless required donations, and an interesting rhetorical structure developed around those strictly disciplined, world-renouncing monks serving as esoteric ritualists and receiving ever more patronage from political elites in return.

This chapter also covers the ways in which *hinin* were rostered by the Saidaiji order, labored for the order, received material offerings as part of ceremonies, and rendered pledges (*kishōmon*) regulating their begging and other activities. In this regard, Quinter looks to a number of different time points in the mid- to late thirteenth century and takes the view that “evidence for Eison having a supervisory or controlling relationship to *hinin* is more implicit than explicit” (p. 141). This comment is, as always, entirely fair, but the decision not to deal with this issue fully in a separate section has compelled the author to add these apologias in piecemeal. Constantly reminding the reader not to

jump to conclusions about the treatment of the *hinin* fails to achieve the desired effect. This chapter left me with the impression that the *hinin*'s ritual association with Mañjuśrī and their labor for the masters of the ritual was bound up with the deliberate perpetuation of their condition.

The chapter continues with a discussion of the 1287 Votive Text penned by Eison's disciple Shinkū (1229–1316) and the Hannyaaji Mañjuśrī Attendant Statues. After introducing the background of the Mañjuśrī Pentad, Quinter elaborates on the miracle narratives relating to “the living Mañjuśrī” used by Shinkū. This is a particularly interesting section, demonstrating the range of narrative traditions that added contextual depth and reality to the living statue. The formation of karmic links through insertions into the statues of the pentad is discussed, and the connection of Mañjuśrī to *hinin* is deepened through the tale of the bodhisattva's appearance in a birthing hut; *kawaramono* (riverbed dwellers, *hinin*) we learn, were often given the task of burying placentas (p. 148).

In conclusion, Quinter notes that the dependence of the Saidaiji community on patrons meant that “truly unattached status is a polite fiction” (p. 150) and, as Janet Goodwin suggested, “expedient means” (p. 149).[2] The inevitable social and karmic connections with donors are an obvious source of tension within the structures of the community, but one which applied to practically all the leading medieval Buddhist reformers. Indeed, the main substance of this chapter concerns the forming of karmic connections through rituals, donations, statue insertions, and pious narratives.

The final two chapters provide perspective on the role of Mañjuśrī with a focus on the transmission of Shingon lineages and traditions within the Saidaiji order. Chapter 5 focuses on “Eison's Statement of Transmission to Shinkū,” a text which narrates a dream vision attributed to Eison. In this vision, Mañjuśrī himself transmits a precepts-based esoteric Dharma to Eison, and thus forward to Shinkū. Quinter places such texts within a “strate-

gy of legitimation,” which is bound up with the inheritance of a lineage. (p. 151). Though Eison himself did not name a successor, this text effectively has him do so in regard to Shinkū. Quinter recommends skepticism with regard to the work’s convenient attribution to Eison, an attribution generally accepted in previous scholarship, and questions its dating to 1269.

Quinter does an admirable job in explaining the significance of the “Statement” and examining all the materials relating to its provenance. He explains the influence of a need for legitimization within a context of increasing esotericization of the Saidaiji order after Eison’s death. The dream vision narrative expresses esoteric transmission through a consecration received direct from Mañjuśrī. This was a counterpart to the exoteric legitimacy provided through the consensus of the elders (who eventually turned to Ninshō for final arbitration) on the appointment of Shinkū, consensus among the elders being the standard for legitimacy set down in the Vinaya. Quinter develops this explanation via informative commentary on other materials which describe the favored status of Shinkū as the foremost disciple of Eison.

The section on “Myōe, Mañjuśrī, and Dream-Visions” explores the influence of fourteenth-century accounts of an esoteric transmission from Mañjuśrī to the Kegon-Shingon monk Myōe. This is some of the best scholarship in the book and is thick with references to primary materials and current scholarship. Here we gain a valuable insight into the role of Mañjuśrī visions and manifestations within esoteric lineages. Quinter accesses many interesting narratives and a great deal of bibliographic and textual detail. This section was an absolute pleasure to read and learn from, and has all the qualities of academic writing of the very highest standard.

Chapter 6 is of a similar level of excellence to chapter 5. It focuses on Monkan’s involvement in the Mañjuśrī cult and the two aspects of the image of him we find in biographical materials: as an or-

thodox Shingon and Ritsu monk, and as a heretical tantric practitioner in and developer of the Shingon Tachikawa lineage. Much of what was written about the Tachikawa school, infamous for abominable black magic, is now seen as the invention of rivals. Monkan held innatist views, and was condemned by a faction of Mt. Kōya monks who had succeeded in establishing their gradualist approach as the mainstream. This chapter offers a superb biography of Monkan, making clear and analytical references to the primary materials. Parallels are drawn here between his activities and those of Eison and his followers based on the role they gave to the Mañjuśrī cult. Here we reach a very high degree of clarity concerning Monkan’s changing status within Shingon, his association with the Saidaiji community as evidenced by his involvement with the insertions in the 1302 Mañjuśrī Pentad, and his later years outside the Shingon mainstream.

In the epilogue, Quinter returns to the vexed issue of the role of outcasts in an initial section entitled “Early Saidaiji Order Activities and Outcasts as ‘Supporters.’” By the section entitled “The Shingon Ritsu Mañjuśrī Cult and Outcasts Reconsidered,” he is finally tackling the issue head-on, bringing in a wide range of primary and tertiary materials. He also seems to qualify his earlier defenses of Eison, which may mildly confuse readers who were as exercised by this issue as I was. Moreover, he tends to provide us with comments where we would have enjoyed an argument. The rest of the chapter offers a discussion of the extent to which the Shingon Ritsu Mañjuśrī cult throughout the Kamakura period reflects exoteric and esoteric elements, and a prospectus for future research.

The final section offers nine of the key texts referred to in the book in English with explanatory notes. These materials were exceptionally clearly rendered and usefully presented. The whole section is a credit to Quinter’s research methods and his intentions as a teacher. Many scholars make translations of key works in their research, but too

many of these are never put into print, or even shared. With this last section, Quinter opens up the heart of his work to the majority of its readers.

The hardback version is on sale at €130 or \$165, while the e-book costs a marketing strategy-based \$168 plus tax. After refusing to send me a hardcover review copy, Brill sent me a “MyBook” version to review. This is an on-demand print of the e-book, provided to purchasers thereof for a further \$25. It is exactly the same as the hardcover, except that it has a nondescript paperback binding and the eleven illustrations are a smudgy black and white. My library was kind enough to buy the hardcover version, so I am pleased to report that the internal illustrations are nicely reproduced in the book proper, ten in full color. These photographs of texts, paintings, statuary and statue insertions add a great deal to the volume, giving the reader a good sense of some of the materials involved in the rituals.

This work is a necessary addition to any library on premodern Japan. For specialists, it will be required reading for many years to come, but I hope that it will gain a wide readership outside of its immediate field. The author has done much to make his work accessible to an interdisciplinary readership, and the topic is a very rich one in that regard. I have labored my criticism of the way the *hinin* issue is presented, but many will prefer Quinter’s format. The necessary discussion of that issue is certainly present in the work, and the reader is free to read through it in any order they may choose. I recommend this volume unreservedly.

Notes

[1]. See, for instance, Hank Glassman, *The Religious Construction of Motherhood in Medieval Japan* (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2001).

[2]. Janet Goodwin, *Alms and Vagabonds: Buddhist Temples and Popular Patronage in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1994).

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