

JAPAN STUDIES REVIEW

Volume XXIV
2020

Interdisciplinary Studies of Modern Japan

Editors

Steven Heine
María Sol Echarren

Editorial Board

Michaela Mross, Stanford University
John A. Tucker, East Carolina University
Ann Wehmeyer, University of Florida
Hitomi Yoshio, Waseda University

Copy and Production

María Sol Echarren
Maytinee Kramer

JAPAN STUDIES REVIEW
VOLUME TWENTY-FOURTH
2020

A publication of Florida International University
and the Southern Japan Seminar

CONTENTS

Editors' Introduction	i
Re: Subscriptions, Submissions, and Comments	ii
ARTICLES	
Strategizing Asia: Japan's Values-Based Diplomacy Amid Great Powers' Competing Visions for Broader Asia <i>B. Bryan Barber</i>	3
How Many Bodies Does it Take to Make a Buddha? Dividing the Trikāya Among Founders of Japanese Buddhism <i>Victor Forte</i>	35
Behind the Shoji: Sex Trafficking of Japanese Citizens <i>Rachel Serena Levine</i>	61
The Infiltrated Self in Murakami Haruki's "TV People" <i>Masaki Mori</i>	85
ESSAYS	
The Role of Compassion in Actualizing Dōgen's Zen <i>George Wrisley</i>	111
How Journalists' Bias Can Distort the Truth: A Case Study of Japan's Military Seizure of Korea in 1904–1905 <i>Daniel A. Métraux</i>	137
BOOK REVIEWS	
<i>Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan</i> By Jacqueline I. Stone Reviewed by Elaine Lai	149

*The Burden of the Past: Problems of Historical Perception
in Japan-Korea Relations*

By Kan Kimura, trans. Marie Speed

Reviewed by Jason Morgan

154

*Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures
in Ancient Japan*

By Bryan D. Lowe

Reviewed by Justin Peter McDonnell

158

Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye

By Steven Heine

Reviewed by Jundo Cohen

162

EDITORS/CONTRIBUTORS

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the twenty-fourth volume of the *Japan Studies Review* (JSR), an annual peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the Asian Studies Program at Florida International University. JSR remains an outlet for publications related to Southern Japan Seminar events and encourages submissions from a wide range of scholars in the field. The 2020 issue contains scholarly works on cross-disciplinary perspectives in contemporary and traditional Japanese studies.

Four articles are included in this volume. The first article is a study by B. Bryan Barber on Japan foreign policy titled, "Strategizing Asia: Japan's Values-Based Diplomacy Amid Great Powers' Competing Visions for Broader Asia," disclosing the challenges that Japan is facing in the twenty-first century while approaching broader Asia with a values-based diplomacy and the opposing frameworks by other great political powers. The next article, "How Many Bodies Does it Take to Make a Buddha? Dividing the Trikāya Among Founders of Japanese Buddhism" by Victor Forte, compares the sectarian perspectives of major premodern Japanese Buddhism founders (Kūkai, Shinran, and Dōgen) to the philosophy of the late Indian Mahāyāna *Trikāya* notion of the three bodies of the Buddha.

The third article is "Behind the Shoji Screen: Sex Trafficking of Japanese Citizens" by Rachel Serena Levine, which exposes the detrimental societal issues of Japanese sex trafficking victims and the consequences of Japan's cultural and governmental views on the exploitation of women. The last article, "The Infiltrated Self in Murakami Haruki's 'TV People'" by Masaki Mori, provides a literary study based on the 1989 short story by Murakami Haruki, exploring the influence of technology on humans and its sociocultural implications on the self.

This issue also includes two essays. George Wrisley, in "The Role of Compassion in Actualizing Dōgen's Zen," provides a comprehensive philosophical analysis of the Buddhist teachings of thirteenth-century Japanese Zen Master Dōgen based on the bodhisattva ideal in Mahayana Buddhism. Daniel Métraux, in "How Journalists' Bias Can Distort the Truth: A Case Study of Japan's Military Seizure of Korea in 1904–1905," explores the historical discrepancies regarding the reports on the Japanese seizure of Korea during the Russo-Japanese War from the Western lens of six Americans and one Canadian journalist.

There are four book reviews dealing with a variety of topics. Jacqueline I. Stone's *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan* is reviewed by Elaine Lai; Kan Kimura's *The Burden of the Past: Problems of Historical Perception in Japan-Korea Relations* (trans. Marie Speed) is reviewed by Jason Morgan; Bryan D. Lowe's *Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan* is reviewed by Justin Peter McDonnell; and Steven Heine's *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* is reviewed by Jundo Cohen.

Re: Submissions, Subscriptions, and Comments

Submissions for publication, whether articles, essays, translations or book reviews, should be made in electronic formats, preferably Word for Windows via email attachment (please inquire about other formats). The editor and members of the editorial board will referee all submissions.

Annual subscriptions are \$45.00 (US). Please send a check or money order payable to *Florida International University* to:

c/o Steven Heine, Professor of Religious Studies and History
Director of the Asian Studies Program
Florida International University
Modesto A. Maidique Campus, SIPA 505
Miami, FL 33199

The FIU Asian Studies Program office number is 305-348-1914. Submissions for publication should be sent to asian@fiu.edu.

Visit our website at <http://asian.fiu.edu/jsr>. PDF versions of past volumes are available online. All comments and feedback on the publications appearing in *Japan Studies Review* are welcome.

ISSN: 1550-0713

Articles

**STRATEGIZING ASIA:
JAPAN'S VALUES-BASED DIPLOMACY AMID GREAT POWERS'
COMPETING VISIONS FOR BROADER ASIA**

*B. Bryan Barber
Nazarbayev University*

In November 2006, Japanese Foreign Minister Asō Tarō outlined an expansion of Japan's foreign policy, which he called the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity." Japan's foreign policy had long stood on two key pillars: the Security Alliance with the United States, and relations with neighboring states in East Asia. The "Arc," however, would form a new pillar of diplomacy for Tokyo in addition to the existing two pillars, and also become the most lucid case for values-based diplomacy elaborated by Tokyo in the post-war era. In his speech on the new pillar, Asō emphasized: "'universal values' such as democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law, and the market economy."¹ He colorfully added:

many countries are now walking down the road to "peace and happiness through economic prosperity and democracy." And, as I am fond of saying, this is exactly the road that Japan herself walked down after the war.

As to Japan's role in these developments, Asō analogized that "Japan will serve as an 'escort runner' to support these countries that have just started into this truly never-ending marathon."

There is a double sense to this depiction of an Arc: first, it is a sanguine recasting of the expression, "Arc of Instability," frequently uttered by US diplomats in the first George W. Bush administration, but second, the new pillar to Japan's foreign policy would emphasize relations with states geographically spanning across Eurasia. Asō elaborated, "there are the successfully budding democracies that line the outer rim of the Eurasian continent, forming an arc."² He added:

¹ Asō Tarō, "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons," Speech, delivered at the Japan Institute of International Affairs, Tokyo, November 2006. Transcript available at www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/enzetsu/18/easo_1130.html (Japanese).

² Ibid.

take a look around the outer edge of Eurasia – just follow that line all the way around. This belt has seen great changes upon the end of the Cold War as the curtain was being drawn on the confrontation between East and West.

Throughout the speech, Asō listed an extensive range of regions included in the Arc: Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasus, continuing to include Turkey and all of Eastern Europe. Asō concluded his speech with the commitment, “[i]n assisting countries as they take these steps forward, Japan aims to usher in a world order that is tranquil and peaceful.”

A decade later, in January 2016, Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō reiterated Japan’s values-based diplomacy in a speech at the Shared Values and Democracy in Asia Symposium. Abe opened with “Asia is now poised to become a champion of democracy,” pointing out that “Asia’s democracy has a distinct mark engraved in it from ancient times, reflecting the values we have held dear for generations.”³ Abe outlined, “Asian democracy as uniquely imparting values such as ‘lovingkindness,’ ‘benevolence,’ and an ‘utmost priority on harmony,’” specifically citing the roots of these values from Asian religious traditions: Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam.

The new pillar to Japan’s foreign policy is, indeed, a significant development from what was both a constrained and myopic foreign policy for a state of such global economic influence and substantial diplomatic potential. Asō’s pillar of an Arc of Freedom and Prosperity and Abe’s Asian Democracy speeches illustrate a significant widening of Japan’s foreign policy, which is an attempt to fortify Japan’s role in Asia. Systematically, this can be explained mainly by the developments of the great powers in the region. The Western-led world order has come into question, particularly after the 2008 financial crisis and the increase of populist challenges to liberalism within Western democracies, leaving Asian states to look elsewhere, and in particular, at their own developed

³ Abe Shinzō, “Address by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe at the ‘Shared Values and Democracy in Asia’ Symposium,” Speech, delivered at the Shared Values and Democracy in Asia Symposium, Tokyo, January 2016. Transcript available at www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/s_sa/sw/page3_001543.html (Japanese).

states as models instead.⁴ Meanwhile, Japan has been pressured by the US since the first Gulf War to take a more active role in diplomacy and collective security in Asia. Additionally, the rise of a non-democratic China encourages Japan to seek to strengthen relations with states along China's periphery, and democratic norms are a key strategy and useful narrative to counterbalance a rising China.

Many in Asia notably challenge the Western-led world order and the Western liberal democratic model and are struggling to reconcile modernization with their social milieu. Tokyo has taken note. Combined with this, in the aforementioned speeches, there is a view of Japanese exceptionalism in Asia illustrated, and the possibility of Tokyo leading Asian states (as "an 'escort runner'") towards the development of Asian democracies. In the early twentieth century, Japan was referred to as a model for "modernization without Westernization"; in the early twenty-first century, Japanese leaders are positioning themselves as a model in Asia for "*democratization* without Westernization." Combining this with the need for overseas export markets and energy imports, and responding to the rise of China, Japan has added the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity as a third pillar to its foreign policy. Japan is leveraging its identity to Asia to bolster economic security, thus tying normativity to material concerns.

Japan is undoubtedly not alone with a vision for Asia, and when Japan's vision is put into policy, strategy, and definitive action, it contends with visions, policies, strategies, and actions by great powers on the continent. This paper examines the visions for Asia in the twenty-first century. It examines the structural dynamics which Japan's vision of a values-based Arc has to contend with, but it also clarifies how this vision interacts with other visions by great powers in terms of how they compete in both ideational and material realms, and also where they may complement each other. The great powers who have their own visions for Asia, which interact most unmistakably with Japan's own vision, are China, Russia, and the US. Each of these powers has its own pronounced framework which encapsulates its vision: for China, it is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); for Russia, it is the neo-Eurasianist school of thought; for the US, it is the Pivot to Asia. Together with Japan's values-based diplomacy, initially labeled the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity by Asō Tarō

⁴ Bahadır Pehlivan Türk, "Turkey-Japan: Dialogue on Global Affairs," *Perceptions* 21/1 (2016), 3.

in 2006, four frameworks for Asia provide windows into each power's vision for the continent. BRI is more clearly enunciated as a development strategy; neo-Eurasianism is more akin to a prevailing purview held by many in the Kremlin; consistency on the Pivot to Asia is questionable in the transition from an Obama to Trump administration. Nonetheless, juxtaposing these four elucidates visions. How can Japan compete with these? What are its viable advantages and disadvantages?

This paper proceeds by briefly outlining the Chinese, Russian, and American visions for Asia, respectively, to contrast them with the aforementioned Japanese vision. The classical geopolitical framework for analysis is applied to tie visions to strategy, and thus, tie the ideational to material. This study then juxtaposes the visions, analyzing intertextual connections to Japan's values-based Arc. Through this juxtaposition, the dynamics of twenty-first century Asia are better understood, the ideational competition among great powers in Asia is revisited, and Tokyo's maneuverability within this milieu for strategy is clarified.

China: Belt and Road Initiative

Talk of China as a "rising power" is shortsighted; sure, it is rising after experiencing its "Century of Humiliation," but with the longest historical record of any modern state, these events were a blip in its historical record. Like the Westphalian system of nation-states and the Islamic *Ummah*, China has its own vision of world order from antiquity: the suzerainty – an order of concentric circles, with the Emperor of China at the center of civilization. China's order was both "hierarchical and theoretically universal."⁵ Moving out next is China proper, then the tributary states – smaller kingdoms which recognized the imperial authority and, in return for paying tribute, gained security. Outside of this system were the barbarians – those who did not recognize the Emperor's heavenly mandate. Along with China, many of the tributary kingdoms in this suzerain system also emerged into modern nation-states, namely the Koreas, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar.

This is consistent with China's worldview during the empire and today, even though China's worldview has gone through substantial transformations in the twentieth century. "China today is consolidating land

⁵ Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (New York: Penguin Group, 2014), x.

borders and beginning to turn outward.”⁶ While the Emperor is no longer part of the system, Beijing is at the center, politically, and the concentric circles remain, exemplified in policy initiatives such as the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the first island chain and second island chain military doctrine – a two-step Monroe Doctrine of the Western Pacific. Beijing, and to an extent, Han China, is now at the center of the system. Next is “greater China,” which includes the minority populations mostly found in peripheral provinces, special administrative regions, and autonomous regions – all peoples and territories within the modern nation-state. Then, the modern version of tributary states – those bandwagoning with the rising China, and thus, those adhering to this new (revived) order. Here is where BRI comes into play. China is attempting to (re)construct an order in Asia with it at the center based on its long-held model of a suzerainty. It is no coincidence that China, in Chinese, is the “middle country” – in the middle of this system of concentric – *Sinocentric* circles. The vision is embedded directly within the name.

How is China reviving its suzerain system in a twenty-first century Asia of Westphalian nation-states in which many have concerns over development, poverty, energy resources, nuclear proliferation, and religion-inspired violence? Indeed, it is a very different Asia since China slipped from its powerful role in the nineteenth century. BRI came about in late 2013, during the first few months of Xi Jinping’s presidency. In September 2013, Xi first mentioned a “Silk Road Economic Belt” while on a visit to Kazakhstan’s Nazarbayev University. The idea was to develop transportation infrastructure projects which would facilitate an “economic belt” to link China to Central Asia, Russia, and on to Iran, Turkey, and ultimately Germany and the Netherlands.⁷ The *one road* component was elicited a month later in Indonesia: a maritime linkage of southeast China with Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and by great extension, Africa and Europe. Both ideas were presented in vague terms – especially the “Maritime Silk Road.” Was the Road merely a desire to strengthen trade

⁶ Robert Kaplan, “The Geography of Chinese Power: How Far Will China Reach on Land and at Sea?,” *Foreign Affairs* 89/3 (2010), 22.

⁷ Peter Ferdinand, “Westward Ho – the China Dream and ‘One Belt, One Road’: Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping,” *International Affairs* 92/4 (2016), 949–950.

logistics through maritime channels in the South China Sea, Indian Ocean, and elsewhere?

There is some indication that these two policy initiatives were not initially intended to be combined, and were, in fact, competing directions for the Asia strategy being deliberated among political elites in Beijing.⁸ Details on both the Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road emerged gradually throughout 2014, and by early 2015 they were merged into a broader framework. The name, “Belt and Road,” or “One Belt, One Road,” comes from the Chinese, “*yīdài yīlù*” (一带一路), an expression fashioned as a traditional Chinese four-character idiom (*chéngyǔ*), which first appeared in 2015 to discuss the two initiatives in tandem.⁹

In its first five years, the term has unquestionably maintained its currency.¹⁰ The framework is broad, however, and necessitates a great amount of commitment and risk for Beijing. Indeed, the risk involved in BRI is characteristic of Xi’s foreign policy, and how it differs from his more risk-averse predecessor, Hu Jintao.¹¹ Moreover, BRI has tremendous implications for Asia, China, the CCP, and Xi. Ferdinand points out it “potentially involves over 60 countries with a combined population of over 4 billion people, whose markets currently account for about one-third of global GDP.”¹² Some have called BRI a Chinese Marshall Plan. The desire to analogize is tempting, but the economic scale and geographic expanse of BRI truly dwarf the Marshall Plan.¹³ Yet, China is still a middle-income country, which differs considerably from the US in the late 1940s. It is also not motivated by an ideological objective. Unequivocally, there are normative interests in BRI, but the Marshall Plan was motivated by the need for quick action to stabilize the economies of Western Europe and prevent Soviet communist expansion into the region. Objectives were

⁸ Tim Summers, “China’s ‘New Silk Roads’: Sub-National Regions and Networks of Global Political Economy,” *Third World Quarterly* 37/9 (2015), 1629.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1630.

¹⁰ Albeit, why the “road” is the maritime linkage and not the overland route can be baffling for English readers.

¹¹ Ferdinand, “Westward Ho – the China Dream and ‘One Belt, One Road,’” 942.

¹² *Ibid.*, 950.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 951.

clearer, as it involved war-torn countries, and again, while large, encompassed a much smaller scope of nations with a smaller array of challenges.

Is China equipped for BRI? Can it spearhead an array of infrastructure projects – the likes of which have never been seen – spanning across Asia, Europe, and Africa, while GDP per capita at home still hovers around \$10,000 – lower than the global average, and economic growth has been slowing for years? The leadership readily admits, as Xi did in 2013, “China remains the world’s largest developing country, and it faces many difficulties and challenges on its road to progress.”¹⁴ Here the Chinese government, itself, explains BRI:

aims to promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multitiered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries.¹⁵

Xi Jinping was quoted as saying, “China welcomes all countries along the routes and in Asia, as well as our friends and partners around the world to take an active part in these endeavors.”¹⁶ The language used by Chinese political leadership as well as official documents present a vision with objectives and a geographic scope, which is so broad it is boundless.

BRI started with Beijing committing to invest around \$1 trillion in infrastructural and transportation development spanning Western China –

¹⁴ Issac Stonefish, “Is China Still a ‘Developing’ Country?” *Foreign Policy*, September 25, 2014 (accessed May 12, 2020, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/25/is-china-still-a-developing-country/>).

¹⁵ “Full Text: Action Plan on the Belt and Road Initiative,” *The State Council, The People’s Republic of China*, March 30, 2015 (accessed May 12, 2020, http://english.gov.cn/archive/publications/2015/03/30/content_281475080249035.htm).

¹⁶ “China Unveils Action Plan on Belt and Road Initiative,” *The State Council, The People’s Republic of China*, March 28, 2015 (accessed May 12, 2020, http://english.gov.cn/news/top_news/2015/03/28/content_281475079055789.htm).

the first plank to the “belt” in BRI.¹⁷ The largest set of completed projects thus far is the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which connects western China to Pakistan’s Gwadar Port on the Indian Ocean.¹⁸ According to the *Council on Foreign Relations*, as of early 2019, China had already spent an estimated \$200 billion on BRI projects.¹⁹ Also significant is China’s critical role in setting up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB): a financial institution Beijing created seemingly with the intention to circumvent constraints of the existing financial order in Asia provided by the Japan-US-controlled Asian Development Bank (ADB) and exert more influence across the region. By the end of 2019, China had committed \$30 billion for AIIB, and coupled with additional commitments made outside AIIB to the Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road totaling tens-of-billions of dollars, Beijing is demonstrating it is willing to make a colossal financial commitment to modifying order in Asia.²⁰ Shambaugh points out that “even during the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union did not spend anywhere near as much as China is spending today.”²¹

BRI and all that has come with it has at its heart a deeply rooted Sinocentric view of Asia. Chinese discuss the period from 1839 to 1949 as the “Century of Humiliation.” China was an empire at the center of a universal suzerainty, yet powers that came from outside the suzerain system destroyed that order. A country that viewed itself at the center of universal order was weakened, occupied, and plundered by “barbarians.” BRI is a

¹⁷ Ferdinand, “Westward Ho – the China Dream and ‘One Belt, One Road,’” 950.

¹⁸ Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 172.

¹⁹ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, “China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, February 21, 2019 (accessed May 12, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>).

²⁰ “Members and Prospective Members of the Bank,” *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank*, December 31, 2019 (accessed May 12, 2020, <https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/governance/members-of-bank/index.html>).

²¹ David Shambaugh, “China’s Soft-Power Push – The Search for Respect,” *Foreign Affairs* 94/4 (2015) (accessed May 12, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-06-16/china-s-soft-power-push>).

restoration of that universal order held for millennia. Beijing's vision of Asia is much like it was long ago – with Beijing at the center. BRI is a strategic resuscitation of what is just.

Mardell argues that “Beijing imagines a continent built by China over the course of decades, setting the stage for China to become a, if not *the*, great power by 2049.”²² In scope and ambition, this is correct. No other vision for Asia comes close to BRI, and because of this, it sets the bar for others who want to compete. Regardless of the competition, BRI is considerably audacious for a country still struggling with its own domestic development issues. Yet, is it poised to lead the way with development and integration across the eastern hemisphere? Chinese officials have admitted off the record that they expect to lose 30 percent on their investments in Central Asia and as much as 80 percent in Pakistan!²³ It is no exaggeration to state the CCP is gambling its own existence on the outcomes of BRI.

Russia: Neo-Eurasianism

While not nearly as longstanding as China's Sinocentric conceptualization of Asia, Russia's neo-Eurasianism also has deep roots that have persisted in Russian thought. Like Latin Americanism, Europeanism, or Asianism, it is a geographic ideology – a *Weltanschauung*, or, more precisely, a “*Eurasienschauung*.” Naturally, as a transcontinental state with more territory in Europe than any other European country and more territory in Asia than any other Asian country, Russia is at the center of this conceptualization. Russia is not simply in the middle between Europe and Asia; rather, it is at the center of Eurasia.

Russian Eurasianist thought originated in the late nineteenth century with a movement among Slavophiles to reject European identity.²⁴ Was the Russian Empire to be “a European state with Asian colonies, or was it a special Eurasian state?”²⁵ These Orientalizers (*vostochniki*) were

²² Jacob Mardell, “One Belt, One Road, and One Big Competition,” *The Diplomat*, December 15, 2017 (accessed May 12, 2020, <https://the-diplomat.com/2017/12/one-belt-one-road-and-one-big-competition/>).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Charles Clover, “Dreams of the Eurasian Heartland – The Reemergence of Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs* 78/2 (1999), 9.

²⁵ Marlène Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 3.

the first to grapple with redefining Russian identity beyond a Slavic identity, as Russia had expanded its territories into the Caucasus and across Central Asia and Siberia, while at the same time falling behind an industrialized Western Europe. A more detailed manifestation of the concept would not emerge, however, until the 1920s. At this time, the Soviets gave up on an imminent worldwide proletariat revolution subsequent to the Bolshevik Revolution, turning their discourses to Soviet distinctiveness – a notion that appealed to many in the Communist Party as well as dissidents in exile.²⁶ The Eurasianists tied Russian people to the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia, whom they claimed originated in ancient Persia, and followed a more collectivist political and economic model that contrasted with European individualism, which the Soviets could appreciate.²⁷ Where the two notably differed was on religion: the Eurasianists emphasized the positive role Orthodox Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism played in Eurasia, and in Russia, specifically.

Eurasianism, as a paradigm, is ideologically murky, but interestingly, it has allowed the permanency of geography to drive ideology: “the Eurasianists suggested that Russia should unlearn the West and perceive itself *geographically*: History, they argued, is the mode in which Europe expresses its identity; geography is Russia’s.”²⁸ Russia is thus defined by its location, its size, and its land-based power: “An interest in geopolitics is therefore inherent in Eurasianism; geography is a *scientific* means of restoring *political* power.”²⁹

Over the course of the mid-twentieth century, Eurasianists developed a large body of literature, but it was the writing of one Eurasianist, Lev Gumilev, which was most favored when the paradigm was revived by neo-Eurasianists in the 1990s. Gumilev’s works of the 1960s to 1980s were received mainly with suspicion, if not banned altogether at times by the Soviets. *Glasnost* allowed for more public access to Gumilev’s work and coincided with rising ethno-nationalism across the Soviet Union. Bassin argues, “[i]t is difficult to overestimate Gumilev’s importance for

²⁶ Ibid., 18.

²⁷ “What the Kremlin is Thinking,” *Foreign Affairs* 93/4 (2014) (accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-06-16/what-kremlin-thinking>).

²⁸ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 31.

²⁹ Ibid., 34.

the late- and post-Soviet revival of Eurasianism.”³⁰ Since his death in 1992, Gumilev has reached cult status with “his words...perceived as dogmas that are above criticism.”³¹

Gumilev’s work, as well as the work of other scholars, such as Aleksander Andreevich Prokhanov, contributed to a revival of Eurasianism, or “neo-Eurasianism,” which calls for Russia “to fulfill the crucial mission of connecting – and pacifying” both the East and West.³² Japanese writer Sawabe Yūji describes neo-Eurasian thought: “Russia is considered a ‘hyper-nation-state,’ consisting not only of Slavic peoples, but also Turkic, Iranian, Mongol, and several other peoples, and it is destined to become an inevitable empire.”³³ The ideology was soon picked up among the political elites in the early 1990s and came to dominate thought in Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁴ In the late 1990s, former Foreign Affairs Minister and Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov emphasized Russian relations in Asia and implemented several neo-Eurasianist ideas into Russia’s foreign policy.³⁵ Today, neo-Eurasianist thought is evident in the legislature, the Defense Ministry, and even the “military elite have also caught Eurasian fever.”³⁶

The currency (neo-)Eurasianist thought has attained among both the post-Soviet intelligentsia and the contemporary political elites is historically unmatched. Prominent advocates today include veteran nationalist politician and LDPR leader Vladimir Zhirinovski, and political scientist and author Aleksandr Dugin.³⁷ In the twenty-first century, neo-Eurasianist thought has conspicuously made its impact upon Russian grand strategy. In 2001, Putin stated, “Russia has always felt herself to be a

³⁰ Mark Bassin, *The Gumilev Mystique: Biopolitics, Eurasianism, and the Construction of Community in Modern Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 212.

³¹ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 10.

³² Simona E. Merati, *Muslims in Putin’s Russia* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 32.

³³ Sawabe Yūji, *Zukai: ichiban yasashii chiseigaku no hon* [Diagrams: The Most Comprehensible Book on Geopolitics] (Tokyo: Saizusha, 2017), 91.

³⁴ Bassin, *The Gumilev Mystique*, 218.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Clover, “Dreams of the Eurasian Heartland,” 9.

³⁷ Dugin’s work is discussed in greater detail later in this study.

Eurasian country. Never have we forgotten that the greatest part of Russian territory is in Asia.”³⁸ Neo-Eurasianists applauded when in 2005, Putin acknowledged that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century. Putin has also publicly praised the work of Gumilev. On a visit to Kazakhstan in 2000, Putin commented:

His scholarly works are a brilliant contribution not only to thinking about history but also to the assertion of the centuries-old community and interrelation between the peoples who inhabit the vast expanses of Eurasia, from the Baltics and the Carpathians to the Pacific Ocean. The instructive potential of Eurasianism is especially significant today.³⁹

Neo-Eurasianism is not inevitably a hard-lined purview involving Russian ethno-nationalism and geopolitical expansionism. The school of thought has come in various incarnations from writers occasionally contradicting one another, in particular regarding Russia’s role, and it can be interpreted in softer forms. Some formulate it with a rightwing, Orthodox Christian worldview, while others have observed ties developing between this rightwing movement and political Islam in Russia as a moral-based coalition.⁴⁰ Consistent in all forms of neo-Eurasianism is the desire “to build a larger geopolitical axis of allies – such as Germany, Iran, and Japan – to resist the American influences.”⁴¹ Mainstream political elites are more attentive to this basic principle of neo-Eurasianism than to the more radical ancillary points. Within this principle, however, lie the policies that can be seen over the last two decades in the form of Eurasian integration.

Eurasian integration is not an attempt by neo-Eurasianists to revive the Soviet Union, but it is a way to ensure that a multipolar world exists, and Eurasia can integrate, develop, and prosper like the EU or US, but

³⁸ As cited in Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 7.

³⁹ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁰ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*; Stefan Wiederkehr, *Die Eurasische Bewegung* [The Eurasian Movement] (Cologne, Germany: Böhlau Verlag, 2007); and Merati, *Muslims in Putin’s Russia*.

⁴¹ Andrei Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 2013), 64.

“morally” and “justly” so. Conceptualizations of Eurasian integration started immediately in the ashes of the Soviet Union with the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and continued with the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC), which gave way to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015. Deepening and widening the integration of the EAEU is a stated goal from the Kremlin, but thus far, it is only considered open to post-Soviet republics (and self-declared independent territories within said republics, such as South Ossetia). Sawabe calls the EAEU the “embodiment” of the neo-Eurasianists’ vision of a new form of Russian Empire.⁴² CIS and EEC illustrate that Moscow’s conceptualization of neo-Eurasianism is the foremost integration of the “lost” territories – the former Soviet republics. Like the EU with NATO, EAEU is complemented with a security institution – the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). While currently limited to post-Soviet republics, the CSTO has expressed willingness to allow other Eurasian states, such as Iran, to apply for membership.

Neo-Eurasianism has a two-tiered conceptualization of Eurasia: there are the former Soviet republics which must be reintegrated first, then a broader Eurasia inclusive of Turkey, Iran, India, China, and Japan. The difficulty in exerting Russian influence beyond its “near abroad” is seen in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO includes four former Soviet republics in Central Asia, Russia, China, and since 2017, India and Pakistan. Several other Asian states are being considered for admission. SCO is certainly a formidable organization that now represents a significant portion of the world’s population, the global economy, and Asia’s landmass, but therein lies the problem for the hardline neo-Eurasianists: Russia’s sway is overwhelmed by the inclusion of a more populous and economically robust China, as well as the more populous states, India and Pakistan. It could be interpreted as a forum colluding to keep American influence out of Central Asia, and in that regard, it has been a success. The US applied for observer status to SCO in 2005, yet was swiftly rejected.⁴³

If Russia is content with a Eurasia where Moscow exerts political influence over the former Soviet republics, yet Asia beyond the near abroad aligns policies with Moscow to ensure a multipolar order in Asia, then this

⁴² Sawabe, *Zukai*, 91.

⁴³ Tsygankov, *Russia’s Foreign Policy*, 190.

vision of Asia is more palpable than Moscow exerting political influence across the vast continent. In greater Asia, Russia must cooperate with other powers, namely China, to ensure the multipolar order it envisages. Yet, as Kotkin remarks, “China has openly and vigorously been building its own Greater Eurasia, from the South China Sea through inner Asia to Europe, at Russia’s expense and with its cooperation.”⁴⁴ This contestation inevitably becomes more intense in Central Asia because it is within both the Kremlin’s near abroad and the first line of China’s Silk Road Economic Belt outside of its own borders. Russia and China can agree to limit the US influence in Asia, but Central Asia is a pivotal overlapping zone of influence for Russia and China.

The United States: Pivot to Asia

In late 2011, the Obama Administration announced a “pivot” in US grand strategy toward Asia.⁴⁵ It was soon followed up with plans to increase the marine presence in Australia, a slight increase in the number of US troops in South Korea, the basing of more military hardware in Singapore, and enhancing the defense alignment with the Philippines. The US also increased defense cooperation discussions with Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaysia, and has increased the number of Malabar naval exercises together with Japan and India.⁴⁶ In economics, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) would deepen interdependence among the US and states across the Asian-Pacific region.

⁴⁴ Stephen Kotkin, “Russia’s Perpetual Geopolitics – Putin Returns to the Historical Pattern,” *Foreign Affairs* 95/3 (2016), 2.

⁴⁵ After 2011, Obama administration officials chose to rebrand the new grand strategy as “realignment” rather than “pivot.” It was suggested that “pivot” was “both inaccurate and misleading” (see Wu Xinbo, “Cooperation, Competition and Shaping the Outlook,” *International Affairs* 92/4 [2016]: 849), but in actuality, it is more accurate and revealing of the underlying vision which drove the announcement. “Realignment” is evasive of directions and intentions: “pivot” is clearer. It provides an honest window into the underlying strategy, and the attempt to rebrand it as a “realignment” was too little too late (the attempt to rebrand was revealing).

⁴⁶ Evan Resnik, “The Obama Rebalance and US Policy towards China,” in *United States Engagement in the Asia Pacific: Perspectives from Asia*, eds. Yoichiro Sato and Tan See Seng (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2015), 13.

There are a number of issues with the Pivot strategy, many of which were unforeseen at the time. Firstly, a pivot motion necessitates shifting the direction faced while maintaining one's point on the ground. This is consistent with the US having maintained its focus on the greater Middle East for the better part of four decades. After the British declared they would pull out all military forces east of the Suez in 1971, the US retreat from Vietnam in 1973, the subsequent oil shocks of 1973 and 1979, and the Iranian hostage crisis, the 1980 Carter Doctrine was a de facto "pivot to the Middle East," and away from East Asia. Subsequent military actions in Libya, Lebanon, and Syria, and full-scale wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iraq, again, solidified and justified this pivot, as did the threats from religious terrorism originating from this region. From Washington's perspective, this is a pivot from its east to its west – a pivot from an Atlantic view of Eurasia to a Pacific view. Part of the 2011 Pivot announcements included the plan to shift naval distribution from 50:50 capabilities in the Atlantic and Pacific to 60 percent in the Pacific and 40 percent in the Atlantic by the end of the decade.⁴⁷

With any pivot, one is turning his or her head from what had garnered attention before. Did the Middle East lose its significance, or did Asia simply become more pressing? Both are plausible, given shifts in American geostrategic interests. Candidates Obama in 2008 and Trump in 2016 both committed to ending combat operations in the region. Moreover, relevant to the long-term strategic goals of the Carter Doctrine, the shale energy revolution of the 2010s has resulted in the US becoming one of the world's largest producers of crude oil and natural gas, meaning Persian Gulf fossil fuel supplies as less significant to Americans. US allies remain dependent, but how long are Americans willing to continue securing the supply of oil from the Persian Gulf? Conflict remains in the Middle East, as do concerns over Islamist terrorism, but Middle East war fatigue has settled deep with Americans, and without seeing a direct benefit to securing energy supplies from the Persian Gulf, Washington is looking to loosen commitments, which was evident in January 2020 when Trump called for NATO to burden share regional stability. A pivot always results in one's previous focal point now becoming either in the peripheral vision, or a blind spot altogether, and this is now manifesting in US policy.

⁴⁷ Resnik, "The Obama Rebalance and US Policy towards China," 13.

The second problem with the Pivot is that there is unmistakably a *panda in the room*: Beijing cannot help but sense that Washington's Pivot is a grand strategy precisely aimed at taking advantage of China's geopolitical insecurities. To Beijing, the Pivot is "a constraint on China's growing power in the region."⁴⁸ This may have been entirely the point. To be sure, the Obama administration continued to reiterate that the Pivot was "a key initiative to ensure sustainable growth and development for countries in the Asia Pacific region."⁴⁹ Yet, the subsequent policy announcements under the purview of the Pivot were by and large military-based. Moreover, the progress being made is among states along China's periphery, many of which have longstanding territorial disputes and security concerns regarding a rising China, such as Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and India. If indeed the Pivot were for the purposes of supporting sustainable economic growth, economic cooperation between Washington and Beijing would be the focus, and in fact, the point of departure for the grand strategy. Washington would also put itself in the diplomatic position to intermediate a reconciliation between China and Japan, and between China and India. However, outside of defense policy, in economics, the only evidence of a Pivot was the failed TPP and some slapdash attempts to counter BRI investment opportunities, which segues to the third problem.

How has the Pivot to Asia sustained from one presidential administration to the next? While in 2011 it did garner wide bipartisan support, it was the brainchild of the Obama administration. By withdrawing the US from TPP, Trump withdrew from the only significant development under the Pivot, which actually related to sustainable economic growth. If the only key facets of the Pivot are defense policies, these do not directly relate to sustainable economic growth. Yet, was sustainable economic growth ever the true objective? Was it Obama's objective? Is it Trump's objective? Trump has never openly renounced the Pivot; rather, his administration has embraced it, albeit with a modified conceptualization. The December 2017 "National Security Strategy" and January 2018 "National Defense Strategy" both express a priority to deepen and widen

⁴⁸ Li Mingjiang and Shoon Ming Hui, "China's Changing Responses to US Regional Policy in Asia Pacific," in *United States Engagement in the Asia Pacific: Perspectives from Asia*, eds. Yoichiro Sato and Tan See Seng (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2015), 44.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

US alliances and partnerships in Asia (or the “Indo-Pacific”) over other regions.⁵⁰

Assuming the Pivot is foremost a defense pivot, there are problems in this strategy. Namely, the most promising partners in the Indo-Pacific regions for strengthening defense cooperation with the US are not so durable. This was evident in the Philippines in 2016 when President Benigno Aquino, who maintained close ties with the US, stepped down and was replaced by Rodrigo Duterte, who announced his plan to “separate” the Philippines from the US both militarily and economically in favor of China. Many allies such as Australia and South Korea will inevitably find themselves in a difficult position in choosing between their overwhelmingly greatest trading partner, China, and their security arrangements with the US.

If Washington cannot back its commitments to, first, sustainable economic growth in Asia, and, second, its defense assurances across the littoral of states along China’s periphery, it will find it difficult to advance its interests in the region. Moreover, Washington’s strategy has compelled a counterstrategy out of Beijing by necessity:

the US factor has worked to shape China’s neighborhood diplomacy in prompting Beijing to attach more significance to relations with its neighbors and to attempt to strengthen economic, security and diplomatic ties with them.⁵¹

Thus, a race to woo the Asian littoral has inadvertently commenced, *a la* Beijing’s BRI, except Washington has shown little interest in matching the financial offers presented in BRI.

If the Pivot is truly about containment of China, it is destined to fail. The Obama administration and policymakers in the State Department repeatedly denied the Pivot was a containment strategy, but the military cooperation commitments the US is making along China’s eastern and

⁵⁰ “National Security Strategy,” *US White House*, December 2017, 46–47, and “National Defense Strategy,” *US Department of Defense*, January 2018, 9.

⁵¹ Wu Xinbo, “Cooperation, Competition and Shaping the Outlook: The United States and China’s Neighborhood Diplomacy,” *International Affairs* 92/4 (2016), 850.

southern periphery, under both the Obama and Trump administrations, can serve as evidence for a sound argument that it is, indeed, a containment strategy. In January 2019, while speaking at the Pentagon, the acting Defense Secretary reminded everyone their priority was, “China, China, China.”⁵² The same can be deduced from Trump’s trade war policies with Beijing. If the Pivot is a containment strategy, it can damage not only the declared objective of sustained economic growth but also the global economy. Nevertheless, if the underlying strategy behind the Pivot is, indeed, sustained economic growth, using the defense sector as the primary actor to initiate the policy into action is a grave mistake. Zbigniew Brzezinski, whose work, *The Grand Chessboard* (1997), conceivably inspired the Pivot strategy, recognized this:

U.S. efforts to buttress Asian stability could prove self-defeating, propelling Washington into a costly repeat of its recent wars, potentially even resulting in a replay of the tragic events of Europe in the twentieth century.⁵³

The Obama administration made the defense sector its primary agent in initiating the Pivot, regardless of underlying intentions; when Trump withdrew the US from TPP in January 2017, it removed the US from the only meaningful institution under the framework of the Pivot in which US-led sustainable economic development in Asia could possibly be attained. Moreover, when Trump began applying new import tariffs on Chinese products in early 2018, ultimately spiraling into a trade war, this negatively affected integrated economies throughout the region. Supporters of these tariffs could argue that in the long-term, this approach could benefit sustainable economic development in Asia by leveling US-China trade balance and forcing China to adhere to conventional trade and investment rules. US allies, Japan and South Korea have expressed the same concerns regarding China’s trade practices, yet they were never consulted about new

⁵² “Remember: ‘China, China, China’ New Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Says,” *Reuters*, January 2, 2019 (accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-military-china/remember-china-china-china-new-acting-u-s-defense-secretary-says-idUSL1N1Z20JA>).

⁵³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Balancing the East, Upgrading the West – U.S. Grand Strategy in an Age of Upheaval,” *Foreign Affairs* 91/1 (2012), 97.

import tariffs. On the contrary, the new steel and aluminum tariffs implemented in March 2018 included Japanese and South Korean exports to the US as well as Chinese. Such economic pressure regimes leave these states to question Washington's commitment to their alliances and likely drift farther into Beijing's camp.

Competing and Complementary Grand Strategies

Among the four aforementioned visions for Asia, including Tokyo's values-based Arc, the geographic scope of the visions varies as much as the ideational components to each. Russia's neo-Eurasianism has a two-tiered approach to Asia (although, for their intents and purposes, Eurasia). First is Russia's near abroad: the idea is to (re)integrate the former Soviet republics, not as a resurrection of the Soviet Union, per se, but as a regional bloc not dissimilar to the EU, but with Russia at the fulcrum. Second, is to integrate a broader Eurasia, inclusive of partners such as Iran, Syria, and Serbia. China is included inasmuch as objectives are aligned, and those objectives tend to coalesce at multipolarity to counter American power preponderance in Asia. Beijing and Moscow have a developing symbiotic trade relationship based on the import of Russia's vast resources into China. This was cemented with a 30-year, \$400 billion energy deal, which commenced operations in December 2019 when the 3,000-kilometer "Power of Siberia" pipeline began supplying China with natural gas. With European natural gas consumers reluctant to sustain their dependency on Russian gas, Russia and China both see a newfound benefit in economic integration, and indeed, Russia's energy exports are *pivoting* to the east.

Beijing's vision of Asia is long embedded in its strategic thinking – long before the US or even the Russian Empire was formed. The suzerain system is the Sinocentric system, and it inescapably undergirds BRI. What is to be the modern tributary state, however, is much broader than it was before. It is inclusive of "new partners" as far afield as Kenya and Hungary. What is Beijing's Asia? Overtly, it is whoever wants to be on board with BRI; it is an initiative to develop and prosper together, but it is conspicuously focused on infrastructure and development, and also clearly focused on the less developed economies of Asia (and Africa) for its investment projects. In a sense, it is China championing itself as a leader of the developing world and declaring it has the deep pockets to finance a mutually coinciding rise in prosperity. It is worth noting that the Chinese-led AIIB, which can be interpreted as Beijing's counter to ADB led by Tokyo and Washington, is open to Japanese and American membership.

While the UK, Germany, Canada, Russia, South Korea, and Australia have all joined, Japan and the US remain noticeably indifferent to AIIB. Mogi argues that Tokyo and Washington are both “suspecting China’s bubble economy will collapse in the future,” and thus, the ADB remains the more pragmatic option for both investors and borrowers.⁵⁴ It is telling of who is more accommodating of the Sinocentric order in Asia, and who is not.

It is evident the US cannot consider a geostrategic pivot without considering the defense sector as the primary actor in implementation. Among Russia’s neo-Eurasianism, China’s BRI, and the US’s Pivot, the American vision is the most obfuscating. Pivot to Asia means *what Asia*? After all, the pre-Pivot focus was the Middle East, yet Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan *are* Asia (also known as “Southwest Asia”), and this is understood in neo-Eurasianism, BRI, and even Tokyo’s Arc. The Pivot is a re-*Oriented* vision for Asia. Moscow has been conceptualizing Asia for a very long time. Beijing has been conceptualizing it much longer. The American vision is confused and not clear regarding its objectives, or how to achieve them. The Pivot is interpreting Asia as the allies along the Indo-Pacific regions, including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia, and nascent partners such as India, Indonesia, and Vietnam. It is mindful of China, if not being the sole purpose for the Pivot, but it is understood as part of Asia, nonetheless. Thus, there is a *good* Asia and a *bad* Asia embedded in the vision of the Pivot.

Tokyo’s Arc complements and competes with all three visions. It most obviously complements the American Pivot. In fact, with the largest overseas American military force on its territory and a longstanding security alliance, Japan is a linchpin to the Pivot. This view was bolstered in 2014 when Obama clarified the US acknowledges Japan’s claim to the Senkaku/Daiyou Islands and that they are covered by the US-Japan Security Treaty – a commitment Trump reiterated in 2017. Moreover, the rise of China’s military is Tokyo’s self-proclaimed top security threat, and, indeed, what keeps it close to the US.⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that US officials in

⁵⁴ Mogi Makoto, *Manga de waku chiseigaku* [Geopolitics Understood Through Illustrations] (Tokyo: Ikeda Shoten, 2017), 84.

⁵⁵ Tim Kelly, “Japan Lists China as Bigger Threat than Nuclear-Armed North Korea,” *Reuters*, September 27, 2019 (accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-defence/japan-lists-china-as-bigger-threat-than-nuclear-armed-north-korea-idUSKBN1WC051>).

the Trump administration have, since late 2017, adopted the strategic concept, a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” in speeches, which Abe began using in 2012. For the Americans, this expression illustrates the aforementioned notions of *good* Asia and *bad* Asia embedded in the Pivot vision. For the Japanese, it is the Arc, repackaged.

Insomuch as the Arc and the Pivot are to counter a Sinocentric Asia, the visions are aligned. Washington will continue to nudge Tokyo to remilitarize, seeing it as a proxy for its own interests in Asia, but as appealing as “equal partners” sounds to Tokyo, remilitarization is very unpopular domestically. If the Pivot is indeed focused on sustained economic growth in Asia, Tokyo’s Arc is also nicely aligned with this objective as well. If we take the Pivot at face value, both visions seek economic development and prosperity across Asia, and both countries believe they have an important role in this vision. From both countries’ perspectives, they see that over the last three decades, the two of them have overwhelmingly provided the most official development assistance (ODA) across Asia, as they commit the most capital for ADB, and their companies also provide by far the most FDI into China, as well as considerable FDI across Asia for the last three decades. Interestingly, there is rarely a sense of competition between the two for their own perceived roles within their own visions of Asia; rather, their visions of Asia are complementary and assuming mutual participation.

Tokyo’s Arc is not necessarily in total competition with Beijing’s BRI, either. On the one hand, there are statements and actions which can be interpreted as competitive. For example, since 2015, Abe has made it a cornerstone of his development assistance policy to promote the idea that infrastructure investments and loans provided by Japan together with the ADB result in “quality infrastructure,” which is an indirect jab at the perception of Chinese-led projects. ADB and AIIB appear to be in competition, but it is important to note that China retains a sizable share in ADB, as the third-largest investor *and* the largest borrower. If it were a direct Sino-Japanese competition, Beijing would have pulled out from ADB investments long ago. Yet, symbolically, the competition of the two banks is revealing of Beijing and Tokyo’s visions for Asia. In the article “Two Asia’s: AIIB v ADB,” Malcolm Cook argues that they:

exemplify the very different understandings of Asia held in Beijing and Tokyo and the very different views of

Japan's place within Asia expressed by the ADB and China's place in Asia expressed by the AIIB.⁵⁶

He adds the geopolitical framing by the two while alluding to Japan's Arc conceptualization:

modern Japan, as an archipelagic power on the North Pacific periphery of the Eurasian landmass, has a North-South maritime understanding of Asia. China, as a vast land power with an inland capital, has an East-West continental understanding of Asia...Post-war Japan's Pacific nature and close relationship with the US have led Japan to pay particular heed to the United States' interest and place in Asia.

With ADB and AIIB, the compatibilities of Beijing and Tokyo's visions for Asia are also evident. Both the Arc and BRI seek out development across a wide swath of the Asian continent, inclusive of Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. In Central Asia, for example, it has been observed that Tokyo and Beijing can serve symbiotic roles. Badykova argues that "China helps generating cash from oil and gas, while Japan helps them invest it in projects that can secure an industrial base for Central Asian economies."⁵⁷ Through BRI, China offers flexible financial means to attain development, while through the Arc, Japan provides the rules framework that can maximize the societal gains from these projects. Tokyo's activity in the region also "fosters regionalism and industrialization, while China promotes diversification of Central Asian exports and globalization."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Malcolm Cook, "Two Asia's: AIIB v ADB," *The Straits Times* [Singapore], June 5, 2015 (accessed May 15, 2020, www.straitstimes.com/opinion/two-asias-aiib-v-adb).

⁵⁷ Najia Badykova, "Japan's and China's Different Functions in Asia," *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 16, 2016 (accessed May 15, 2020, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13319-japan-and-chinas-different-functions-in-asia.html>).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

It is in both China's and Japan's interest to seek development and stability in Asia, yet where they differ is the Sinocentric order in Asia. In particular, Tokyo's values-based Arc did not include China, and Tokyo had differentiated itself by making the Arc a values-based pillar of foreign policy, which is predicated upon democratization in Asia. Whether Tokyo has pressed this value at all is questionable, but its inclusion in the policy outline and the consistent reiteration of this value makes Tokyo's Arc not only distinct from Beijing's BRI but also exclusive of China, as a non-democratic state. China's growing predominance in Asia and global economic competition has made the carrot and stick approach of democratization-measures-for-development-aid unfashionable in the twenty-first century. If Tokyo is not serious about encouraging democratization measures by using the purse, at least the language of democratization embedded in the Arc is enough to make it a vision of Asia exclusive of China.

It would be shortsighted to think, however, that Japan is unequivocally determined to create its vision of Asia exclusive of China. China has been a significant recipient of Japanese ODA and a major destination for Japanese FDI for over four decades, and Sino-Japanese trade relations are the deepest between any two Asian states today.⁵⁹ Aside from historical animosity, territorial disputes, and general distrust, the two countries are deeply interconnected with each other's economies. Hosoya Yuichi describes Japan's Asia policy as two disjointed policies.⁶⁰ One is the values-based Arc, but the other is the East Asian Community (EAC) elucidated by Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō four years prior to the Arc. Like the Arc, Koizumi's EAC emphasized cooperation with countries sharing the values of democracy, but he made it a point to include China in this vision. While there are similarities between EAC and the Arc, and indeed the EAC can be seen as a nebulous precursor to the Arc, the geographic visions are considerably different. The EAC was specifically delineated as the integration of Japan, South Korea, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members, Australia, and New Zealand, but also China. It used the ASEAN+3 framework for its geographical scope,

⁵⁹ China is scheduled to "graduate" from Japan's ODA programs in fiscal 2021.

⁶⁰ Hosoya Yuichi, "Japan's Two Strategies for East Asia: The Evolution of Japan's Diplomatic Strategy," *Asia-Pacific Review* 20/2 (2014), 154.

and thus, is more of a reaffirmation of Japan's second pillar to its foreign policy (relations with neighbors in East Asia) than the new third pillar. In his EAC speech, Koizumi made clear:

I would like to highly praise the active role China is willing to play in regional cooperation. With its wealth of human resources and huge economic potential, China will surely make an enormous contribution to regional development (2002).⁶¹

The Arc spans like a belt, from Southeast Asia to Turkey and Eastern Europe, but it is not inclusive of China. Koizumi's vision of Asia, inclusive of China, differs from his successors and fellow Liberal Democratic Party elites, who have tended to emphasize Tokyo's alliance with Washington over cooperation with Beijing. The main opposition party until 2016, the Democratic Party of Japan, showed much more overt overtures towards Beijing, notably former Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio, who served less than a year but was clear in his intention to *pivot* Tokyo's foreign policy from the US alliance to strengthening its partnership with Beijing. Since stepping down in June 2010, Hatoyama has continued to advocate for strengthening relations with Beijing and even acquiescing to a Sinocentric order in Asia. Hatoyama has personally issued an apology for Japanese war crimes in Nanjing, recommended Tokyo recognize the existence of a territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Daiouyu Islands, and to the chagrin of many of his compatriots, he sits on the international advisory committee for the AIIB. It has been pointed out that "[b]y appointing a former Japanese prime minister as an advisor to the AIIB, China may be attempting to weaken the collaboration between Japan and the United States."⁶² It also serves to destigmatize AIIB among Japanese.

Hatoyama may not represent the broad interests of the Japanese populace, the political elites, or even his own party, but his approach of

⁶¹ Koizumi Junichirō, "Japan and ASEAN in East Asia – A Sincere and Open Partnership," Speech, delivered in Singapore on January 14, 2002. Transcript available at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/koizumispeech/2002/01/14speech_e.html (English).

⁶² "Former Japanese Leader Hatoyama to Buck Precedent, Join Advisory Panel of China-Led AIIB," *The Japan Times*, June 26, 2016.

acquiescing to Sinocentric order in Asia does represent a long-persevering approach to China in Japan. While broadly speaking, China is perceived as the greatest state-level threat to Japan and surveys often demonstrate a general distrust between the Chinese and Japanese, there is a strand of thought which perseveres in Japan from pre-modern times that hitching itself to China is ultimately in Japan's best interest:

the Japanese, in distant history, have gone through periods where they deferred to the Chinese, and it is possible they will one day do so again, especially if they perceive China as a rising state and their nation as a declining one.⁶³

Currently, this is a view held mostly among those on the political left, such as Hatoyama, but it can easily change on account of signals of weakening durability of Washington's commitments to Japan and the region writ large. It is often noted in modern Japanese history:

If there is one lesson above all others that Japan learned from the twentieth century, it was that alliance with the global superpower – Great Britain in the first two decades of that century, and the US for the last five – offered the best assurance of stability and prosperity.⁶⁴

Indeed, such a pragmatist approach to statecraft could eventually dictate that between Washington and Beijing, the latter is possibly interpreted as more committed to stability in Asia. There was evidence of this possible shift in 2018 and 2019 when Abe visited China, and both sides spoke of a “new era,” amid the US pull out of TPP negotiations, the warming of relations between Trump and Kim Jong-Un, and the new US import tariffs impacting economies of both China and Japan. Also, China is more economically interconnected throughout the region than the US, and increasingly so. In November 2019, Beijing, Tokyo, and 14 other Asian-

⁶³ Gordon G. Chang, “Will Japan Become a Chinese Colony?” *Forbes*, September 4, 2009 (accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/2009/09/03/japan-china-yukio-hatoyama-opinions-columnists-gordon-chang.html>).

⁶⁴ Gavan McCormack, *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace* (New York: Verso, 2007), 55.

Pacific countries concluded an agreement on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. While the free trade agreement is less ambitious than CPTPP, it excludes the US and is symbolic of geopolitical shifts in the region. Thus, acquiescence to Sinocentric order in Asia may be Tokyo's best bet for survival. The onus is on Washington to prove that is not the case.

Aleksandr Dugin and his works are well known in Russia, and a discussion of neo-Eurasianism is remiss without mention of Dugin's thought and his influence on neo-Eurasianist doctrine. The direct influence Dugin has on the Kremlin is unclear, but the pervasion of his thought through lectures, books, and television appearances, and his role as advisor to members of the State Duma, the United Russia Party, unofficial advisor to Putin, and the military means his ideas must permeate to a significant degree.⁶⁵ Dugin bases his philosophy of geopolitics on Halford Mackinder's heartland thesis and places Russia at the "pivot" of the world system.⁶⁶

It is in Dugin's work where neo-Eurasianism directly relates to Japan. Dugin advocates for Russia to seek out strategic alliances with key powers along its periphery. In Europe, it is Germany with which Russia must ally; in the Muslim world, it is Iran; and in East Asia, it is Japan, to which he credits its early twentieth-century pan-Asianist ideology.⁶⁷ Thus, Dugin advocates for a quadruple alliance of Russia-Germany-Japan-Iran to dominate the Eurasian space and defend against American intervention. There is a hierarchy in this proposed alliance, however, as Dugin theorizes Russia as the superpower, and Germany, Japan, and Iran are regional allies needed to support Russia in this structure.⁶⁸ To this end, Dugin has proposed the Kremlin return the disputed Kurile Islands to Japan, and

⁶⁵ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 107–108.

⁶⁶ Aleksandr Dugin, *Geopolitika postmoderna. Vremena novych imperii; ocherki geopolitiki XXI veka* [Geopolitics of Postmodernity. The Times of New Empires; Essays on the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century] (St. Petersburg: Amfora, 2007), and Aleksandr Dugin, "Geopolitics of Russia" Reading, delivered at the Institute of International Relations, Athens, Greece, April 16, 2013. Video available at <https://youtu.be/XU0SHO4hDgo>.

⁶⁷ Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 117.

⁶⁸ At other times, however, he has omitted Iran from this alliance he envisages, calling for a restoration of "the mythical triangle between [*sic*] Germany, Russia, and Japan" (see Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism*, 142).

Kaliningrad to Germany, in exchange for their alignment with Russia and severing ties with the US.⁶⁹

Dugin's neo-Eurasianist vision is at odds, particularly with Beijing. He views Russia's sphere of influence not constrained to the borders of the former Soviet Union, but rather, inclusive of (Inner) Manchuria, East Turkestan (Xinjiang), Tibet, and Mongolia – both the republic and China's autonomous region. This is consistent with Sawabe's thesis, that neo-Eurasianism, in general, represents an easterly shift for Russia to balance with China.⁷⁰ Dugin makes clear he considers China a threat to Russia's interests in Asia, along with the US in the Americas, the UK in Europe, and Turkey in the Muslim world.⁷¹

To this end, indeed, the Kuriles are key to a possible coalescing of neo-Eurasianism and Tokyo's Arc. Dugin's thought is not to be confused with Kremlin policy, but his approach to Japan regarding the Kuriles is an option that it appears Putin has considered. In recent summits with Abe, the two have based their negotiations on a 1956 joint declaration to split the disputed islands, while Putin is also insisting on Tokyo to curtail the presence of American forces in Japan. Palatable for Putin would be a deal on the Kurile Islands dispute in exchange for Tokyo weakening its security alliance with Washington, or, at best, removal of American troops from Japanese soil altogether. Russo-Japanese cooperation is certainly plausible, and there is undoubtedly room for deepening relations. Both visions emphasize stability in post-socialist spaces in Asia, for example. Despite the ongoing island dispute, Japan was the first G7 member state to invite Putin for a bilateral summit after the Crimean Crisis. While Tokyo did join with Washington and other Western allies in condemning Moscow's actions, and also joined in the sanctions on Russia, domestically, there was debate in Japan whether intense condemnation against Moscow over the Crimean Peninsula could be turned right around in negotiations over a solution to the Kurile Islands dispute. In any case, the Kremlin has shown interest in settling the territorial dispute with Japan, which is not characteristic of

⁶⁹ Ibid., 241.

⁷⁰ Sawabe, *Zukai*, 88.

⁷¹ Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki: geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii* [The Fundamentals of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia] (Moscow: Aktogeia, 1997), 247.

Russia when considering territorial disputes with Ukraine and Georgia, for instance.

Both Moscow and Tokyo have Beijing in mind; both are seeking leverage if, by chance, relations with a rising China sour, and neither is comfortable being, at best, a junior partner with Beijing, and at worst, a bandwagoning “tributary” state to the Sinocentric order of Asia. Furthermore, Russia is looking for the inroad to weaken the US-Japan alliance, and Japan is looking for an insurance policy, in the case the US decides to pull back from commitments in Asia. Nevertheless, Moscow and Tokyo are continuing a slow-dance entente, in which exogenous factors in the shape of China and the US are bringing them closer together.

Conclusion

Japan’s vision of Asia in the twenty-first century takes shape on account of both domestic drivers as well as opportunities and constraints in the international system. This paper focuses on the latter, outlining how Japan’s vision of Asia interacts with visions of Asia coming from Russia, China, and the US. Additional research could extend this discussion further by including other regional powers and their visions for Asia, such as India’s “Look East Policy,” proclaimed in the 1990s, and South Korea’s more recent “New Southern Policy,” both of which have visions of Asia which are interacting with Japan’s.

The four visions for Asia examined in this paper are conceptualizations with differing overlays over the eastern hemisphere (see Table 1). BRI includes parts of Europe and Africa, neo-Eurasianism includes all of Asia and fades into western Europe. The American Pivot to Asia is mostly formulated by observing across oceans. And, the Arc, as the name suggests, spans a wide swath of countries from Southeast Asia to Eastern Europe. All of these, however, have notable omissions. BRI does not explicitly incorporate Japan, and the Arc does not mention China. Neo-Eurasianism marks Japan as a regional linchpin but is contradictory regarding China. The Pivot to Asia is predicated on the American alliance with Japan and a rekindling of the San Francisco System, as it appears deliberately intent on containing China. All exemplify an exceptionalism of Self, and the security of Self undergirds all four visions.

	Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)	Neo-Eurasianism	Pivot to Asia	Arc of Freedom and Prosperity
geographical focus	Asia, Europe, Indian Ocean, and Africa	(1) near abroad (2) all of Asia and eastern Europe	Indo-Pacific regions (includes Japan, Australia, Indonesia, India)	Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Middle East, and Eastern Europe
notable exclusions/inclusions	excludes Japan, US; includes Russia	Japan, Germany, and Iran are regional linchpins; divided on China	China is a driving motivation; Russia is excluded	China and Russia excluded, but other former Soviet republics are vital
inception	2013	reemergence in 1990s	2011	2006
declared driving facets	infrastructure, development	multi-polarity, to link (and pacify) East and West	sustainable economic development	infrastructure, development, democratization
possible underlying driving facets	restoration of Sinocentric system (justice)	restoration of Russian power (justice)	Chinese containment (order), burden sharing (justice)	countering Chinese dominance (order), economic stability (order)

Table 1. Competing Visions for Asia

The four visions for Asia and the strategies which undergird each one can be framed in the *order* versus *justice* dichotomy, as presented by Hedley Bull in *The Anarchical Society* (1977). More than the other three, for Tokyo, it has remained a vision for *order*, and from this order, Japan's national security is bolstered. Bull explains the "proponent of order takes up his position partly because the existing order is, from his point of view, morally satisfactory, or not so unsatisfactory as to warrant its

disturbance.”⁷² For Russia and China, it is a strategy for *justice*. Russia’s vision is to remedy “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century”; for China, it is to restore the Sinocentric system interrupted by the Century of Humiliation and subsequent US intervening with China’s rise. Both are seeking in their respective approaches to restore an order which currently does not exist due to “immoral” causes but did once in the historical imagination: “[I]deas about justice belong to the class of moral ideas, ideas which treat human actions as right in themselves and not merely as a means to an end.”⁷³ The order in these historical imaginations is right because it is *just*. As for an outcome, Bull argues:

When then, demands for justice are put forward in the absence of a consensus within international society as to what justice involves, the prospect is opened up that the consensus which does exist about order or minimum coexistence will be undone. The question then has to be faced whether order or justice should have priority.⁷⁴

Interestingly, the American Pivot is not only a geographical pivot, but it has also manifested from one administration to the next as a pivot from *order* to *justice*. Trump’s emphasis on burden sharing defense costs with Japan, South Korea, and others, and Trump’s utilizing of import tariffs are all in the interest of justice, and not order in Asia. As Japan now stands alone among the four with a vision emphasizing order, the other three also exemplify “power” in Asia with traditional means – military power, a nuclear arsenal, and security alignments/alliances, coupled with their distinguishable economic enticements.

Few would consider Japan is exuding the scope of power seen from the former three in the twenty-first century, but in the absence of military-based hard power, Japan projects attraction across Asia for its counter-model to this. Countries across Asia are drawn to its ability to exert influence, particularly through economics and culture, despite lacking military power and engagements across Asia. Indeed, in international

⁷² Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 93.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

favorability surveys, Japan tends to consistently enjoy a higher favorability rating than the US, China, or Russia across broader Asia (although certainly not among its neighbors in China and South Korea). It separates itself from the US by not leading its engagements in Asia with its military sector, and also unlike the US, *it is* Asia – proselytizing *Asian* democracy, *Asian* values, and an *Asian* economic model. It has more credibility than the US to argue that what is in Japan’s best interest is also in all of Asia’s best interest, and it has not contorted its vision from one administration to the next to the degree which the US has done. It separates itself from Russia by lacking natural resources and not wielding them as strategic tools for geopolitical objectives of power expansion. It separates itself from China by the perceived threat that comes with its sheer size and proximity in Asia, the risks associated with its loans and investments, and a widely-shared perception of Japan’s superior industrial quality. Currently, Japan’s vision also stands alone among the four in emphasizing order over justice.

Insofar as these visions for Asia are undergirded by security of state, it is a manifestation of post-cold war globalization and strengthening of regional security complexes (RSCs) across Asia into not a security constellation, but a single, massive security complex. In 2003, Buzan and Waever argued that Southeast Asia has “merged with Northeast Asia into a larger East Asian RSC,” but they then predict this RSC will be “potentially including in the future also South Asia in a huge Asian RSC.”⁷⁵ If the America Pivot to Asia turns out to be a Pivot *out of* Asia or if Americans simply lose interest, it would have tremendous ramifications in Asia. “[I]t would strengthen the possibility that the Asian super complex would evolve into a full Asian RSC.” Buzan and Waever add, “it would expand the engagement of the Eurasian great powers with the Middle East.”⁷⁶ This intensification is already seen, as Moscow’s neo-Eurasianism, Beijing’s BRI, and Tokyo’s Arc all view the Middle East as a cornerstone to their visions. The unspoken part in the American Pivot, however, is its turn *away from* the Middle East.

This analysis reveals maneuverability in the international milieu. Visions of Asia are conceptualized and interact with other visions in both the ideations and material forms. Tokyo reacts to notions and concepts

⁷⁵ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 477.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 459.

expressed in Washington, Moscow, and Beijing, and vice versa. What is uncharacteristic is that Japan is left *leading* the effort to sustain order in Asia and spread democracy, human rights, and rule of law. While the US under Trump has pulled out of trade agreements in Asia, initiated a trade war with China, and smoothed over tensions with North Korea in spite of human rights abuses and ongoing missile tests, it is left to Japan – who by default leads the truncated TPP, seeks to strengthen trade relations with China, and remains wary regarding North Korea – to champion these causes with its values-based diplomacy.

HOW MANY BODIES DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A BUDDHA? DIVIDING THE TRIKĀYA AMONG FOUNDERS OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM

Victor Forte
Albright College

Introduction

Much of modern scholarship concerned with the historical emergence of sectarianism in medieval Japanese Buddhism has sought to delineate the key features of philosophy and praxis instituted by founders in order to illuminate critical differences between each movement. One of the most influential early proposed delineations was “single practice theory,” *ikkō senju riron* 一向専修理論 originating from Japanese scholars like Jikō Hazama 慈弘砵 and Yoshiro Tamura 芳朗田村.¹ This argument focused on the founders of the new Kamakura schools during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries like Hōnen 法然, Shinran 親鸞, Dōgen 道元, and Nichiren 日蓮, claiming that each promoted a single Buddhist practice for the attainment of liberation at the exclusion of all other rival practices. In recent scholarship, however, single practice theory has been brought into question.² As an alternative method of delineation, this study proposes the examination of how three major premodern Japanese founders (Kūkai 空海, Shinran, and Dōgen) employed the late Indian Mahāyāna notion of the three bodies of the Buddha (Skt. *trikāya*, Jp. *sanshin* 三身) by appropriating a single body of the Buddha in order to distinguish each of their sectarian movements. Unlike single practice theory, which is based in a delineation of exclusive paths to liberation, the appropriation of a single Buddha body, I will argue, provided the very basis for the founder’s authority. Whichever practices the founders may have promoted, they

¹ See Jikō Hazama 慈弘砵, *Nihon Bukkyō no kaiten to sono kichō: Chūko Nihon Tendai no kenkyū* 日本仏教の開展とその基調 — 中古日本天台の研究 (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1948), reprint of the 1923 edition; and Yoshiro Tamura 芳朗田村, *Kamakura shin bukkyō shisō no kenkyū* 鎌倉新仏教思想の研究 (Kyoto: Heirakuji shoten, 1965).

² For a critical response to this characterization of Dōgen’s Zen, see T. Griffith Foulk, “Dōgen’s Use of Rujing’s ‘Just Sit’ (*shikan taza*) and Other Kōans,” in Steven Heine, ed., *Dōgen and Sōtō Zen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 42.

certified the legitimacy of their sectarian claims through the supremacy of the chosen Buddha body.

Indian Origins of *Trikāya* Theory

One of the more radical developments of late Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism was the transformation of Buddha identity from the historical Gotama Buddha to the *Trikāya* or three bodies of the Buddha. The formulation of this idea evolved, however, over a number of centuries in a historically complex, and to a great extent, untraceable manner. There is quite early evidence of the “*Dharmakāya*” or “truth body,” indicated in the Pāli canon, even if there is only a single example to be found:

He whose faith in the Tathāgata is settled, rooted, established, solid, unshakeable by any ascetic or Brahman, any deva or māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world, can truly say: “I am a true son of the Blessed Lord, born of his mouth, born of Dhamma, created by Dhamma, an heir of Dhamma.” Why is that? Because...this designates the Tathāgata: “The Body of Dhamma [*dharmakāya*],” that is, “The Body of Brahmā” [i.e. body of the highest].³

Paul Harrison’s historical-critical study of the *Dharmakāya* argues that the concept maintained an adjectival, rather than nominal form from this early Pāli example through much of the early Mahāyāna sūtra literature.⁴ The term “*Dharmakāya*” indicated an embodiment of the teachings or qualities of Buddhas instead of a transcendentalized or essentialized identity. Yet, most scholars agree that there were notable contributions to the notion of Gotama Buddha’s unworldly identity deriving from Mahāsāṃghika School⁵

³ See the *Aggañña Sutta* (D iii 84) in Maurice Walsh, trans., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1987), 409.

⁴ See Paul Harrison, “Is the *Dharma-kāya* the Real ‘Phantom Body’ of the Buddha?” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15/1 (1992), 44–94.

⁵ See Janice J. Nattier and Charles S. Prebish, “Mahāsāṃghika Origins: The Beginnings of Buddhist Sectarianism,” *History of Religions* 16/3 (1977), 258.

as early as the third century BCE.⁶ Even so, it is still difficult to assert clear doctrinal lines between Mahāsāṃghika characterizations of Gotama and the fully developed *Trikāya* theory presented in the fourth century CE writings of Asaṅga, the founder of the Indian *Yogācāra* School.⁷

If one recognizes the *Trikāya* as the traditional identity of the Buddha, then all three bodies must be assimilated in the presentation of the meaning of Buddha identity and Buddha activity. To emphasize any one of the three bodies, one could argue, is to present an incomplete or skewed representation of Buddhahood. Yet, if we consider the founding of Japanese Buddhism in the formulations of Kūkai, Shinran, and Dōgen, we find that each chose a single Buddha body to represent the central meaning of their respective schools. Not only did each construct a vision of the Dharma based upon a single body, but each chose a different body so that in these major premodern Japanese Buddhist sects of Shingon (真言), Jōdoshinshū (浄土真宗), and Sōtō Zen (曹洞禅), we find the *Trikāya* divided: the *Dharmakāya* (Jp. *hōshin* 法身) placed at the center of Kūkai's Shingon, the *Saṃbhogakāya* (Jp. *hōjin* 報身) placed at the center of Shinran's Pure Land Buddhism, and the *Nirmāṇakāya* (Jp. *ōjin* 応身) placed at the center of Dōgen's Sōtō Zen. One possible reason for such body choices, I contend, is that the choice of a single body assured the authority of the representative sect through the very exclusion of other sects understood as other bodies. However, by choosing a single body, each founder was compelled to negate certain dimensions of Buddha identity, limiting access to all three bodies, and thus limiting the soteriological alternatives made available to the practitioner. This study will consider the contextual reasons for these particular body choices, the limits of each

⁶ The earliest textual evidence of this position being attributed to Mahāsāṃghika thought is in the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* (dated from the First to Second century of the Common Era) Here, the latter describes the rival Lokottaravāda school of the Mahāsāṃghikas as proclaiming that all the words of Gotama Buddha were perfect transcendent truths, and in addition, his body was undefiled and not subject to any worldly conditions. See Bart Dessein, "The Mahāsāṃghikas and the Origin of Mahayana Buddhism: Evidence Provided in the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*," *The Eastern Buddhist* 40/1–2 (2009), 46.

⁷ See Maitreyanātha and Āryasaṅga, *Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature* (*Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*), trans. L. Jamspal et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

presentation of the Dharma through a single body rather than the entire *Trikāya*, and possible implications for our understanding of foundational Japanese Buddhism based on these single-body/triple-body distinctions.

The Case of Kūkai

Kūkai (774–835 CE), the earliest founder of the three, inhabited the Japan of the late Nara, early Heian period when state-sponsored Buddhism was mainly in possession of the court and aristocratic scholars, and essentially functioned as a source of imperial preservation. However, Buddhism also had by this time, spread into the countryside, providing the peasantry with examples of charismatic wonder-workers (*hijiri* 聖) like Gyōki 行基 (668–749), who practiced and slept in the mountains and offered an early form of social engagement, dedicating themselves to activities like bridge building and irrigation development. But the court was aware of these unorthodox wanderers and was able to restrict them enough, so they were not able to establish an independent, popular sect of Buddhism.⁸ Kūkai's major accomplishment in the historical development of institutional Japanese Buddhism is in his uniting mountain-based Buddhism with court-based Buddhism, without being fully beholden to either. His capacity to do so came from a rare combination of religious sensibility, creative genius, and political savvy.

Kūkai's presentation of the Dharma was inherently hierarchal, writing tracts on the superiority of Buddhism over Confucianism and Taoism,⁹ the superiority of esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō* 密教) over exoteric Buddhism (*kengyō* 顯教),¹⁰ and the superiority of Vajrayāna or *Dharmakāya*-based teachings over Hīnayāna, *Nirmāṇakāya*-based teachings and Mahāyāna, *Saṃbhogakāya*-based teachings.¹¹ This hierarchal representation of Buddhism mirrored the social stratification of Imperial Japan, providing the

⁸ Daigan Matsunaga and Alicia Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, vol. I (Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1974), 118–119.

⁹ Yoshito S. Hakeda, trans., “Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings (*Sangōshiki* 三教指帰),” *Kūkai: Major Works* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 101–139.

¹⁰ Hakeda, “The Difference Between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism (*Benkenmitsu nikyōron* 辯顯密二教論),” *Kūkai: Major Works*, 151–157.

¹¹ Hakeda, “The Precious Key to the Secret Treasury (*Hizō hōyaku* 秘藏宝鑰),” *Kūkai: Major Works*, 157–224.

possibility of the court's identification with such a structure. The universalism of the *Dharmakāya* in the image of Mahāvairocana Buddha (Jp. *Dainichi Nyorai* 大日如来) likewise supported the universalist self-identity of the imperial clan; the Great Sun Tathāgata, as a neo-iconic validation of Amaterasu (天照), the Great Sun kami of the Yamato territories, made possible a Buddhist-centered source of power for the protection of the nation.

Kūkai's biography served as a narrative for the discovery of these hierarchies among the indigenous and foreign influences of his lifetime. He rejected his aristocratic Confucian-based education in order to search among those practicing various amalgamations of Shinto, Daoism, and Buddhism in the mountains of Shikoku. The story of his search among the *shugenja* (修験者), culminated in his introduction to the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (Jp. *Dainichikyō* 大日經) at about the age of thirty, served mainly as a rejection of both the prevalent institutional forms of Buddhist scholasticism and the magico-ascetic systems he discovered in the mountains, thus mirroring the search of Gotama Buddha. It is only in this text that he came to recognize a superior teaching. While much of the text was impenetrable to him, given its central focus on Sanskrit mantras, a language he could not yet read, the esoteric pronouncements of the text assured him of its superiority over the exoteric disciplines of Japanese Buddhist scholasticism. His ability to recognize its superiority had already been established through his initial preparatory indoctrination into the *Kokūzōgumonjihō* (虚空藏求聞持法) rite, "The Rite for Seeking a Grip on What is Heard."¹² Thus, the recitation of the bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha (Jp. Kokūzō 虚空藏) Mantra for one million repetitions promised the capacity to grasp the meaning of any text. In this sense, both his rejection of other available teachings and his embrace of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* were both validated in this bestowed power to recognize a text's ultimate value.

One factor that seems to have attracted Kūkai to the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* was its claim of universality. One possible hermeneutic of this text (most likely transmitted to Kūkai by his Chinese teacher, Huiguo 惠果 (746–805))¹³ is that it claimed to provide direct access to the preaching of the

¹² Hakeda, "Indications of the Goals of the Three Teachings," *Kūkai: Major Works*, 102.

¹³ Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 128–129.

Dharmakāya, subsuming all other works within it. The preaching of Mahāvairocana as the *Dharmakāya* included all Buddhist teachings within itself since all *Sambhogakāya* and *Nirmāṇakāya* teachings are ultimately the expression of the universal *Dharmakāya*. While other sūtras represent snapshots in time, teachings that provided skillful expressions of the Dharma formulated to reach the limited capacities of a particular audience, and the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* was not limited to time and space since both transcended and contained all other expressions of the Dharma. To study this text was to study all Buddhist texts and to know their ultimate meaning. It is this claim of superiority offered by the Esoteric path, grounded in the preaching of the *Dharmakāya*, that Kūkai based his own claims of authority, thus resulting in the most overt body choice among the three founders. One clear example can be found in his work, “The Difference Between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism (*Benkenmitsu nikyōron* 辯顯密二教論), where Kukai cited the Esoteric *Vajraśekhara Sūtra*¹⁴ in order to delineate the hierarchical relation between the paths offered by the three bodies:

The Buddha, manifested in human form [i.e. *Nirmāṇakāya*], preached the doctrines of the Three Vehicles for the sake of bodhisattvas who were yet to advance to the Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood, for the followers of the Hinayana, and for ordinary people; the Sambhogakaya Buddha taught the doctrine of the One Vehicle for the bodhisattvas in the Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood. Both teachings are Exoteric. The Dharmakaya Buddha, for his own enjoyment, with his own retinue, preached the doctrine of the Three Mysteries.¹⁵ This is Esoteric. The

¹⁴ (Jp. *Kongochokyo* 金剛頂經). In accordance with the training he received from Huiguo, Kukai paired this text with the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* as co-equal in canonical authority. The work is mainly an Esoteric retelling of Siddhartha Gotama’s awakening, where the cosmic bestowal of an Esoteric initiation allows him to fully extricate himself from the limitations of asceticism and subsequently attain Buddhahood.

¹⁵ The Three Mysteries (Jp. *sanmitsu* 三密) of body, speech, and mind are realized exclusively through the Esoteric initiations of mudrā, mantra, and maṇḍala. These are understood as mysteries precisely because of their exclusive Esoteric accessibility.

doctrine of the three Mysteries is concerned with the innermost spiritual experience of the Dharmakaya Buddha, and the bodhisattvas in the Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood or even those who are nearly equal to the Buddha cannot penetrate it, much less the Hinayanists and ordinary people, who could not cross its threshold.¹⁶

The superiority of the Esoteric over the Exoteric and the exclusivity of the Three Mysteries, based in this differentiation between the teachings offered by the three bodies, functioned as a prevalent theme throughout Kūkai's career and was his central claim for distinguishing his school of Buddhism and solidifying his institutional authority.

However, it took Kūkai more than a decade after his return to Japan to fully establish himself in the centers of Heian institutional power. During the three-year reign of Emperor Heizei (平城), Kūkai remained excluded from the capital on the island of Kyushu. It was not until 809 before he was called by the court of Emperor Saga (嵯峨) to take up residence at Takaosanji (高雄山時). Although Saichō (最澄), the founder of Japanese Tendai, had been given a political head start, enjoying the favor of the emperor Kammu, and performing the first Esoteric *abhiṣeka* ritual¹⁷ in 805 while Kūkai remained in China, fate was in the end, more attentive to Kūkai. The death of Kammu in April 806 weakened Saichō's advantage, and the emperor Saga enthroned three years later, had more of an appreciation for aesthetics than he did for Buddhism. Kūkai was capable of obliging the emperor's literary interests with demonstrations of his own poetic talents through written correspondence and was also eager to show how the powers of esoterism could provide superior protection of the nation.¹⁸ Still, it was not until 816 before Saga finally granted permission for Kūkai to construct a Shingon monastery on Mt. Kōya. By 822, Kūkai's institutional power was further established after Saga permitted the construction of a dedicated *abhiṣeka* hall at Tōdaiji in Nara.

¹⁶ Hakeda, "The Difference Between Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism," *Kūkai: Major Works*, 152.

¹⁷ (Jp. *kanjō* 灌頂); the primary initiatory ritual.

¹⁸ In 810, soon after supporters of the former emperor Heizei had instigated a failed, but violent attempt to usurp the throne, Kūkai presented Saga with a written memorial promising protection of the nation through Esoteric mantra recitation. See Hakeda, "Rise to Eminence," *Kūkai: Major Works*, 41.

The following year Saga abdicated the throne, but not before transferring Kūkai's residence from Takaosanji to Tōji, a national monastery in the capital city that would become a dedicated training center for Esoteric Buddhism. The growing relationship Kūkai successfully cultivated with Saga culminated with the former emperor receiving the *abhiseka*.¹⁹

The rise of Kūkai during these years, while not necessarily bringing about a decline of Saichō's stature in the capital, indeed resulted in some disappointments for the latter. This was the tension between their mutual interest in esotericism and the incongruity of their notions of dharmic authority. For Saichō, this authority was founded on the one vehicle (Skt. *Ekayāna*, Jp. *ichijō* 一乗) teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* (Jp. *Hokekyō* 法華經), recognized in Tendai as the final, and therefore, most advanced teaching of Śākyamuni Buddha. Saichō's interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra* led to an inclusive, eclectic approach to Tendai monasticism, where numerous forms of practice were understood to be included in the one vehicle. Like Kūkai, Saichō claimed that his system of practice could lead to liberation in a single lifetime,²⁰ but he also held the position that Esoteric practice was affirmed within the *Lotus Sūtra* as part of the one vehicle, while Kūkai rejected this notion due to his position on the limitations of *Nirmāṇakāya* teachings. Both claimed a universalism, but while Saichō's universalism was defined in terms of inclusivity, Kūkai's universalism was decidedly exclusive due to his interpretation of the *trikāya*.

Their initial encounters seem to have exhibited mutual respect, with Saichō recognizing the value of Kūkai's expertise rather early, seeking him out as soon as he arrived in the capital to borrow texts in 809 and then to receive the first two *abhiseka* initiations in 812.²¹ Kūkai was willing to oblige these requests but expected a greater commitment to the day-to-day Esoteric disciplines held at Takaosanji before he would be willing to bestow Saichō

¹⁹ Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra*, 43.

²⁰ See Paul Groner, "The *Lotus Sutra* and Saichō's Interpretation of Buddhahood with This Very Body," in George J. Tanabe Jr. and Willa Jane Tanabe, eds., *The Lotus Sutra in Japanese Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).

²¹ Hakeda, "Abhiṣeka Ceremonies at the Takaosanji," *Kūkai: Major Works*, 42–44.

with the more advanced initiations.²² The decline in their relationship may have escalated; yet, when one of Saichō's prized students, Taihan (泰範), began to break from Mt. Hiei in favor of Takaosanji. In Ryūichi Abé's examination of the correspondences between Saichō and Taihan during this period, he cites an 816 letter Taihan wrote in response to one of Saichō's pleas for a reunion of their joint dissemination of Tendai Buddhism. Taihan's rejection of Saichō's plea is unequivocal, and the very basis for his sound refusal was in Taihan's conversion to Kūkai's form of universalism and exclusivity:

You also asked me, "What difference in excellence could there be between the One Unifying Vehicle of the Lotus and the One Unifying Vehicle of Shingon?"...because I cannot remain forever perplexed by your thundering question, I would like to state my view, one that is as narrow as that through a bamboo pipe. The Tathagatas, the great teachers, provide the medicine of Dharma according to the capacities of their patients. They prescribe myriad medications corresponding to countless proclivities in people...And yet the Dharmakaya Buddha unfailingly distinguishes himself from the Nirmanakaya Buddha. How, then, could there be no difference in depth between the exoteric and esoteric teachings? The teaching of the Dharmakaya is absolute, hidden, and ultimate, while the teaching of the Sambhogakaya is relative, apparent, and provisional. Therefore, I am now immersing myself in the nectar of Shingon and have no time for tasting the medicines of the exoteric schools.²³

The Case of Shinran

Both Shinran and Dōgen lived in a world four centuries removed from Kūkai, yet they mirrored their predecessor's concern for ascertaining the singularity of attainment, resulting in their own particular body choices. They also shared in their respective biographies, a rejection of Tendai eclecticism, both beginning their training on Mt. Hiei, but ultimately leaving in

²² See Ryūichi Abé, "Saichō and Kūkai: A Conflict of Interpretations," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22/1–2 (1995), 118–120.

²³ Abé, "Saichō and Kūkai," 130–131.

search of greater clarity for the meaning of attainment. Shinran's affinity for the *Sam̐bhogakāya* reflected his assertion of the impossibility of liberation through self-power (*jiriki* 自力) and the corresponding necessity of fully entrusting the vows of Amitābha as liberation through other power (*tariki* 他力). The promise of attainment embraced by Shinran originated from three canonical texts, the Larger *Sukhāvatī-vyuha Sūtra* (Jp. *Daimuryōjukyō* 大無量壽經), the Smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*, often named the *Amitābha Sūtra* (Jp. *Amidakyō* 阿彌陀經), and the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* (Jp. *Kanmuryōjukyō* 觀無量壽經). The Larger *Sukhāvatī-vyuha Sūtra*'s importance mainly lies in the record of forty-eight vows promised by the bodhisattva Dharmakāra to the primordial Buddha Lokeśvararāja if he were to attain final enlightenment. As a recognized canonical text, the Larger *Sukhāvatī-vyuha Sūtra* represented for Shinran a contract of soteriological certainty. The promise of Amida's primal vow is unique in the Indian canonical records, offering a decisive liberation from the faithful's karmic burdens.

The *Amitābha Sūtra* describes the Pure Land given to Sariputra by the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, extolling its exceptional beauty, and reiterating vows eighteen through twenty promised by Amitābha while he was a bodhisattva. But the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra*, an apocryphal text most likely composed originally in China, offers an even clearer promise of liberation. It is based upon a story of a king and queen who are imprisoned by their power-hungry son. The queen prays for the aide of Śākyamuni Buddha, and he responds by teaching her a hierarchal system of meditations on the visual details of the Pure Land. However, for those so burdened with past karma that they are incapable of meditation, he tells the queen that one can attain the Pure Land after death by simply reciting the name of Amitāyus (Buddha of Infinite Life).

Although the Larger *Sukhāvatī-vyuha Sūtra* and the *Amitābha Sūtra* are both Indian in origin, there is no historical evidence of a Pure Land cult that emerged in India exclusively devoted to the Pure Land Sūtras. The earliest evidence of Chinese interest in the *Sam̐bhogakāya*-based powers of the Pure Land writings comes from Southern teachers like Huiyuan in the fourth and fifth centuries and Zhiyi in the sixth. However, they are not even considered canonical in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism because they are seen as presenting elitist systems, emphasizing the self-power of the meditational techniques found in the Indian sources. It was in the North, when extreme political instability and strife during the 350-year period between the Han and

Tang dynasties brought about a questioning of the efficacy of self-power, that Shinran's Chinese predecessors emerged.²⁴

In this region, between the Fifth and Seventh centuries, the hopelessness of social reality inspired a reversal in the Mahāyāna vision of the bodhisattva vow. Rather than seeing in themselves a capacity to take on the bodhisattva vow to attain final enlightenment for the welfare of other beings, those who recognized their own incapacity to attain could place their hope in the recorded vow of a cosmological bodhisattva, thus placing the possibility of attainment in one's dependence upon the aide of other-power (Jp. *tariki* 他力).

Although Shinran did not travel to China to receive the Pure Land Dharma from its source, he had been introduced to its practice on Mt. Hiei. He left the Tendai school after nineteen years of training and became a student of Hōnen in 1201, having given up on the possibility of attainment through his own efforts. We find in these two patriarchs of Japanese Pure Land a distillation of the Chinese teachings into a definite meaning of attainment through Other Power. Most of the Chinese founders emphasized the meditative practices presented in the *Amitāyurdhyana Sūtra* as the most efficient vehicle of Pure Land practice. Shandao's contribution to the evolution of Pure Land thought was in declaring that recitation was *equal* to meditation as a path to attainment.

But Hōnen, even though he saw himself as a follower of Shandao, argued that recitation was superior to other practices like meditation, encouraging his followers to recite the *nembutsu* exclusively (*senju nembutsu* 専修念仏).²⁵ Shinran radicalized, or one might argue, *clarified*, Hōnen's teaching even further. He concluded that claiming birth in the Pure Land resulted from reciting the *nembutsu* would mean that self-power was still operative. Shinran asserted that the promise of attainment was only possible through recitation with true entrusting (*shinjin* 信心). This would mean that the

²⁴ Matsunaga and Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, vol. II, 24.

²⁵ See chapter 3, "Passages Concerning the Tathāgata Amida's Original Vow, Which Promises Birth Not for Other Practices but for the Nembutsu Alone" in Hōnen's *Senchakushū: Passages on the Selection of the Nembutsu in the Original Vow* (*Senchaku hongan nembutsu shū*), trans. Senchakushū English Translation Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press; Tokyo: Sōgō Bukkyō Kenkyūjo, Taishō University, 1998), 72–81.

recitation is simply a recognition of Amida's Vow rather than an intentional practice of attainment.²⁶

Functioning as a soteriological release from the uncertainty of final enlightenment, Shinran's radical hermeneutic of the Indian sources promised attainment to even the most unskilled of religious seekers, those left with nothing more than the capacity for true entrusting in Amida's Primal Vow. Shinran's *Jōdoshinshū* (浄土真宗) is the Way of True Entrusting, only requiring one's recognition that the burden of karma has made attainment through self-power an impossibility. It is only in the full recognition of this impossibility of attainment that attainment is made possible; a hope that relies on hopelessness, an entrusted promise that renders the uncertain certain. For the way of true entrusting, neither the Gotama as *Nirmāṇakāya* nor Vairocana as *Dharmakāya* could provide such a conduit of attainment. The teachings of the historical Buddha were of no practical use to the seeker of the Dharma. Even Gotama recognized his Way would be challenging and was uncertain if it could be conveyed to others.²⁷ The world of Shinran, so far removed from the original discoverer of the Dharma, was a world of insurmountable karmic blindness, rendering the instructions of the Buddha incapable of penetrating the ignorance of those, like Shinran, who were left stranded on the further shore of karmic bondage.

If human beings were too blind to recognize the vision of Gautama, they were also too deaf to hear the preaching of Mahāvairocana. For Kūkai, in order to realize attainment through the *Dharmakāya*, one must come to recognize one's true identity as none other than the Truth Body itself; attainment is realized in the original state of enlightened reality. But for Shinran, the defilements rendered the recognition of this nature an impossibility. Reciting the *nembutsu* with true entrusting bypassed the path of self-power,

²⁶ According to Shinran, "with regard to Other Power, since it is inconceivable Buddha-wisdom, the attainment of supreme enlightenment by foolish beings possessed of blind passions comes about through the working shared only by Buddhas; it is not in any way the design of the practitioner." See Dennis Hirota, trans., "A Collection of Letters," *The Collected Works of Shinran* (Kyoto: Jōdō Shinshū Hongwanj-ha, 1997), letter 10 (accessed July 14, 2020, <http://shinranworks.com/letters/a-collection-of-letters/10-2/>).

²⁷ See *Mahāvagga* I. 5, 2–4 in F. Max Müller, ed., *The Sacred Books of the East*, trans. T. W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg, vol. XIII (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1881), 84–85.

which required one to penetrate through the defilements to reveal one's original nature. In contrast, in order to enter the Way of True Entrusting, the other power of Amida's Primal Vow could only be received through the utter conviction of one's defilement. Only in the certainty of defilement is there the certainty of attainment, realized as an unequivocal dependence on Amida's Vow.²⁸ In Shinran's collection of hymns, "Gutoku's Hymns of Lament and Reflection," the conviction of his defiled nature provided the very basis for his attainment.

Each of us in outward bearing,
Makes a show of being wise, good and dedicated;
But so great are our greed, anger, perversity and deceit,
That we are filled with all forms of malice and cunning.

Extremely difficult is it to put an end to our evil nature;
The mind is like a venomous snake or scorpion.
Our performance of good acts is also poisoned;
Hence, it is called false and empty practice.

Although I am without shame and self-reproach
And lack a mind of truth and sincerity,
Because the Name is directed by Amida,
Its virtues fill the ten quarters.

Lacking even small love and compassion,
I cannot hope to benefit sentient beings.
Were it not for the ship of Amida's Vow,
How could I cross the ocean of painful existence?²⁹

²⁸ See Shinran's letter "Lamp for the Latter Ages" (*Mattoshō* 末燈鈔): "those who have attained true shinjin are already certain to become Buddhas, and therefore are equal to the Tathagatas. Although Maitreya has not yet attained Buddhahood, it is certain that he will, so he is already known as Maitreya Buddha. In this manner, that person who has attained true shinjin is taught to be equal to the Tathagatas." See Hirota, *Collected Works*, letter 15 (accessed July 14, 2020, <http://shinranworks.com/letters/lamp-for-the-latter-ages/15-2/>).

²⁹ Hirota, "Gutoku's Hymns of Lament and Reflection," *Collected Works*, hymns 95–98 (accessed July 14, 2020, <http://shinranworks.com/hymns-in-japanese/hymns-of-the-dharma-ages/hymns-of-lament-and-reflection/>).

However, where is Shinran's claim to authority in this passage? Throughout his writings, Shinran insists on refuting any possible claim to authority, incessantly reminding his readers of his foolishness and sinfulness, and is said to have asserted that he did not have even a single disciple, stating, "If I could bring people to say the Nembutsu, then I could call them 'my disciples.' But it would be preposterous to call somebody 'my disciple' when he says the Nembutsu solely through the working of Amida's compassion."³⁰ This denial of authority points rhetorically to the *Samḥogakāya* Buddha Amida and the canonical origins of his Vow, while at the same time renders Shinran an exemplar of True Entrusting for the faithful. In being recognized as such, his reputation and authority in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism was assured.

While Amitābha Buddha is represented as a *Samḥogakāya* Buddha in both the Pure Land sūtra literature as well as the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*³¹ and was identified as such in the vast majority of Shinran's works, contemporary scholars³² have also cited later writings in Shinran's career where he recognized Amida as the *Dharmakāya*. On one level, one could say, Amida is certainly the *Dharmakāya* because all Buddhas, including Amida, are merely outward forms of the universal, formless, *Dharmakāya*. In Shinran's "Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'" (*Yuishinshō-mon'i* 唯信鈔文意), written in 1251, he clarified the distinction between the formless dharma-body and the dharma-body of form that is Amida, while at the same time recognizing their inseparability:

there are two kinds of dharma-body with regard to the Buddha. The first is called dharma-body as suchness and the second, dharma-body as compassionate means. Dharma-body as suchness has neither color nor form; thus, the mind cannot grasp it, nor words describe it. From this oneness

³⁰ From the *Tannishō* (歎異抄) in Alfred Bloom, *Strategies for Modern Living: A Commentary with the Text of the Tannishō* (Berkeley: Numata Center For Buddhist Translation and Research, 1992), 6.

³¹ Maitreya-nātha and Ārya-saṅga, *Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature*, 95.

³² See Alfred Bloom, "The Ultimacy of Jodo Shinshu: Shinran's Response to Tendai," *Pure Land* 10/11 (1994), 28–55; and Thomas P. Kasulis, "Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262): Naming What Comes Naturally," *Engaging Japanese Philosophy: A Short History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2018), 181–211.

was manifested form, called dharma-body as compassionate means. Taking this form, the Buddha announced the name Bhikṣu Dharmakara and established the Forty-eight great Vows that surpass conceptual understanding.³³

While all Buddhas may be identified with the *Dharmakāya* on the level of *Dharmakāya*'s universality, only Amida Buddha, the dharma-body as compassionate means, is originally primordial with the formless dharma-body of suchness. Therefore, because the Vows of Dharmakara originate from the formless dharma-body of suchness, they transcend the common discriminatory capacities of human beings (*hakarai* 計らい). The dharma-body as compassionate means is the Buddha-nature in the phenomenal world as true entrusting (*shinjin busshō* 信心仏性). For this reason, Shinran contended that *shinjin* did not originate from human discretion, but only from Amida's compassion. Because Amida is none other than the natural outpouring of compassion originating from the formless dharma-body of suchness, Amida is the ultimate expression of Buddhahood in the world of form. Through the acceptance of Amida's compassion as true entrusting, one transcends the limits of one's karmic condition, participating in the original, formless Buddhahood of the *Dharmakāya*.

However, due to Shinran's years on Mt. Hiei, he would have been trained in the primacy of Śākyamuni's teachings as the Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra*. While formulating his own recognition of the supremacy of Amida Buddha and the message of the Pure Land sutras, he also needed to reconcile this resultant shift in the ultimate import of the Lotus. In Alfred Bloom's study of Shinran's critique of the Tendai interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, he elucidates Shinran's rejection of Tendai syncretism, thus claiming that the One Vehicle was none other than the Primal Vow of the dharma-body of compassionate means, not the multiplicity of self-power teachings and practices espoused by Saichō and other leaders of the Tendai school.³⁴ Also, Shinran displaced the central position of the *Nirmāṇakāya* in the Tendai interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, instead asserting the supremacy of Amida. In his "Hymns of the Pure Land" (*Jōdo Wasan* 浄土和讃), he interprets chapter

³³ From Shinran's "Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'" (*Yuishinshō-mon'i* 唯信鈔文意) in Hirota, *Collected Works* (accessed July 15, 2020, <http://shinranworks.com/commentaries/notes-on-essentials-of-faith-alone/>).

³⁴ Bloom, "The Ultimacy of Jodo Shinshu," 40.

sixteen of the *Lotus Sūtra* as an indication of the eternal nature of Amida Buddha (*jindenkuongō* 塵點久遠劫) rather than the Tendai notion of the eternal Śākyamuni (*kuonjitsujō* 久遠実成).³⁵

While Shinran identified Amida Buddha with the *Dharmakāya*, he was not, therefore, identifying Amida with Vairocana, at least not in the way Kūkai understood Vairocana. As the *Dharmakāya*, Kūkai understood that all phenomena without exception are manifestations of Vairocana, each expounding the Dharma in particular ways (*hosshin seppō* 法身說法). The same could be said for Amida, but that only places Amida on the same level of any other manifestation of the *Dharmakāya* and would consequently be limited to the particularity of the *Dharmakāya*'s expression, limited by time and place.

For Kūkai, the dharma-body would not be of two kinds as Shinran contended (formless dharma-body of suchness and dharma-body of compassionate means), but rather the single universal dharma-body of suchness expressed in the world in an infinite array of forms. Vairocana is the universal, formless dharma-body of suchness, and the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* is the singular text that provides the preaching of the formless dharma-body. In his later writings, it seems as though Shinran strove to address this distinction between the original formless ground of Vairocana and the manifested form of Amida in order to dissolve the problem of time claimed by Kūkai, thus presenting an eternal *Samḥogakāya* Amida with no particular origination in time, sharing a primordial identity with the formless dharma-body of suchness.

The Case of Dōgen

Eihei Dōgen's *Bendōwa* (辨道話) fascicle is commonly cited to support single practice theory.³⁶ The high level of attention given to this text has been primarily due to both its early date and the inclusion of a question and answer section, unique in the collection of materials included in the 95-

³⁵ Ibid., 48. Bloom cites hymn 55: "It is taught that ten kalpas have now passed since Amida attained Buddhahood, but he seems a Buddha more ancient than kalpas countless as particles"; and hymn 88: "Amida, who attained Buddhahood in the infinite past, full of compassion for foolish beings of the five defilements, took the form of Sakyamuni Buddha and appeared in Gaya."

³⁶ See Norman Waddell and Masao Abe 水野弥穗子, trans. *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 7.

fascicle *Treasury of the True Dharma-Eye* (*Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏).³⁷ Traced to 1231, four years after his return from China, *Bendōwa* is most likely the earliest text included in the collection, and has been understood as an early public assertion of the supremacy of seated meditation (*zazen*). However, an equally important theme is Dōgen's claims of authority based in patriarchal transmission, a transmission he traces back to the *Nirmāṇakāya* Buddha, Siddhārtha Gotama. Throughout *Bendōwa*, both in the introductory material and the question and answer section, Dōgen repeatedly reminds his audience that attainment can only be authenticated through the approval of a teacher included in the line of patriarchs. In the introduction, for example, he states:

The great teacher Śākyamuni Buddha disclosed the Dharma to Mahākāśyapa before the assembly on Vulture Peak; it was then transmitted from patriarch to patriarch to Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma traveled to China and imparted the Dharma to Huike. This was the beginning of the Buddhadharma coming to the East...immediately entangled vines were cut at the source, and the one pure Buddhadharma spread. We should pray that this succession will occur in our country as well.³⁸

³⁷ Steven Heine finds the text problematic in his historical-critical analysis of Dōgen's writings, *Did Dōgen Go To China? What He Wrote and When He Wrote It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 123–124. This is because *Bendōwa* was not discovered until the late seventeenth century, about 400 years after Dōgen's death. In addition, question and answer material is not included in any fascicle other than *Bendōwa*, making it a rather strange outlier in comparison to his remaining works. While the text is included as the first fascicle in the early nineteenth-century 95-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*, it was excluded from the 75-fascicle collection, originally edited by Dōgen's disciple Ejō. In regard to this study of Dōgen's claims to authority, the question and answer section does provide a unique window into the ways that Dōgen is said to have responded directly to questions regarding the validity and efficacy of his form of Buddhism.

³⁸ Mizuno Yaoko 水野弥穗, ed., *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 [Treasury of the True Dharma-Eye], 3 vols., vol. I (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1990), 14–15.

Included in the question and answer section of *Bendōwa*, Dōgen is asked to compare his school with other established Japanese traditions like the Lotus, Kegon, and Shingon systems. Dōgen replies that it is unnecessary to debate about the inferiority or superiority of teachings, or to get caught up in the meaning of traditional phrases from various schools, but then reiterates the necessity of authentic transmission:

In receiving and transmitting the Buddhadharma it is necessary for a teacher to be a person who has been vouched with realization. Priests who are literary scholars fall short, like the blind leading the blind. Today, all the followers of the Buddha patriarch's right transmission preserve the Buddhadharma in their reverence for a skilled master who has attained the Way.³⁹

This insistence on certified transmission is not limited to *Bendōwa*, but other significant fascicles in the *Shōbōgenzō* as well. Dōgen opens the 1241 *Busshō* (*Buddha-nature* 仏性) fascicle for example, with Śākyamuni's assertion that all beings without exception have the Buddha-nature, and then follows by stating:

This is the lion's roar of our great teacher Śākyamuni turning the wheel of the Dharma, and it is the craniums and brilliant eyeballs of all the many Buddhas and patriarchs. As of 1241, for the last two thousand one hundred and ninety years, scarcely fifty generations of rightful heirs up to my late master Tiāntóng Rújīng, have faithfully practiced this Dharma. Twenty-eight consecutive generations of patriarchs in the West and twenty-three consecutive generations of patriarchs in the East have all resided there.⁴⁰ The Buddhas and patriarchs throughout the ten directions have all resided in this Dharma.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., vol. I, 24.

⁴⁰ A total of fifty-one generations; the last representative of this transmission is therefore, Dōgen himself.

⁴¹ Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. I, 72–73.

In 1245, the same year that Dōgen established Daibutsuji 大仏寺 (renamed Eiheiiji 永平寺 in 1246), a new monastic residence located in the secluded environs of Fukui prefecture, Echizen province, he began composing fascicles that emphasized the traditional practices of the earliest Sangha, including *Hatsu-u* 鉢盂 (*Begging Bowl*), *Ango* 安居 (*Rains Retreat*), and in the following year, *Shukke* 出家 (*Homeleavers*). In *Hatsu-u*, Dōgen traced the “authentic transmission” from the seven Buddhas of antiquity to all the generations of both India and China, claiming that “the fifty-one generations of the West and the East are the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye, the mind of nirvāṇa, the robe, and the begging bowl.”⁴² The reference here to the *Shōbōgenzō*, the title given to his entire collection of fascicles, reveals the very basis for Dōgen’s authority. This title claims the continued age of *shōbō* 正法 (True Dharma), as a direct refutation of *mappō*, the notion that medieval Japan resided in the age of a degenerate or defiled Dharma. According to Dōgen, an undefiled Dharma had been maintained historically through a certified patriarchal transmission that originated from the earthly founder of the True Dharma, Siddhārtha Gotama.⁴³ By asserting the necessity of patriarchal transmission, Dōgen placed his authority within the historical realm of the *Nirmāṇakāya*. In contrast to Kūkai, who argued that the *Nirmāṇakāya* represented a Dharma limited by historical time and place, or to Shinran, who confessed that the True Dharma of Siddhārtha Gotama was no longer accessible for those hindered by karmic burden, Dōgen claimed he had procured an undefiled Dharma for Japan, certified by his inclusion in the historical line of patriarchal transmission.

Dōgen also cites such transmission-based protection of the Dharma from degeneration in the *Eihei Kōroku* (永平広録), a collection of formal *jōdō* 上堂 style sermons, as well as *kōan* cases and poetic works, primarily compiled in the final eight years of his career. In volume 5, Dharma Discourse 374, Dōgen presented a *kōan* case (also number 59 in *Eihei Kōroku*, volume 9) between the monk Nanyue and the Sixth Patriarch Huineng. When they first met, Huineng asks, “What is this that thus comes?” It took Nanyue eight

⁴² Ibid., vol. III, 415.

⁴³ This claimed contrast between *shōbō* and *mappō*, due to the certification of historical transmission, forms the grounding of the *Shōbōgenzō* title to such an extent that, while not being a literal translation of the title, could be more accurately understood in an English translation as *Treasury of the Undefiled Dharma Transmission*.

years to finally answer, by saying, “To explain or demonstrate anything would miss the mark.” Huineng responds, “Then do you suppose there is practice realization or not?” Nanyue replied, “It is not that there is no practice realization, but only that it cannot be defiled.” Huineng responded, “This nondefilement is exactly what the buddhas protect and care for. I am thus, you are thus, and the ancestors in India are also thus.”⁴⁴

There are more direct criticisms of both *nembutsu* and Shingon esotericism in *Bendōwa*. The third question in the text begins by recognizing the legitimacy of patriarchal transmission but asserts that recitation of the *nembutsu* also leads to enlightenment. Dōgen’s response could not be more unequivocal:

What do you know about the merits of sūtra recitation and *nembutsu*? It is pointless imagining that simply moving your tongue is a meritorious activity...Intending to attain the Buddha Way by foolishly occupying the mouth with a thousand or ten thousand recitations is akin to directing the shaft of an ox cart northward in order to reach the southern lands, or trying to fit a square peg into a round hole...you are no more than a frog of the spring field, croaking day and night without benefit.⁴⁵

Both questions 4 and 16 recorded in *Bendōwa* allude to what was understood as a Shingon assertion that the meaning of the Buddhadharma is to realize that the mind is already fully Buddha. Dōgen responded to these claims with as much derision as he did with the practice of the *nembutsu*, returning to the transmission of the Dharma through the efforts of the historical Buddha, stating “if the Buddhadharma were attained by knowing the self is already Buddha, Śākyamuni would not have gone through the trouble long

⁴⁴ Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, trans., *Dōgen’s Extensive Record: A Translation of the Eihei Kōroku* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 328. See an early study of the place of these works in Dōgen’s career in Steven Heine, “The Dōgen Canon: Dōgen’s Pre-*Shōbōgenzō* Writings and the Question of Change in His Later Works” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24/1–2 (1997), 47.

⁴⁵ Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. I, 21–22.

ago to guide others to enlightenment.”⁴⁶ He then turns to an encounter dialogue between master Fa-yen and his disciple Hsüan-tse,⁴⁷ where the latter is reminded by the former that simply recognizing one’s original nature is not sufficient without dedicated practice, thus illustrating the primary insight realized by Dōgen himself after leaving Mt. Hiei and discovering what he concluded was the True Dharma while studying under the Chinese master Ru-jing.⁴⁸

Yet, it is not as though Dōgen never engaged in such practices; having been a monk on Mt. Hiei, he would have been introduced to both the *nembutsu* and esotericism as a matter of course. Nevertheless, Dōgen left the Tendai school abruptly after only a single year of training. As is generally acknowledged, it was not Dōgen’s problems with *nembutsu* practice that brought about his rejection of Tendai, but rather his concern about the meaning of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覺) and its relationship to practice. Dōgen, it seems, initially sought out a Pure Land master named Kōin (公胤) after leaving Mt. Hiei but was recognized by the teacher as not being a good match. It may have been Kōin who sent Dōgen off to Kenninji (建仁寺) to seek out Eisai (栄西), the first Japanese Zen master to receive transmission in China.⁴⁹

As the Pure Land sūtras and esoteric texts seem to have had little, if any, influence on Dōgen while training on Mt. Hiei, he would have likewise been trained in the study of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which, unlike these other textual materials, seems to have had a significant influence on his thought, since his references to this sūtra can be found throughout the *Shōbōgenzō*.⁵⁰ One obvious distinction between the *Lotus Sūtra* and both the Pure Land and *Mahāvairocana* sūtras, a distinction germane to this study, is that the *Lotus Sūtra* contains the teachings of the *Nirmāṇakāya* Buddha, which, given

⁴⁶ Ibid., vol. I, 41.

⁴⁷ From the early eleventh-century *Jingde chuandenglū* 景德傳燈錄, a Chinese record of Tang-era master-disciple encounter dialogues. The example used by Dōgen in this case is titled “Ping-ting comes for fire.”

⁴⁸ For instance, the unity of practice and attainment (*shushō ittō* 修証一等).

⁴⁹ Matsunaga and Matsunaga, *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, vol. II, 235.

⁵⁰ See Gudo Nishijima and Chodo Cross, trans., *Master Dogen’s Shōbōgenzō*, book 1 (Woking, UK: Windbell, 1994), 293–321, for a list of all these references in the 95-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*.

Dōgen's insistence on the authentic transmission of the true Dharma originating from Śākyamuni Buddha, would seem to be no mere coincidence. Taigen Dan Leighton has contributed a significant study of these influences on Dōgen's thought, especially chapters fifteen and sixteen of the *Lotus Sūtra*.⁵¹ From this section of the text, Leighton examines Dōgen's hermeneutical wordplay reflecting on the scene of innumerable bodhisattva's arising from the earth in order to hear the words of Śākyamuni. Amid this congregation, the Buddha claims to have been training these beings throughout an inconceivable lifespan, far beyond the eighty-years attributed to the *Nirmāṇakāya* Buddha. This indicates a continued presence of the Buddha and his Dharma throughout time and space so that his *parinirvāṇa* was merely a show of skillful means in order to avoid the attachment of his followers.

Although Leighton observes that Dōgen's contemporary Myōe Shōnin, a Shingon scholar, yearned to witness this ever-present Buddha by traveling to India, Dōgen's insights of space and time allowed him to mourn the passing of Śākyamuni and see his continued presence through the here-and-now dedication to monastic practice, where each practitioner turns the flower of the Dharma in the temporal continuation of mind to mind transmission.⁵² To illustrate Dōgen's idiosyncratic reading of this event, Leighton cites a Dharma discourse recorded in the *Eihei Kōroku*, given during the yearly ceremony to remember Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*.⁵³ Here Dōgen reminds his disciples:

This night Buddha entered nirvāṇa under the twin sāla trees,
and yet it is said that he always abides on Vulture Peak.
When can we meet our compassionate father? Alone and
poor, we vainly remain in this world. Although it is like
this, his remote descendants in this thousandfold Sahā
world, at this very time, what can you say?

After a pause Dōgen said:

⁵¹ See Taigen Dan Leighton, "Dōgen's Appropriation of *Lotus Sutra* Ground and Space," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32/1 (2005): 85–105.

⁵² Dōgen dedicated an entire *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle to this phenomenon in 1241, titled *Hokke-ten-hokke* (法華転法華), or "The Flower of the Dharma Turns the Flower of the Dharma."

⁵³ Leighton, "Dōgen's Appropriation of *Lotus Sutra*," 101.

In Crane Forest with the moon fallen, how could dawn appear? In Kuśi[nagara] flowers wither, and spring is not spring. Amid love and yearning, what can this confused son do? I wish to stop these red tears and join in wholesome action.⁵⁴

While referring to the miraculous Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra*, who “is said” to always abide on Vulture Peak, Dōgen focuses his discourse on the Buddha of history, who died a mortal’s death, leaving behind all those who “vainly remain in the world.” He remembers the absence of Śākyamuni with great mourning, but at the same time, avoids limiting his “love and yearning” to lamentation. Instead, the Buddha’s passing reminds Dōgen to “join” all the Buddhas and patriarchs in his own continued reaffirmation of here-and-now practice. It is in this joining with all practitioners throughout space and time that, for Dōgen, Śākyamuni continues to abide.

Even while contemplating the inconceivable lifespan of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Buddha, unlike both Myōe and Shinran, Dōgen remained firmly grounded in the historical *Nirmāṇakāya*, not rendering Śākyamuni into a transcendent form that would approximate a *Sambhogakāya*.⁵⁵ However, while not directly referring to the *Dharmakāya* in his writings, are there examples that would nonetheless seem to invoke such a body? One concept from the *Busshō* 仏性 (Buddha-nature) fascicle, what Dōgen presents as “whole-being Buddha-nature” (*shitsū busshō* 悉有仏性), may be as close as he gets to a traditional notion of the *Dharmakāya*, recognizing the Buddha-nature of all phenomena, both sentient and insentient. This understanding of whole-being Buddha-nature is invoked in other fascicles as well, like *Bendōwa* and *Genjōkōan* 現成公案. For example, in his introductory remarks in *Bendōwa*, he states, “The grass and trees, fences and walls, proclaim and exalt the Dharma for the benefit of the ignorant, sages, and all living beings. The ignorant, sages, and all living beings expound and make clear the Dharma for the benefit of grasses and trees, fences and walls.”⁵⁶ In *Genjōkōan*, he declares, “To confirm all things by gathering them to the self is

⁵⁴ See discourse 486 (delivered in 1252) in Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen’s Extensive Record*, 432–433.

⁵⁵ Refer to the discussion of Shinran’s interpretation of chapter sixteen of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

⁵⁶ Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. I, 18.

delusion, for all things to advance forward and confirm the self is enlightenment,”⁵⁷ and further on, “To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be confirmed by all phenomena.⁵⁸ To be confirmed by all phenomena is to cast off body and mind of self and other.”⁵⁹ These statements affirm a direct realization of the suchness (Skt. *tathātā*) of all phenomena as the continuous manifestation of the *Dharmakāya* in the everyday world. While Kūkai recognized a similar dimension of Vairocana as *hosshin seppō*, Dōgen’s whole-being Buddha-nature is not the Vairocana whose mysterious preaching can be found in the pages of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* and accessed through the performance of esoteric rites, but only in the common, unobstructed presencing of the “ten thousand things.”

In comparison to Shinran, Dōgen’s whole-being Buddha-nature bears no resemblance to Buddha-nature as true entrusting, which is grounded in the cosmological dharma-body as compassionate means, and only known through the full relinquishment of self-power. In addition, while both Shinran and Dōgen were influenced by chapter sixteen of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Dōgen resisted the eternalism bestowed upon Śākyamuni, mourning the latter’s death while attributing his inconceivable lifespan to the continued sharing of the dharma in the monastic tradition of mind-to-mind transmission. Shinran embraced the notion of eternalism by questioning the origins of Amida as expounded in the Pure Land sūtras and merging him instead with the primordial dharma-body of suchness.

Limits of the Body, Limits of the Path

So far, we have examined how Kūkai, Shinran, and Dōgen each claimed exclusivity for their particular movements based primarily on the identification with a chosen Buddha-body. By limiting the path to the meaning of a single Buddha-body, attainment was given a meaning that could be distinguished against the background of other competing traditions. If they were to include the entire *trikāya* in any of their movements, it is quite apparent how such an inclusion would have compromised the promise of attainment each of them proclaimed. If Kūkai included the *Samṃhogakāya* and *Nirmāṇakāya*, Mahāvairocana would lose his universalist promise, since his teachings would not be recognized as both superior to, and inclusive of, all

⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. I, 54.

⁵⁸ Literally, “the then thousand dharmas” (万法).

⁵⁹ Mizuno, *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. I, 54.

teachings attributed to these two remaining Buddha-bodies. If Shinran included the *Nirmāṇakāya* and *Dharmakāya*, there would be a recognition that attainment was possible through self-realization and would thus render true entrusting utterly impossible. If Dōgen included the *Sam̐bhogakāya* and *Dharmakāya*, he would have to admit an incompleteness in the Buddha identity of Śākyamuni, putting into question the singularity of historical mind to mind transmission. These body-choices do provide a stable and clear foundation for the possibility of liberation, allowing for the establishment of distinct Japanese Buddhist schools, providing exclusive paths that, in their very exclusivity, were able to establish authoritative legitimacy.

Because the choice of single-body systems over triple-body systems effectively removes the uncertainty of liberation, one could be led to recognize an underlying pressure in medieval Japan to assure the possibility of attainment. A path of uncertainty would not be able to survive in a world that demanded proof that liberation was within one's grasp. This pressure for assurances does warrant consideration given the central importance placed upon certainty in all three movements. The entire span of medieval Japanese history was beset by dramatic social changes and instability both within the political power centers, and in the experiences of the marginalized masses. People were hungry for liberation from the strife of human existence, and they demanded a clear and assured response to their needs.

The competition among Japanese founders for both governmental approval and popular support in a time of palpable human need required them to distinguish their movement from other alternatives and to base this distinction upon the possibility of attainment. There was the very practical requirement of impressing others that one's religious claims were certifiable, superior, and exclusive. Without such assurances, a new sectarian movement would not receive enough support to survive. Within this socio-political environment, Kūkai, Shinran, and Dōgen all rejected the eclecticism of Saichō and the Tendai establishment, and in so doing, formed institutions with exclusive paths to liberation, founded primarily on the authoritative promise of a single Buddha body.

While all three could also be said to hold a conception of the *Dharmakāya*, still, each presented an idiosyncratic vision of the universal Truth Body by further reinforcing the primacy of their chosen Buddha body: Kūkai in the direct preaching of the *Dharmakāya* as Vairocana, Shinran in the primordial eternalism of the *Sam̐bhogakāya* Amida as the dharma-body of compassionate means, and Dōgen in the everyday presencing of phenomena, all continuing to expound the Dharma of Śākyamuni throughout space and time.

In this way, by structuring the universal in the specific, each one reinforced the exclusive authority of their offered paths. Nevertheless, the division of the *Trikāya* among these three founders of Japanese Buddhism resulted in a greater multiplicity of means to liberation, each suited to persons of differing walks of life and various individual proclivities. Such division also limited the power and influence of any single Buddhist institution, thus avoiding possible sectarian monopolies that, when paired with political power centers, could have drastically reduced personal choice and religious freedom.

BEHIND THE SHOJI SCREEN: SEX TRAFFICKING OF JAPANESE CITIZENS

Rachel Serena Levine
University of California, Santa Barbara

A geisha sits behind the *shoji* screen, patiently waiting for her customer to arrive. In a way, she is the epitome of Japanese women historically and today: demure, well-educated, and highly skilled, but also resigned to traditional gender roles, used, overworked, and victimized. For centuries, the sex trafficking of Japanese women has gone unacknowledged, hiding the victims behind a *shoji* screen created and supported by Japanese society. The normalization of victimization, such as sexual assault, and the constraint of traditional notions of gender, specifically the devalorization of females, prevent the identification of victims, while vague governmental policies and definitions fail to protect them. In order to effectively combat trafficking, Japan must open the *shoji* and reveal the women veiled behind it.

Japanese victims of sex trafficking are arguably hidden in plain sight as they are culturally and historically visible, yet their plight and status as victims are often overlooked. A simple glance at highly discussed aspects of Japanese culture, such as the geisha and the Japanese sex industry, points to the existence of sex trafficking. Japan is notorious for its large sex industry, as evidenced by the multitude of Japanese guides geared towards foreign patrons and often criticized or, in some cases, favored for the plethora of sex work.¹ This industry is highly visible, widely accepted (best seen by its popularity among Japanese businessmen and its great scale), and the largest market for women in Asia, generating around four and ten trillion yen annually.² Less known are the dark secrets held by this multibillion-dollar industry that facilitates sex trafficking. Despite the notoriety of the sex trade, the existence of sex slavery in Japan is much more prevalent than nationally acknowledged. A 2012 survey taken by the anti-human trafficking NGO

¹ Matt Young, "Shinjuku, Tokyo: Inside World's Most Notorious Red Light District," News.com.au, December 17, 2017 (accessed June 23, 2020, <https://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-advice/travellers-stories/my-terrifying-experience-inside-worlds-most-notorious-red-light-district/news-story/9206f3ba-b11c989265a4064d34d75e5b>).

² Meryll Dean, "Sold in Japan: Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation," *Japanese Studies* 28/2 (2008), 169–170.

Polaris Project Japan (now known as Lighthouse) revealed only 4.8% of the Japanese population was aware of foreign victims of human trafficking being brought into Japan. Perhaps more appalling, only 2.1% of the population was conscious of the fact that Japanese people are trafficked domestically.³

This lack of awareness or acknowledgment is also seen in the international and academic communities. Japan is considered a source, transit, and destination country for human and sex trafficking, yet most discussions focus on its status as a destination or transit route while failing to address Japan's role as a supplier of victims. One 1999 bulletin from the International Organization of Migration explains, "Japan has the largest sex market for Asian women, with over 150,000 non-Japanese women involved, mainly from Thailand and the Philippines," but fails to mention Japanese women at all.⁴ This is a common trend as scholarly articles discussing sex trafficking in East Asia also neglect Japanese victims, and instead, choose to highlight foreign ones. But this comes at a price, as failing to recognize victims only pushes them further into the darkness.

The inability to identify Japanese victims is indicative of indoctrinated societal issues and requires close examination. What constitutes trafficking is frequently disputed and differs from country to country, thus, for this study, I define trafficking as a process consisting of coercion, movement, and exploitation, though this movement does not need to cross borders. Recognizing factors that prevent the identification of Japanese victims of sex trafficking is an essential step in identification and protection; without first understanding why victims remain hidden, society will be unable to combat the issue as a whole. The problem of sex trafficking is detrimental to Japanese society as the exploitation of Japanese women prevents them from participating in both the public and private sphere, stagnating growth in the formal economy, and negatively affecting the family structure as they are unable to help raise children and support their families. As the ignorance of the plight of Japanese women negatively affects Japanese society as a whole, it is an issue citizens must tackle as a community.⁵

³ Darrell Moen, "Sex Slaves in Japan Today," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 44/2 (2012), 35.

⁴ Ibid., 42.

⁵ Ibid. The phrase "private sphere" is used in gender studies to indicate the domestic sphere, located inside the home, while the term "public sphere" refers to society outside the home.

Barriers to Prosecution

Multiple barriers to victim identification lead to the paucity of acknowledgment for Japanese victims. Trafficking cases often go unreported, and many are labeled as immigration violations rather than instances of trafficking, reducing the likelihood that other victims will come forward for fear of deportation.⁶ The inability to differentiate between trafficking and illegal immigration, as well as the failure to recognize trafficking victims, originates with the definition used by the Japanese government. According to the United States Trafficking in Persons Report, Japan uses a “narrow”⁷ definition of human trafficking, that can be found in the 2009 Immigration Control and Refugee Act, chapter 1, article 2:⁸

(vii) The term “trafficking in persons” means any of the following acts:

- (a) The kidnapping, buying or selling of persons for the purpose of profit, indecency or threats to a person’s life or body, or delivering, receiving, transporting or hiding such persons who have been kidnapped, bought or sold;
- (b) In addition to the acts listed in sub-item (a) above, placing persons under 18 years of age under one’s control for the purpose of profit, indecency or threats to a person’s life or body;
- (c) In addition to the acts listed in sub-item (a), delivering persons under 18 years of age, knowing that they will be or are likely to be placed under the control of a person who has the purpose of profit, indecency or threat to their lives or bodies.⁹

⁶ “Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Japan,” Report, International Labour Organization, January 1, 2005, 36 (accessed June 23, 2020, http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_143044/lang--en/index.htm.36).

⁷ In what way this definition is narrow is not explained.

⁸ US Department of State, “US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report” (Washington D.C., 2017), 225–227.

⁹ “Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act,” Immigration Services Agency of Japan, July 15, 2009 (accessed June 24, 2020,

The “narrow[ness]” cited by the Trafficking in Persons Report is likely due to the vague wording used when discussing the purposes attributed to trafficking. According to the aforementioned act, trafficking is done “for the purpose of profit, indecency or threats to [people’s] lives or persons.” In this sentence, the word “profit” is vague, leading one to question what exactly constitutes profit? When looking at a more literal translation from Japanese, the answer becomes clear. The law states trafficking is done “for the purpose (*mokuteki* 目的) of making money (*eiri* 営利), obscenity (*waisetsu* わいせつ), or violence towards life or body (*shitai ni taisuru kagai* 身体に対する加害).”

More specifically, the term *eiri*, which uses the characters for business and profit, respectively, refers to “commercialization” or “money-making,” emphasizing a financial aspect. Therefore, this “profit” must be financial in nature. Possibly most detrimental to identification and combating is the word わいせつ. This term has multiple translations in English, including but not limited to: obscene, indecent, improper, and dirty, but is not defined anywhere else in the article, nor is there reference to this phrasing in Japanese government rhetoric. However, another issue arises from the phrase “for threat to life and body” as trafficking is rarely ever done for the purpose of hurting someone; this is just a means to an end. In this case, the translation of the official definition given by the Palermo Protocol, off which the Japanese government bases its definition, into Japanese becomes jumbled, going from “by means of the threat or use of force” to “for the purpose of.”¹⁰ This slight change in wording obfuscates identification and prosecution as acts constituting trafficking must align with the stated purposes, which is also the case regarding the word “indecency” as what is obscene and indecent changes depending on the person.

Ambiguous language open to subjectivity further complicates conviction and prosecution. One can easily argue that something is not sex trafficking and that someone is not a sex trafficking victim, creating multiple avenues for traffickers to take advantage of ambiguities in the wording. Hypothetically, one can claim that naked images of women over the age of

<http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/newimmiact/pdf/RefugeeRecognitionAct01.pdf>).

¹⁰ UN General Assembly, “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,” November 15, 2000, Article 3a.

18 are not indecent, even if they were forced to take them. Therefore, the act is not sex trafficking, and women are not sex trafficking victims. Likewise, the fixation on the purpose of the trafficking allows the hypothetical argument that because these pictures were taken as forms of art, and profit was secondary and not purposeful, it is not an act of sex trafficking. The emphasis of profit as monetary also disregards the multitude of victims who are used as sexual slaves and creates loopholes for traffickers who may trade sexual services for objects or favors. This ability to bend and twist the definition of trafficking factors into the low numbers of prosecutions and convictions of traffickers and prevents the identification of victims.

Japan's view of human trafficking as an issue of migration also contributes to the small number of prosecutions. This leads to a "disparity" between the number of trafficking cases reported by the National Police Association and the number of cases that end up going to trial, as many of those accused of trafficking are "dealt with by the Immigration Bureau for immigration law violations."¹¹ Consequently, many traffickers are deported rather than prosecuted, allowing them to continue trafficking. Those that are prosecuted receive relatively light punishments.

According to the United States Trafficking in Persons Report, in Japan, the use of deception in sex trafficking results in a punishment of "a maximum of three years imprisonment or a fine." When threats or violence is used, the punishments are "three years imprisonment and a fine" and "a maximum of three years imprisonment."¹² In fact, many offenders receive "suspended sentences" consisting of a fine and a promise to "not commit another crime during a set period of time."¹³ In 2015, a total of 27 sex traffickers were prosecuted, with 9 receiving only fines as punishment.¹⁴ This low punishment allows for fast recidivism as traffickers are quickly released from prison, or allowed to pay a fine, and then able to resume their business. Not only is Japan often incapable of identifying traffickers, but it is also unable to prosecute them successfully, and fails to prevent what little

¹¹ Dean, "Sold in Japan," 176.

¹² US Department of State, "US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report," 2017, 225.

¹³ Dean, "Sold in Japan," 176.

¹⁴ Alastair Wanklyn, "Japan Short of 'Minimum' Standards on Human Trafficking: U.S. State Department," *The Japan Times*, July 1, 2016.

traffickers the government can penalize from re-integrating into society and continuing to subjugate women.

Cultural Barriers to Identification: Shame

As foreign trafficking victims overshadow the recognition of Japanese ones, aspects of Japanese culture and society further contribute to the lack of awareness of domestic victims. Shame, one of the many *shoji* screens, may be the strongest barrier, preventing Japanese victims of trafficking from coming forward while also affecting government rhetoric as Japan hopes to avoid embarrassment in the international system.

A country and culture that is known for its warriors preferring to die on their swords than admit defeat in battle or be captured by the enemy, Japan has a long-documented history of aversion to shame.¹⁵ This is best evidenced by the government's continued inability to apologize for wartime atrocities as it would mean admitting guilt and disgracing the nation.¹⁶ Avoidance of shame is increasingly important in a society with strong social pressure and a focus on *sekentei* (世間体), a word used in relation to one's appearance in the "eyes of society." In Japan, a person's behavior and way of living are based on what is "appropriate" within the public sphere, breeding a culture of conformity as "the stake that sticks out gets hammered back in" (出る杭は打たれる *deru kui wa utareru*). Any individual who acts out of the norm is "subject to social sanction in the form of shame," which hurts one's standing in society.¹⁷ An individual must always guard their reputation and save face.

In Japanese society, both honor and face are prioritized. Honor consists of both an internal and external determination of individual worth, while face focuses more on one's position within a social hierarchy and the respectability claimed by this position. The concept of shame is "tied to the external evaluation of individual worth that is central to both honor and face

¹⁵ Takie Sugiyama Lebra, "Shame and Guilt: A Psychocultural View of the Japanese Self," *Ethos* 11/3 (1983), 193.

¹⁶ Torsten Weber, "Apology Failures: Japan's Strategies Towards China and Korea in Dealing with Its Imperialist Past," in Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 801–816.

¹⁷ Masayuki O. Asai and Velma A. Kameoka, "The Influence of Sekentei on Family Caregiving and Underutilization of Social Services among Japanese Caregivers," *Social Work* 50/2 (2005), 114.

concerns,” and dishonorable behavior embarrasses the individual and their family.¹⁸ Because of this, the Japanese are unlikely to ask for help when they need it, for fear it makes them seem weak to others.¹⁹ In upholding honor and saving face by adhering to what is acceptable within society, the Japanese are able to avoid shame. However, when dishonor is inevitable, they put significant effort into hiding disgraceful behavior and events.

Being taken advantage of sexually is a prodigious source of shame, preventing victims from self-identifying and asking for help.²⁰ As a result, there is a definite pattern of underreporting acts that victimize women, such as sexual assault. While Japan often “boasts” about its low rates of sexual assaults, survey results suggest otherwise.²¹ A 2014 survey by the Cabinet Office of the Central Government found 1 in 15 women “[experienced] rape at some time in their lives.”²² Due to the stigmatization of rape, these results are probably inaccurate: TELL, a Japanese Non-Profit Organization dedicated to providing support and counseling services, estimates that “1 in 3 women will experience sexual violence within their lifetime.”²³ Over 2/3 of the women from the 2014 survey reported never telling anyone, and less than 4% reported the assault to police. Reasons given for not reporting rape or sexual assault include the fear of shame, losing face, and dishonoring one’s family. Being more conservative and reserved in their “attitudes, behaviors and contact with men,” Japanese women tend to respond to sexual assault with silence, which is reinforced by the fear of “personal and family shame” and “the risk of being shunned by neighbors.” Rather than acknowledge their

¹⁸ Michael Boiger et al., “Defending Honour, Keeping Face: Interpersonal Affordances of Anger and Shame in Turkey and Japan,” *Cognition and Emotion* 28/7 (2014), 1257–1258.

¹⁹ Asai and Kameoka, “The Influence of Sekentei,” 111.

²⁰ John P. J. Dussich, “Decisions Not to Report Sexual Assault: A Comparative Study among Women Living in Japan Who Are Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and English-Speaking,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 45/3 (2001), 278–301.

²¹ Motoko Rich, “She Broke Japan’s Silence on Rape,” *The New York Times*, December 29, 2017 (accessed June 24, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/29/world/asia/japan-rape.html>).

²² Ibid.

²³ “Sexual Abuse,” TELL Japan (accessed June 24, 2020 <https://telljp.com/lifeline/tell-chat/homepage/resources/sexual-harassment/>).

involvement in “taboo behavior” and report being assaulted, Japanese women find it is more beneficial to “suffer in silence.”²⁴

In addition to shame and self-blame, this under-reporting is likely also due to the “narrow” definition of rape. Japanese courts and the police often only pursue cases involving “physical force” and “self-defense.”²⁵ In other words, if force is not involved and/or a woman does not fight back, the Japanese judicial system does not consider it a case of rape and does not believe they will obtain a conviction. Japanese law does not allow for plea bargaining, so prosecutors only take the strongest cases to court, resulting in a 99.9% conviction rate in 2002.²⁶ The definition of rape, together with the standard for prosecution, affects the way women view consent, as victims are unlikely to “describe nonconsensual sex as rape.”²⁷ A study carried out by John Dussich revealed that out of 784 respondents, 90.7% decided not to report their sexual assaults when violence was not involved. Unfortunately, even when violence occurs, 75.9% of victims still opted not to report the assault.²⁸ This way of thinking may be connected to the shame of being taken advantage of and victim-blaming. If the women themselves do not think of the act as rape, then they have nothing to be ashamed of and do not have to come to terms with the stigma of being victims.

Unsurprisingly, trafficked women are also often afraid of reaching out for help due to the shame of their actions. Sexual assault sexually is a humiliating occurrence that often brings with it victim blaming and shaming, as society states, the victims put themselves in that position.²⁹ Admitting or bringing attention to the fact someone was tricked, sexually exploited, and sex trafficked brings with it only dishonor and suffering.³⁰ Kurumin Aroma, a victim of a fake modeling agency interviewed for ABC Australia, “felt ashamed she was involved at all,” reflecting how outward societal shame internalized and become self-blame. Furthermore, she is “ashamed” of her

²⁴ Dussich, “Decisions Not to Report Sexual Assault,” 280–281.

²⁵ Rich, “She Broke Japan’s Silence on Rape.”

²⁶ Eric Rasmusen, Manu Raghav, and Mark Ramseyer, “Convictions versus Conviction Rates: The Prosecutor’s Choice,” *American Law and Economics Review* 11/1 (2009), 47–78.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Dussich, “Decisions Not to Report Sexual Assault,” 290.

²⁹ Ibid., 297–298.

³⁰ Ibid., 281.

overall involvement, not just the sexual acts she was forced to perform. Regarding these acts, she explains that “it was like rape,” with the modifier “like” being used to downplay her experience, a common trait among victims. Kurumin is unable to acknowledge much of what happened to her was the epitome of rape.³¹ If she does not admit she was raped, she does not have to label herself a rape victim in addition to a trafficking victim.

Shame is not only effective at silencing individuals but is also a powerful catalyst in public policy issues and governmental affairs. As a country that has been trying to prove itself and compete within the international community, it is important for the Japanese government to appear strong. Since the Meiji Period, the government has attempted to catch up to the West and be considered a major power, a feat that eventually led to its militarization and expansion within East Asian and galvanized the Asian Pacific War in 1937. Japan’s defeat in World War II and subsequent US occupation, in conjunction with its demilitarization, set back Japan’s quest for dominance. While it has achieved economic power, leading the world economy in the ’70s and the ’80s before the economic bubble burst, it has never regained the military prowess it experienced pre-WWII and has been trying to prove its worth.³²

To save face and maintain its status in the hopes of once again becoming a hegemon, the Japanese government actively avoids anything that makes the country appear weak in the eyes of the international community. Countries that have extensive reports of human trafficking are often seen as weak in terms of security, with criticism citing their lack of militaristic power.³³ Still, human trafficking is, in mainstream theory, a security issue attributed to inadequate border control and government power. Weaknesses cause criticism of a country’s security, which is essentially a manifestation

³¹ Rachel Mealey, “Women in Japan Tricked into Pornography,” *ABC News*, June 10, 2017 (accessed June 23, 2020, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-10/increasing-number-of-japanese-women-forced-into-pornography/8602288>).

³² William Gerald Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 194–198, 214–215, 243–253; and Hu Lingyuan and Gao Lan, “Proactive Pacifism: A Blessing for the Japan-US Alliance,” *China International Studies* 52 (2015), 80.

³³ Stewart Patrick, “Weak States and Global Threats: Fact or Fiction?” *The Washington Quarterly* 29/2 (2010), 39.

of power in international society; a state that lacks security lacks power.³⁴ For a country like Japan, which already lacks hard power and is currently trying to increase its security capabilities, anything that abates the state's power in the eyes of the international community, or its people, is inherently detrimental.

The Japanese government is ashamed of the trafficking within its borders and chooses to forego disseminating information regarding domestic sex trafficking. As Kinsey Dinan of Human Rights Watch explains, "[t]he Japanese government has been more reluctant to acknowledge that human trafficking exists in Japan, than other countries."³⁵ Due to the government control of information given to the media, the dearth of knowledge regarding the sex trafficking of Japanese citizens is indicative of the government failing to provide reports on the topic, an idea supported by the lack of current Japanese data regarding sex trafficking.³⁶ The government prefers to hide or ignore the issue than to admit shame and appear weak.

Because of this shame and fear, Japanese rhetoric regarding sex trafficking victims downplays their plight. Often, these women are not labeled as "trafficking victims" and are alternatively given the title of "prostitutes," insinuating they are selling themselves of their own volition. Instead of calling them "sexual slaves" (*seidorei* 性奴隷), women used by the Japanese military during World War II were referred to as "comfort women" (*ianfu* 慰安婦),³⁷ the word "comfort" sounding softer and less risqué. When referring to the act of high schoolers selling their bodies to older men, Japan uses the phrase "compensated dating" (*enjo kōsai* 援助交際),³⁸ making the process seem almost innocent and focusing on the exchange of services and

³⁴ Jennifer K. Lobasz, "Beyond Border Security: Feminist Approaches to Human Trafficking," *Security Studies* 18/2 (2009), 343.

³⁵ June Lee, "Human Trafficking in East Asia: Current Trends, Data Collection, and Knowledge Gaps," *International Migration* 43/1–2 (2005), 187.

³⁶ Most of the data regarding sex trafficking in Japan comes from other countries. In fact, the Japanese government and organizations combatting sex trafficking within Japan often direct people to the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report.

³⁷ Sharon Kinsella, "From Compensating Comfort Women to Compensated Dating," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 41 (2011), 64.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

not the sexual grooming of young women. The softening of language surrounding trafficking victims presents their subjugation as less shameful, creating another shoji, hiding victims, and preventing their identification and protection.

Sexist Norms

Japanese governmental norms and regulations support sexism within society, which in turn reinforces gender roles and norms that affect female roles within the public sphere.³⁹ The banality of victimization of Japanese women, seen by the high rates of sexual assault, harassment, and abuse, also permeates society. Violence and victimization are often downplayed or ignored, and Japanese women have absorbed a sense of learned helplessness, making them less likely to report assault or trafficking, further hindering identification. Because of discrimination and harassment, especially in the professional environments, many women seeking employment are left with no choice but to assume gendered roles within the professional sphere or, lacking options, enter the sex industry. Despite the government's attempts at regulation, it ultimately fails to protect women within the workforce and the sex industry, erecting more shoji, creating vulnerabilities, and paving the way for victimization by traffickers.

Numerous sexist norms within society disempower women, making them susceptible to traffickers. Many of these vulnerabilities extend from Japan's current economic stagnation. In response, in 2015, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe launched his 'womenomics' initiative as an effort to boost the economy. This initiative, aimed at getting women into the workforce and leadership positions, is a sharp contrast to Abe's second goal of increasing the birthrate.⁴⁰ While normally these two goals could coexist harmoniously, traditional notions of gender decrease the effectiveness of Abe's policies. Furthermore, while Prime Minister Abe attempts to convince women to join the workforce, he fails to address societal factors impeding women's entrance into the public sphere.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle remains the difficulty women face when attempting to find employment, caused by discrimination within the

³⁹ Joyce Gelb, *Gender Policies in Japan and the United States: Three Cases in the United States and Japan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 63.

⁴⁰ Kevin Rafferty, "Why Abe's 'Womenomics' Program Isn't Working," *The Japan Times*, December 31, 2015.

Japanese workforce. This discrimination roots itself in traditional gender roles that relegate women's loyalty to the home and the family, a notion that counteracts Japanese business interests as they wish for their employees to be solely loyal to the company.⁴¹ Therefore, women are often unable to find full-time employment, as companies expect them to spend most of their time doing reproductive labor by caring for their families.⁴² This is evidenced by the common business interview practice of asking women questions regarding relationship status, possibilities of marriage, and the likelihood of having children. After graduating with a law degree from one of Japan's top universities, one woman reports being asked if she was "planning to have a baby."⁴³ This societal expectation that women will get married and have children makes it difficult for women to find jobs even right out of college. It is a challenge for women to enter the workforce, which in turn makes it difficult for them to obtain full-time jobs, preventing them from attaining high positions in the company and moving up in the workforce, or supporting themselves financially without relying on parents or spouses.

When women are finally able to find employment, their jobs typically adhere to traditional gender roles. Because of the devalorization of feminine roles, women are often given "lower-paid" and "part-time" jobs and tasks and commonly subordinated to "clerical positions" even when they are just as qualified as their male counterparts.⁴⁴ According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, in the late 2000s, women constituted 70% of part-time and casual workers.⁴⁵ One of the most popular and inherently gendered jobs for women is the position of "Office Lady" or "OL."

⁴¹ Kelly Barrett, "Women in the Workplace: Sexual Discrimination in Japan," *Human Rights Brief* 11/2 (2004), 1; Rafferty, "Why Abe's 'Womenomics' Program Isn't Working."

⁴² Ibid. Work associated with roles in the domestic sphere, primarily caregiving, cooking, and cleaning. This work is unpaid labor that is unrecognized and devalued within society.

⁴³ Leo Lewis, "Japan: Women in the Workforce," *Financial Times*, July 6, 2015 (accessed June 23, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/60729d68-20bb-11e5-aa5a-398b2169cf79>).

⁴⁴ Barrett, "Women in the Workplace," 3; Rafferty, "Why Abe's 'Womenomics' Program Isn't Working."

⁴⁵ Yoshio Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (Port Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 172.

First appearing in the 1950s and the 1960s, this role encompassed tasks considered befitting of women such as cleaning, sewing, and shopping. At this time, it was not uncommon for women's tasks to be interrupted in order for them to perform errands for men, as jobs given to males were valued more highly. Female roles were often "simple, routine, assistant jobs that are performed each time in response to an order," and women usually lived at home, expecting to find a husband and then quit their job.⁴⁶ This explains the relatively low pay as women were assumed to be working for "lipstick money"⁴⁷ rather than to support themselves or their families. Today, Office Ladies' jobs remain "simple and repetitive," and women in these roles frequently become bored with their work. These positions are often fetishized as these women set fashion trends and are commonly interviewed by magazines and the company they work for regarding frivolous topics, such as views on love and marriage, leisure, and fashion.⁴⁸ OL jobs and other roles commonly occupied by women within the workforce are demeaned, and feminine work is made into something akin to a fashion statement, rather than a serious profession.

Not only are women discriminated against when attempting to join the workforce, but they are also harassed upon their entrance. The most common form of harassment is "sexual harassment" or "*sexy-hara*." A survey carried out in Tokyo by Japanese Feminist group WeToo Japan found 70% of women had experienced some form of harassment in public, with 48% of women saying they had been touched inappropriately and 42% of women stating a stranger "had pressed their bodies against them suggestively." Only 10% reported the harassment to the police.⁴⁹ These statistics are indicative of men believing they have a right to female bodies, which exist mainly for their consumption. This is also seen in professional

⁴⁶ Yuko Ogasawara, *Office Ladies and Salaried Men: Power, Gender, and Work in Japanese Companies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 24–25.

⁴⁷ Ibid. The term "lipstick money" is used by feminist scholars to draw attention to the fact that society views males as working to support a family, while females are merely earning money to buy frivolous things like lipstick.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Yuko Aizawa, "Lifting the Lid on Japan's Harassment Problem," *NHK World-Japan*, January 30, 2019 (accessed June 25, 2020, <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/nhknewsline/backstories/liftingthelid/>).

environments as 1 in 3 women admits to experiencing sexual harassment at work, 24% of which occurs at the hands of a boss.⁵⁰ Just as problematic is the manifestation of a new form of harassment known as “maternity harassment” or “*mata-hara*,” defined as discrimination against pregnant women, it has become a common practice in Japanese businesses for pregnant women to be fired or forced out of their jobs.⁵¹ Sometimes this harassment is as blatant as women being told to “clean out their desks” before going on maternity leave. Other times it is subtler, such as being reassigned and forced to do menial tasks until they become frustrated or bored with their work and quit of their own volition. Recent reports show that 1 in 4 working mothers has experienced maternity harassment in some form. Outside the professional sphere, working mothers are often criticized for not dedicating enough time to their families, and their ability to successfully take care of their family is questioned.⁵²

In response to workplace discrimination and harassment, Japan issued the 2010 Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which promises to tackle these issues. Unfortunately, this plan is vague and focuses on raising awareness and monitoring conditions, rather than creating or implementing laws. Additionally, the plan does not lay out details regarding how they will raise awareness, or who is in charge of monitoring:⁵³ it is just an empty promise to support and protect women within the workforce without actually putting policies into motion.

⁵⁰ Justin McCurry, “Nearly a Third of Japan’s Women ‘Sexually Harassed at Work,’” *The Guardian*, March 2, 2016 (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/02/japan-women-sexually-harassed-at-work-report-finds>).

⁵¹ Emma Chanlett-Avery and Rebecca M. Nelson, “‘Womenomics’ in Japan: In Brief,” *Current Politics and Economics of Northern and Western Asia; Hauppauge* 23/4 (2014), 418.

⁵² Patrick Cox, “Matahara: When Pregnant Women, New Moms Are Harassed at Work,” *Public Radio International*, September 9, 2015 (accessed June 25, 2020, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-09-09/maternity-harassment-so-common-japanese-workplace-they-invented-word-it>).

⁵³ “Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality,” UN Women: Global Database on Violence against Women, 2010 (accessed June 25, 2020, <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/japan/2010/third-basic-plan-for-gender-equality>).

High rates of domestic abuse also highlight Japan's inability to protect women. According to official statistics offered by the Japanese government, in 2015, 1 in 4 women experienced abuse at the hands of a spouse.⁵⁴ These statistics are likely inaccurate due to under-reporting, considering a World Health organization study from 2006 found that around 15.4% of women in Yokohama, a large city in Japan, reported experiencing some form of domestic violence.⁵⁵

In fact, domestic abuse is the least reported violent crime in Japan, despite accounting for "one fifth of all violent crimes."⁵⁶ To add insult to injury, the reporting of such crimes is unlikely to result in prosecution. In 2015, a total of 63,141 cases of domestic abuse were reported, yet less than 10% resulted in arrests. The significance of this issue on the health and wellbeing of women remains evident in the increasing fatalities resulting from domestic abuse, estimated to be one every three days. Women who experience abuse at the hands of boyfriends or while dating are at even more of a risk as laws against domestic abuse only pertain to women who live with their abuser.⁵⁷

Sexist patterns and norms within Japanese society negatively affect women by failing to protect them and making them vulnerable to sex traffickers. Low paying jobs and low participation rates in the workforce creates susceptibility to abuse as women become dependent on men to support them. Women unable to find male support are forced to look for jobs elsewhere, the easiest location being the sex industry where they are offered jobs pertaining to traditional notions of gender, mainly the servicing of men. Gabriele Koch, a postdoctoral fellow at the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University, explains that "sex industry employment is also a means for securing financial stability in a context wherein women are largely undervalued as workers in the full-time,

⁵⁴ Rob Gilhooly, "Domestic Violence: 'Abuse Was All I Knew,'" *The Japan Times*, May 7, 2016.

⁵⁵ Claudia Garcia-Moreno et al., "Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence," *The Lancet* 368/9543 (2006), 1264.

⁵⁶ Gilhooly, "Domestic Violence."

⁵⁷ Ibid.

professional economy.”⁵⁸ Hence, the most popular occupation chosen by these women is “hostessing,” where women are paid to keep groups of men company.⁵⁹ Hostess clubs are considered part of the *mizu shobai* (水商売 lit. “water trade”), or “nightlife industry,” which is essentially a less carnal counterpart to *fuzoku* (風俗 lit. “public morals” or “customs”), also known as the “sex industry.”⁶⁰ However, the use of the term “water” as a euphemism for sexual services justifies the consideration of the nightlife industry as part of the sex trade.⁶¹ Moreover, while these companies rarely include sex, the often sex-centered discussions, as well as the sexualization and objectification of the women, bring the job of hostess further into the realm of sex work.⁶²

Many women turn to these professions due to the high salaries not offered in mainstream industries, while others choose this line of work because there is “no other work for women.”⁶³ Often, these institutions are run by Yakuza and located in districts associated with the sex industry, such as Kabukicho in Shinjuku ward, Tokyo.⁶⁴ Even though these women are not always trafficking victims, they remain vulnerable specifically to other forms of sexual violence such as sexual harassment and assault.⁶⁵ The precarity in Japan’s workforce creates an excuse for traffickers to approach vulnerable women, promising them a job, support, and high wages that they cannot find elsewhere, often leading them to unknowingly or unwillingly enter a situation they cannot escape.

⁵⁸ Gabriele Koch, “Willing Daughters: The Moral Rhetoric of Filial Sacrifice and Financial Autonomy in Tokyo’s Sex Industry,” *Critical Asian Studies* 48/2 (2016), 226.

⁵⁹ “Hostess Girls,” Japan’s Disposable Workers, 2013 (accessed June 25, 2020, http://disposableworkers.com/?page_id=2).

⁶⁰ Anne Allison, *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 34.

⁶¹ Greg Naito, “What Are the Dynamics of Work, Play and Gender in the Mizu Shobai?” 徳島文理大学研究紀要 75 (2008), 13.

⁶² Ibid.; Allison, *Nightwork*, 46–49.

⁶³ “Hostess Girls,” Japan’s Disposable Workers.

⁶⁴ David A. Feingold, “Human Trafficking,” *Foreign Policy* 150 (2005), 28.

⁶⁵ Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration, and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 8.

Failure to Protect Sex Workers

Not only does Japanese society steer women into the sex industry, but it also fails to protect sex workers, allowing exploitation at the hands of traffickers. Along with the re-emergence of the Japanese sex industry post-World War II came the 1948 Law Regulating Businesses Affecting Public Morals, which required businesses involved in the sex industry to register with the police, operate within a specific registered category, and prohibit hiring anyone under the age of 18.⁶⁶ The existence of such a law not only accentuates the importance and acceptance of the sex industry within Japanese society but exhibits the government sanctioning of such an industry. Besides these regulations, little was done to monitor businesses. There were no laws put in place to protect workers, other than an age limit that was likely rarely enforced due to a lack of intervention, thereby allowing the exploitation of sex workers and trafficking to continue.

In 1956 came the first attempt at protecting sex workers, with Japan taking an abolitionist, anti-prostitution stance. Created in an attempt to “[protect] and [rehabilitate] prostitutes,” the Prostitution Prevention Law, enacted in 1957, criminalized acts relating to prostitution including solicitation, the operation of brothels, and “intercourse with an unspecified person in exchange for payment,” and defined punishments for violators, including fines and jail time.⁶⁷ This law was probably created with the combating of sex trafficking in mind, since in most cases, prostitutes were seen as being forced into prostitution rather than “autonomous” agents, and the “evils of prostitution” were often attributed to “people arranging [the] prostitution,” whereas prostitutes themselves were viewed as victims.⁶⁸

According to Rhacel Parreñas, Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California, these claims of “forced prostitution” spurred by moral and abolitionists sentiments prevent the recognition of sex work as a form of “viable employment” and divert attention away from

⁶⁶ Jun Hongo, “Law Bends over Backward to Allow ‘Fuzoku,’” *The Japan Times*, May 27, 2008.

⁶⁷ Tsubasa Wakabayashi, “Enjokōsai in Japan: Rethinking the Dual Image of Prostitutes in Japanese and American Law,” *UCLA Women’s Law Journal* 13 (2003), 164–166; Shiga-Fujime Yuki and Beverly L. Findlay-Kaneko, “The Prostitutes’ Union and the Impact of the 1956 Anti-Prostitution Law in Japan,” *U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal, English Supplement* 5 (1993), 23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

“solutions that target the regulation and protection of sex workers.”⁶⁹ In this vein, this well-intentioned law did very little to protect sex workers or prevent prostitution largely due to the specificity of what constitutes intercourse and the definition of prostitution as an exchange of sex for money. The law itself defined sex as vaginal intercourse, leaving room for other sex acts (such as oral sex) that, when exchanged for money, were not by definition prostitution and thus were not illegal.⁷⁰ Other issues with the law include the difficulty of determining what sex is compensated and what sex is consensual, as well as the fact that paid sex with a “specified person or acquaintance” is not banned. Businesses and other parties involved can easily claim the customer and worker had consensual sex as friends and then exchanged money for the room or other expenditures. These gaps prevent the law from being effective, allowing the continued subjugation of sex workers, and increasing the risk of trafficking.⁷¹

Combating Efforts

Japan’s efforts to combat sex trafficking in recent years are ineffective, though, according to the Trafficking in Persons Report, they are significant. Often referred to as the TIP, the report is issued annually by the United States Department of State for the purpose of monitoring and combating human trafficking. First issued in 2011, the report places state governments into tiers based on their compliance with standards stated in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), with Tier I marking full compliance and Tier 3 indicating lack of compliance with no indication of efforts to do so.⁷²

Beginning in 2011, Japan was consistently identified as a Tier 2 country due to the lack of full compliance with the TVPA’s minimum standards for combating human trafficking.⁷³ After making significant efforts

⁶⁹ Parreñas, *Illicit Flirtations*, 8.

⁷⁰ Yuki and Findlay-Kaneko, “The Prostitutes’ Union and the Impact of the 1956 Anti-Prostitution Law in Japan,” 166.

⁷¹ Hongo, “Law Bends over Backward to Allow ‘Fuzoku.’”

⁷² US Department of State, “Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act” (Washington D.C., 2000); and US Department of State, “US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report,” 2017, 225–227.

⁷³ US Department of State, “US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report” (Washington D.C., 2011).

to comply with these standards, Japan was finally upgraded to a Tier 1 country in 2018, with the report citing the establishment of a task force combating child sex trafficking, specifically compensated dating and child pornography. Whether or not these efforts are indeed effective in combating trafficking is not discussed, and the report continues to criticize Japan on its leniency during prosecutions.⁷⁴

Arguably, the most notable attempt at combating trafficking was Japan's signing of the Palermo Protocol. The "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime" focuses on trafficking as a transnational process that "is committed in more than one State," with effects in other states, a large part of its process occurring in another state, or "[involving] an organized criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one State."⁷⁵ It defines trafficking as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation."⁷⁶

In all, the Protocol brings focus to what is known as the "Three P's" of prevention, protection, and prosecution.⁷⁷ While it seems like a substantial step towards fighting trafficking, Japan is not yet a party to the Protocol, but it does make significant efforts to conform to it, such as the 2004 Japanese Comprehensive Action Plan increasing the enforcement of "immigration controls, assurance of the security of travel related documents, review of

⁷⁴ Ibid., 2018, 244.

⁷⁵ Jean Allain, "No Effective Trafficking Definition Exists: Domestic Implementation of the Palermo Protocol," *Albany Government Law Review* 7 (2014), 113–114.

⁷⁶ UN General Assembly, "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons," Article 3a.

⁷⁷ Kelly Hyland Heinrich, "Ten Years After the Palermo Protocol: Where Are Protections for Human Trafficking Victims?" *Human Rights Brief* 18/1 (2010), 1.

status of residence and visas for ‘entertainers,’ countermeasures against false marriages, [and] measures to prevent illegal employment.”⁷⁸

Unfortunately, Japan’s efforts focus on trafficking as a transnational process and have minimal effect on the trafficking occurring within state borders, particularly the trafficking of Japanese citizens. The government focuses on border security, checking residential status, and reinforcing immigration controls, with most of these combating efforts occurring through the Immigration Bureau of Japan.⁷⁹ By emphasizing the immigration aspect of trafficking, victims are viewed as illegal immigrants rather than vulnerable human beings, and efforts to fight trafficking are ineffective. International Affairs and Global Security scholar Jaqueline Berman explains that “a focus on crime and violated borders (rather than on the conditions under which women migrate or are forced to work) extends barriers to migration and renders it more dangerous for women while not necessarily hindering movement or assisting the actual victims.”⁸⁰ Immigrants will enter a country by any means necessary, making migration more dangerous and allowing them to be targeted by traffickers.

Furthermore, Japan’s view of human trafficking as an issue of illegal immigration impedes efforts to fight trafficking involving Japanese citizens, shown by the “ongoing failure to help Japanese runaway girls who are subjected to sex trafficking.”⁸¹ In other words, Japan’s focus on border security instead of human security only serves to complicate migration, making it more difficult and paving the way for exploitation by traffickers,

⁷⁸ Ellen M Queen, “The Second Tier: Japan’s Stagnation in the Fight Against Sex Trafficking,” *Indiana International and Comparative Law Review* 25/3 (2015), 552–553.

⁷⁹ “Japan Vows to Advance Steps to Eradicate Human Trafficking,” *Kyodo News Service*, May 8, 2015 (accessed June 25, 2020, <http://www.moi.gov.mn/npe/?q=content/japan-vows-advance-steps-eradicate-human-trafficking>).

⁸⁰ Jacqueline Berman, “(Un)Popular Strangers and Crises (Un)Bounded: Discourses of Sex-Trafficking, the European Political Community and the Panicked State of the Modern State,” *European Journal of International Relations* 9/1 (2003), 37.

⁸¹ Alastair Wanklyn, “U.S. Slams Japan over Sex Trafficking, Forced Labor,” *The Japan Times*, July 28, 2015.

while simultaneously marginalizing Japanese victims.⁸² Indeed, the history of Japanese anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution laws reveals the Japanese government's abolitionist stance on prostitution. While society itself accepts the sex industry, shown by its continued visibility – and as the Japanese government supports it, evidenced by its longevity and their attempts to regulate it – the act of prostitution itself (at least the version defined by Japan) is not permitted.⁸³ Instead of taking the more complex route of outlining the difference between sex trafficking victims and sex workers, Japan prefers to abolish the act of prostitution as a whole, as seen by the ongoing legality of the possibly outdated Prostitution Prevention Law. By simplifying this difference, the Japanese fail to understand there is a “significant difference between purchasing the time of a prostitute – a commercial sex act – and making use of or paying for an imported sex slave – a by-product of human sex trafficking.”⁸⁴

Even when it is illegal, women hoping to make money will continue to sell their bodies in order to survive in a society that discriminates against them in the workforce but welcomes them into the sex industry. Much like focusing on border security only serves to make migration more dangerous, an abolitionist approach to prostitution only serves to make sex work more dangerous and reinforces sex trafficking as women rely on third parties for protection from the law, creating more avenues for exploitation.

Conclusion

Multiple factors facilitate sex trafficking in Japan and allow the continued exploitation of women as they prevent the identification and protection of victims while creating and supporting risk factors for trafficking. Japanese trafficking victims remain unidentified within society as the government combating methods focus on border security and fail to

⁸² Ibid. Human security is a term used by Feminist International Relations scholars defined as the freedom from need, and freedom from want. The term is juxtaposed against State Security as it focuses on the individual as the most important actor, rather than the state.

⁸³ Seiko Hanochi, “Constitutionalism in a Modern Patriarchal State: Japan, the Sex Sector, and Social Reproduction,” in Isabella Bakker and Stephen Gill, eds., *Power, Production and Social Reproduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2003), 83.

⁸⁴ Queen, “The Second Tier,” 558.

prosecute traffickers. Shame culture and inherently gendered governmental laws and policies further harm women, preventing them from coming forward and announcing their plight, while creating avenues for further exploitation. Though these factors are difficult to combat as they are embedded within society, measures must be taken in order to pave the way for effective combating of the sex trafficking of Japanese citizens. The focus must be on society, changing its views of female victimization, and raising awareness regarding the prevalence of sex trafficking within Japan. This spread of public awareness of human trafficking should start with the younger generation, specifically targeting males as they are the most likely demographic to purchase sexual services.

Japanese society must also strengthen its collectivist tendencies. As a nation that values group loyalty and wellbeing over the individual, Japan appears to have a “don’t ask, don’t tell” view of sex trafficking and the sex industry.⁸⁵ According to a 2006 survey by the National Women’s Education Center of Japan, 45.5% of men and 26.3% of women stated tolerance of a ‘man unknown to myself’ using sexual services, while 25.5% of men and 4.9% of women expressed tolerance of a “male family member or acquaintance” using services. These views also occur with the selling of services as in response to a “woman unknown to myself” selling services, 42.1% of men and 20.4% of women were accepting, while 9.7% of men and 3.6% of women expressed tolerance of a “female family member or acquaintance” selling services.⁸⁶ In other words, men and women are relatively accepting of the buying and selling of sexual services as long as they themselves are unaware of it or do not know the person involved, which contrasts with the collectivist ideology ingrained in the Japanese psyche whereby you are your neighbor’s keeper.

Collectivist tendencies are increasingly important in the context of self-policing. Japan is a society where women are seen as second-class citizens, as they are often collectively and individually irrelevant unless it

⁸⁵ Harry C. Triandis et al., “Individualism and Collectivism: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Self-Ingroup Relationships,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 54/2 (1988), 324.

⁸⁶ Nami Otsuki and Keiko Hatano, “Japanese Perceptions of Trafficking in Persons: An Analysis of the ‘Demand’ for Sexual Services and Policies for Dealing with Trafficking Survivors,” *Social Science Japan Journal* 12/1 (2009), 53–54.

benefits society in some way, particularly men. The importance of women, both as individuals and as a group, must be emphasized: women are instrumental to Japanese society in both the public sphere as workers and in the private sphere as mothers. The victimization and exploitation of Japanese women can no longer be hidden behind shoji screens. Thus, to identify victims and combat trafficking, society must recognize the importance of women, understand their vulnerabilities, and be more conscious of the sex trafficking of Japanese citizens.

THE INFILTRATED SELF IN MURAKAMI HARUKI'S “TV PEOPLE”

Masaki Mori
University of Georgia

Murakami and Technology

“*TV pīpuru* TV ビーブル (TV People),” a short story originally published in 1989, presents an exceptional case among fiction by Murakami Haruki 村上春樹 (1949–) in the sense that technology assumes central importance.¹ The technology in question, which is the analog TV system, has already been outdated and replaced by the digitized counterpart for a few decades, but the significance of this work still lies in problematizing the relationship between humans and technology, starting with the writer’s own case. Far from being a mere “bad dream, an optical illusion,”² the story critiques the fundamental ways televisual media, in general, affect people’s lives, the most important of which concerns the dismantlement of the self as a pivotal sociocultural construct of intellectual endeavor.

As a writer of contemporaneity, Murakami has publicly made use of the Internet system twice so far, accepting and answering many questions from his readers in Japan and abroad through a temporary website, publishing select collections of correspondence in the form of books and extended versions as CD-ROMs or electronic books.³ While this occasional practice calls for strenuous efforts at the expense of his other writing activities, he

¹ Haruki Murakami 村上春樹, “TV People,” in Alfred Birnbaum and Jay Rubin, trans., *The Elephant Vanishes* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 195–216.

² Livia Monnet, “Televisual Retrofutures and the Body of Insomnia: Visuality and Virtual Realities in the Short Fiction of Murakami Haruki,” *Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies* 3 (1997), 357.

³ Four books came out respectively in 1998, 2000, 2001, and 2006 as a result of the first website correspondence between 1996 and 1999. The fifth book published in 2003, *Shōnen Kafuka* 少年カフカ (*Kafka the Boy*) was based on correspondence from 2002 to 2003. Another book was issued in 2006 from the third online interaction early the same year. The latest book was published in July of 2015 in response to far more readers’ input from January to May of that same year.

considers it an essential means to have direct contact with his readership rather than a relatively quick, lucrative form of publication. These undertakings prove his Internet literacy. Curiously, this online familiarity on a personal level does not translate well into the scarcity of references to information technology in his fiction, and they are far dispersed and not always of the latest kind. Examples include the cassette tape and its recorder that the narrator in “*Kangarū tsūshin* カンガルー通信 (*The Kangaroo Communiqué*)” (1981) uses and the online conversation with keyboard typing via the telephone line between protagonist and his brother-in-law as well as his missing wife in *Nejimakidori kuronikuru* ねじまき鳥クロニクル (*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*).⁴

In creating his fictional world, at least, Murakami appears somewhat reluctant to incorporate the latest technology, as exemplified by *1Q84*.⁵ With the alphabet “Q” pronounced the same as the number 9 in Japanese, the very title indicates the story’s timeframe set in this particular year, just like George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) to which it pays titular homage. Like the British dystopian counterpart, Murakami’s story affiliates itself with science fiction when the term 1Q84 refers to a parallel world that one of the main characters, Aomame, inadvertently slips into. Unlike Orwell’s novel that features the then imaginary technology of ubiquitous surveillance devices from the futuristic viewpoint of the forties, Murakami’s novel, however, published a quarter-century after the story’s dated setting, realistically refers to the technology that was available in the mid-1980s. The deliberately reversed lapse of time suggests at once his comfort of writing about his lifetime’s near past and his discomfort to negotiate the current Internet-based, informational society fully.

To a lesser degree, this temporal scheme suggestive of the writer’s hesitation to incorporate up-to-date technology also applies to *Kishidanchō goroshi* 騎士団長殺し (*Killing Commendatore*) (2017) that draws back about a decade earlier for its primary setting instead of addressing the present in its actual writing later in the mid-2010s. Accordingly, the characters customarily use cellular phones, but smartphones have not made their debut as yet even

⁴ Haruki Murakami, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, trans. Jay Rubin (New York: Vintage, 1998). Originally published in 1994–1995. All the translations to *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* are to this translation.

⁵ Haruki Murakami, *1Q84*, trans. Jay Rubin and Philip Gabriel (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing, 2011). Originally published in 2009–2010.

in this latest novel. Meanwhile, the reclusive character Menshiki accesses the Internet with "a laptop" and "a state-of-the-art Apple desktop computer" at his isolated residence among hills.⁶ Generally speaking, Murakami's fiction centers on human affairs that have little to do with the advancing forefront of technology for communication; instead, it relies on established kinds, such as the radio, LP, CD, and TV, as staple elements of the social fabric from his younger days.

This preference of non-commitment to advanced technology contrasts with Kazuo Ishiguro's stance. Born five years apart shortly after World War II, Ishiguro (1954–) and Murakami respect each other as contemporary writers of international standing. Like the Japanese counterpart, the British writer is not known to avidly pursue new or emerging technology, with one major exception of *Never Let Me Go* (2005) that anticipated the nationalized system of human clone production to medically harvest organs in the foreseeable future. The novel was probably inspired in the wake of the world's first cloned animal, Dolly the Sheep, in July of 1996, and it was hardly a coincidence for the novel to come out of the United Kingdom where the sensationally innovative, biological experiment successfully took place. While uplifting national pride, the scientific breakthrough immediately stirred up the prospect of eventual human cloning with varying consequences, mostly of a genetically bleak future.

In this respect, Murakami's creative mind does not concern itself much with what the evolving technology signifies for humanity.⁷ Outside of information technology, *Sekai no owari to hādoboirudo wandarando* 世界の終わりとハードボイルド・ワンダーランド (*Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World*) (1985) might seem to present an anomalous case, but its purely imaginary cerebral experiment creates an autonomous subconscious world that was not grounded on an existing or emerging technology of the eighties' reality. "TV People," therefore, stands out among his fictional pieces all the more for its focus on one of the most widespread, modern technological

⁶ Haruki Murakami, *Killing Commendatore*, trans. Philip Gabriel and Ted Goossen (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 2018), 262, 634. All the references to *Killing Commendatore* are to the translation in 2018.

⁷ Ibid. Interestingly, the protagonist of *Killing Commendatore* expresses his personal aversion about the idea of having an operation remotely conducted by a surgeon via the Internet (119), and a friend ridicules him for his out-of-date mindset (446).

phenomena. This short story deserves close attention for that reason alone, inciting a fundamental question as to what underlies a nonsensical story about intruders from the other side of television.

Style and Negativity

Although Murakami's fiction has enjoyed high popularity in many parts of the world for three decades, certain established writers and critics have not tended to regard it favorably. While online bookmakers and news organizations have not failed to mention his name as one of the top candidates for a Nobel Prize for Literature in recent years, the selection committee has always proven to use different criteria. One major reason lies in the nature of his writings. Usually written in an easy style to read – filled with original humor, unrealistic occurrences, and references to consumer goods and items of popular culture – Murakami's works are often prone to criticism of frivolity and irrelevance by those who regard grave, sociopolitical conditions as a novelist's foremost duty. From another perspective, though, Murakami addresses specific contemporary issues in his own unique way. The unreal content is akin to works of Kafka and magical realism, alluding to a hardly articulable problem, which lurks in the psyche or society, through unconventional, and sometimes shocking representation. His fiction thus confounds the boundary between serious and popular kinds of literature, to which "TV People" testifies well.

The story does not abide by logic or reason in realistic terms, sounding almost as if the author enjoyed confusing the reader with the nonsensical content. Indeed, the text exhibits a strong sense of playfulness in several respects. The sudden, inexplicable intrusion of shrunk people with a TV set into the narrator-protagonist's daily routine, as well as one of them coming out of the TV in the end, indicates a major element of humor on the plot level. On the sensuous level, soon after the story's beginning, the reader encounters transcriptions of the noises that the narrator hears of a clock in the living room and a stranger's reverberating footsteps outside. Those supposedly onomatopoeic phrases attract the reader's attention audio-visually as they stand out on the pages for their jarring, consonant-rich formations that are hard to pronounce as well as for their dynamic presentations with bold letters in the original Japanese text and with capitalization in the English translation. With no semblance to any regular clock sounds or footsteps, the transcriptions are meant to be wordplays on the surface. Wordplay is also apparent when the narrator explains the strange yet barely noticeable size of the TV People's physique that is proportionally

less than that of humans by 20 to 30 percent. The text repeats the brief sentence "That's TV People" three times in ever-smaller font sizes to represent their reduced body size.⁸

Concerning consumer or popular items, apart from frequent mentions of TV, this story has a number of references to magazines targeted for young to middle-aged women with disposable incomes, such as *Elle* エル, *Marie Claire* マリ・クレール, *An・An* アンアン, *Croissant* クロワッサン, and *Katei gahō* 家庭画報 that is translated as *Home Ideas*. For her editorial research and personal interests, the narrator's wife subscribes to the periodicals, the latest issues of which she organizes in a pile on the sideboard of their living room. The husband does not care for them in the slightest, even wishing for the thorough elimination of all the world's magazines. Accepting their presence in his domestic surroundings as part of his marital condition, however, he confesses to the fear of disturbing the orderly pile of magazines lest that act of negligence provoke the displeasure of his meticulous wife. Magazines by nature are produced as consumables for a leisurely pastime and quick information, and their presence in the story bespeaks the consumption-oriented popular culture in which it is set.

The origin of "TV People" might also account, in part at least, for an ambience of playful creativity through its close affinity with popular culture and consumer society. In the late 1980s when he stayed in inertia after having completed two long novels, including *Noruwē no mori* ノルウェーの森 (*Norwegian Wood*) (1987) and *Dansu dansu dansu* ダンス ダンス ダンス (*Dance Dance Dance*) (1988), Murakami was suddenly inspired to write the short story "almost automatically" after he watched on MTV "the video clip of Lou Reed's song" in which "two strangely dressed men were carrying a large box all over the town," and that helped him to break the writer's block.⁹

⁸ This is shown on page 198. Unless otherwise noted, all the references to Murakami's short story "TV People" are to its translation in *The Elephant Vanishes* (1993).

⁹ Haruki Murakami, *Murakami Haruki zensakuhin 1990–2000 I, Tanpenshū I* 村上春樹全作品 1990–2000 I, 短編集 I [The Complete Works by Murakami Haruki 1990–2000 I: The Collection of Short Stories I] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2002), 294. All the references to this short story in the original are to this edition. Unless otherwise noted, all the translations from Japanese texts are mine. See also Haruki Murakami and Kawakami Mieko, *Mimizuku wa tasogare ni tobitatsu: Kawakami Mieko kiku / Murakami Haruki kataru* みみ

With an uneasy, foreboding tone that is far from being light-hearted and merely amusing, however, the short story points to specific problems inherent in the very normal way we live our television-saturated lives. The intrusion of TV-carrying people into one's life, for instance, stands for the omnipresence of mass media in every corner of the society that seeks easy access to entertainment and information. The salience of their obtrusive visits aligns itself with the media's so pervasive and prevalent influence as to affect even those who, like the narrator, have opted out of televisual exposure. At the same time, with their uniformly plain appearance impersonally nondescript and their silent team maneuver not interfering with the general population, TV People integrate themselves into the social background so thoroughly that they do not attract attention or suspicion from anyone other than the narrator. Humans willingly embrace the media's availability for their convenience and take it for granted as an indispensable part of their lives.

"TV People" thus reveals how the television system affects people significantly through unhindered infiltration into society and stable placement in it as a presumed necessity. Certain kinds of exhibited humor might entertain the reader without offering much reason to laugh outright while supposedly facilitating the text to deliver its social commentary. The text badly qualifies as a conventional satirical piece of dark humor, because its oblique presentation heavily muffles and even distorts an assumed message to hamper and confuse understanding. The overall effect is attenuated negativity until the very end when the story offers not so much an open ending as an ambiguous resolution of alternative demises. For the sake of quick nomenclature, one might be tempted to ascribe such a composition to playful postmodern disillusionment with reality. The story investigates into an even more fundamental predicament that besets and undermines today's humanity beyond mere technophobia, which essentially accounts for the looming sense of negativity.

The Ending of Forking Impasses

Rather than suggesting imaginable possibilities to evolve after the textual closure, the ending in question presents an interpretive impasse with mutually entangled and multiple combinations of dead ends. First, finding himself somewhat getting dry and shrunk in the penultimate paragraph, the

ずくは黄昏に飛びたつ：川上未映子 訊く／村上春樹 語る [The Horned Owl Flies Off at Dusk: Kawakami Mieko Asks / Murakami Haruki Tells] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2017), 251–252.

narrator fears impending death through petrification like what his office colleagues have undergone in his short dream immediately before one of the TV People emerges out of the TV. On the one hand, it represents an awareness of physical death. In the overall context of repeated emphasis on the reduced size of TV People, on the other hand, the perceived physical shrinkage might indicate the narrator's mutation into a nonhuman form of TV People.¹⁰ Their persistent interest in him as a target of their invasion might bespeak their unspoken intention to enlarge their cohort. The ending, without a definite outcome, does not make it clear whether he is becoming another one of them or turning into mere stone at the end. More importantly, in either case, he is at a loss of what to say because he is losing the capability not only to vocalize but also to formulate his own thoughts, which amounts to the loss of his mental faculty and signifies the demise of his inner being.

Second, the one who steps out of the screen and has apparent leadership over the other two TV People makes two assertions concerning the narrator's wife, who has mysteriously failed to come home that evening: she will no longer return to him, and the telephone will ring in about five minutes with a call from her. The narrator is inclined to believe the TV representative in the end, thinking that his marital relationship with the wife has irreparably been damaged. Nevertheless, there is no objective basis for the validity of those statements. His wife might arrive after all or might not, as the representative tells him. The predicted telephone call involves at least three pairs of unresolved binaries concerning its actualization, timing, and the caller's identity. Notwithstanding, he is convinced in the end that his wife has abandoned him, albeit the notion is unfounded and forced on him.

A phone call, possibly from a protagonist's absent wife who stays away at an unknown, unreachable location, recalls an analogous situation with which *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* begins. Unlike the novel in which the protagonist has the textual scope of three volumes to strive for a reunion with his wife, psychical or otherwise, the short story's curtailed circumstances likely indicate the termination of the relationship if the suffered damage is so considerable as the narrator is induced to believe, or now that the narrator's life is in jeopardy. He holds no reason for hope to restore the tie with his missing wife in either of these cases.

In these two respects, there are a number of combined possibilities to follow after the ending, but none of them can claim certain legitimacy. The

¹⁰ See Monnet, "Televisual Retrofutures," 341, 343, 357.

irresolution of such entangled plotlines renders the ending into a kind of labyrinth where the reader hermeneutically gets lost. In effect, “TV People” finds itself congenial to magical realist works of South American writers such as Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) who penned short stories like “The Garden of Forking Paths” (1941) and “The Aleph” (1945) as well as Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014), whose recently translated yet unspecified long novel the narrator is reading. Murakami’s text as a whole is similarly written somewhat like a maze, which one might enter lightheartedly as an uncomplicated reading game. The text hardly makes rational sense, however, and the reader can thus get metaphorically entrapped in this maze since the game turns out to be much more serious and complex than it initially appears. Towards the end, Murakami inserts the phrase, *osoroshii kaisen meiro* おそろしい回線迷路 (dreadful circuit maze),¹¹ translated as “mega circuit” of the telephone line system, to hint at the impassability of almost infinite routes that disconnects the narrator from his wife and also to finalize the text’s labyrinthine quality and its implied literary affinity.¹² This specific reference to a system too complicated to exit at the narrative’s termination verifies not an open-ended development but the plot’s ultimate breakdown.

The Narrator’s Vulnerability

Given the ending’s nature discussed above, a few questions arise as to what brings about the narrator’s multifaceted demise: What attracts TV People as an instrument of the demise to this individual? and what does the entire situation signify beyond this particular case? With the first two questions, some elements suggest what might be amiss with the way he lives. In a way, he is no more than an ordinary resident of the city. Beneath his appearance as a successfully married, regular office employee, however, lie some personal issues and idiosyncratic dissonances.

First, by principle, he refuses to own or use certain mechanical amenities, such as the television and elevators, to the extent that his colleagues ridicule him as a modern-day Luddite. His obdurate avoidance of the machinery, especially the television, largely accounts for TV People’s keen interest in him. They do not have to approach the others, including his wife and colleagues, because the television has already appropriated them

¹¹ Murakami, *Complete Works*, 43.

¹² There is a similar situation involving the protagonist and his missing wife in Murakami, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, 485.

into its system. In other words, the humans, with a few exceptions, have thoroughly and willingly forfeited their position as critically thinking beings without resistance or questioning as far as their interaction with technology is concerned.¹³ As such, they unreflectively behave as if a TV set or TV People did not exist even when they are physically aware of the new device or intruding strangers nearby. What TV People want is the conversion of a few resistant standouts. In this respect, the narrator is a social outcast, and the others treat him accordingly by refusing to discuss or acknowledge his conundrum over technology.

Second, apart from his aversion to technological assimilation, the narrator stays quite aloof of human connection and commitment in both public and private spheres, although he does not regard his detachedness as unusual. In his public role as an office employee for a major electronics company that rivals Sony, he works competently enough to be well regarded by his department head. He self-admittedly does not feel much enthusiasm or satisfaction with his job, which mostly consists of long, smoke-filled meetings for marketing new products. For instance, the day after TV People's first intrusion into his life, he speaks up only once in one of those meetings to ease his sense of duty for receiving a salary. To worsen the unfulfilling environment of drudgery, he has not developed a close relationship with his colleagues. He innately detests the department head for his lightly physical and habitual touch of intended cordiality. Exceptionally, the narrator goes out for a drink after work with a man of his age once in a while, but this supposedly friendly colleague tensely ignores and silently interrupts his confiding as soon as he timidly ventures to mention TV People. In short, as a member of the paid team organized to ensure and enhance corporate profitability, the narrator is not isolated in his workplace, but he does not meaningfully connect to anyone beyond his expected duties.

As far as we can surmise from the text, he does not have much social activity in his private life, either. Unlike his wife, who goes out to see her friends from high school over dinner on some weekends, he prefers to stay home by himself, thus indicating few friends, if any, with whom he can socialize away from work. His unsociability extends to the family circle. As

¹³ See Kuritsubo Yoshiki 栗坪良樹, "Chinnyūsha TV pīpuru 闖入者 TV ピーブル [TV People the Intruders]," Kuritsubo Yoshiki and Tsuge Mitsuhiro 柘植光彦, eds., *Murakami Haruki sutadīzu 3* 村上春樹スタディーズ 3 [Murakami Haruki Studies 3] (Tokyo: Wakakusa shobō 若草書房, 1999), 281.

is typically the case with Murakami's writings, fictional or otherwise, parents are simply disregarded and are irrelevant to the story. Unmentioned likewise, siblings probably do not exist or matter for the narrator. He does have some other relatives but mentions that for ten years, he has not met his cousin to whom he does not feel very close, and he intends to send her a letter to decline her wedding invitation. It is easily inferable that, with a mutual feeling, she has sent him the invitation merely out of the formality of familial obligation.

The situation is even more problematic with his marriage of four years to his wife, who should undoubtedly be the single, most crucial companion in wedlock. She works for a minor publisher of a niche journal with a small yet devoted readership. Both still at an early stage of their careers, they work hard to gain enough income to afford a middle-class urban lifestyle equipped with an apartment in a so-called "mansion" building and a car. When they are busy with their respective jobs, they hardly talk to each other for three days. It is partly because of their tight, ill-matched schedules that the narrator is inclined to decline his cousin's wedding invitation in preference of a long-planned vacation with his wife in Okinawa. Insufficient communication and deficient partnership constitute a large part of their marriage life.

Fairly typical of many of today's marriages in which both spouses have full-time office employment, however, their case does not deviate from the norm much. What makes this marriage striking is the balance of power that plays out between the two involved. Neither of them dominates over the other, but the wife has imposed her will on the husband in certain respects from the beginning, including having made him quit smoking upon getting married. She does not compromise herself, either, with regard to the precise arrangement of interior home decorations. The small apartment is cramped with her research materials as well as with his books, and she does not allow him to disturb in any way. Lest he displease her with his carelessness, he accepts her meticulous ways with patience as a necessary condition for keeping their marriage untroubled and does not shift the position of any items in their residence, except for his own possessions like books and records.

Generally speaking, a spouse often caters to the partner's whim or demand in order to keep their relationship intact. The narrator's wife might as well have conceded to accommodate her husband's idiosyncrasy for life without a TV, although her editorial interest for a magazine about organic food and farming has possibly contributed to their mutual agreement on a less artificial way of living. Still, her uncompromising volition to place everything under her control is oppressive. As the narrator guesses, her

minute attention to the domestic space must exhaust her mind with stress, probably reflecting an unsurfaced yet persistent fear and insecurity verging on the neurosis of dealing with unmalleable external reality. With the aforementioned deficiency of communication and companionship into consideration, there emerges a possibility of her underlying dissatisfaction with her married life, from which she might wish to escape before the husband understands the cause.

At the same time, through his submission to her will, he might keep peace at home, but not necessarily peace of mind. In his home, his life is mentally compartmentalized, consisting of a larger area that he shares with his wife and a much smaller one, reserved exclusively for his own use. Constant caution about casually touching and altering the configuration of nearby objects outside his own small domain renders him psychologically strained and claustrophobic, and as a result, even somewhat paranoid, which might partially account for his fixation on the heterogeneous intruders of a reduced size into his personal space. The spouses' complex inner crises, combined yet mutually unacknowledged, likely have significantly been undermining their marital relationship for some time until it reaches a point of no return or reparation, which the TV representative declares at the end as part of the intruders' scheme.

Of the two spouses, TV People have already taken the wife into their machination because on her return home one day, despite her strong penchant for order, she completely ignored the disorderly aftermath of what the technicians have done in the living room, including the newly installed and unrequested television, her disarrayed magazines, and the large clock displaced on the floor. Given no TV exposure at home, it is only inferable that her induction into their fold had taken place at her work or in the past before marriage when she probably used to watch it. The narrator, on the other hand, remains an unfinished business for TV People, for he has adamantly lived his adult years without a TV. His case must intrigue them all the more for his deep occupational engagement in the proliferation of new TV sets.

The story begins with their covert yet daring onset on him because the time has finally ripened for their maneuver against this exceptional individual. The exact timing cannot be haphazard and unplanned, for the opening pages show him in a very vulnerable state. Physically, he stays alone at home. Socially, as explained above, he is isolated. He also reveals his detachment from the traditional Japanese culture through his total disregard for the sensitivity to nature and seasonal changes in his urban habitat.

Spatially, he feels strained and ill at ease in his private surroundings; and temporally, he habitually finds himself vaguely anxious and disoriented at twilight on early Sunday evenings. The oxymoronic headache of a dull, yet piercing sensation is the first sign, accompanied by the hallucinatory perception of jarring noises, including the large clock's mechanical movement and a stranger's footsteps reverberating in the hall outside the apartment.

These two sensory phenomena undoubtedly strike him on a regular basis, as he anticipates them at a specific time, almost like an obsession. Rather than presented merely as playfully distorted, onomatopoeic transcriptions, the two kinds of noises refer to the relentless progression of time and tacit ostracism that he cannot alter. One comes literally from a solid device for indicating time within the domestic walls where he feels constrained, while the other metaphorically stands for the society that alienates him externally. The narrator is so familiar with the noises that he internalizes them, promptly answering to the wife's question with a similarly dissonant, almost unpronounceable phrase, “サリュッツップクルウウツ” transcribed as “*SLUPPPKRRRZ*,” before realizing its nonsensicality and taking it back.¹⁴ The noises, as well as the headache, result from the persistent unease over lost time and opportunities in the form of a mounting list of the Sunday plans that he has failed to carry out. Coupled with the dreary prospect of a weekday labor cycle to begin just overnight, the noises and the headache beset the narrator with such intensity of discomfort that he lies stupefied, both mentally and physically, in the gathering dusk of his living room, subjecting himself as a ready target before TV People's arrival.

TV People Examined

Unrealistic and surreal as they are, TV People's properties can be understood in terms of Sigmund Freud's speculation on the uncanny,¹⁵ Jean Baudrillard's notion of simulations,¹⁶ and J. Hillis Miller's definition of the

¹⁴ Murakami, *Complete Works*, 18.

¹⁵ See Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” in Alix Strachey, trans., *On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958). Originally published in 1919.

¹⁶ Jean Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations,” in Mark Poster, ed., Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman, trans., *Selected Writings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). Originally published in 1981.

paranormal.¹⁷ These three theories interrelatedly work together effectively to explain Murakami's nonhuman beings. First, Freud's idea of the uncanny is relevant here more for what does not apply to Murakami's short story than for what it does. The psychoanalyst classifies the uncanny phenomena into two kinds, one that we feel "when repressed infantile complexes have been revived," and the other "when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed."¹⁸ The "castration-complex," including the fear of such dismemberment as damage to eyes, typically exemplifies the first kind.¹⁹

This does not apply to Murakami's narrator-protagonist because he is not concerned at all about a specified physical damage of that kind, repressed or not, to his body, and there is no single reference to the past of his childhood in which repression must originate. A repressed trauma from the past does not lie within the scope of this story. The second group consists of the superstitious fear that the rational mind rejects, such as the revival of the deceased and human lookalikes coming to life. This is not the case with *TV People*, because they are neither revived dead beings nor animated dolls. Infused with life, they act like humans.

In contrast to the Freudian uncanny that fills the subject with "dread and creeping horror" or "feelings of unpleasantness and repulsion," *TV People* do not terrify or discomfort the narrator with a sense of repugnance at all. Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject, therefore, has little place here.²⁰ Nevertheless, the narrator intrinsically senses an unusual sort of awkwardness that disquiets the mind in the face of *TV People*, which he tentatively calls "何かしら奇妙な印象 (an inexplicable strange impression)" or "居心地の悪さ (uncomfortableness)," initially ascribing it to the proportional reduction of their physical size.²¹ This kind of unexplained discomfort might account for the reason why Matsuoka Kazuko 松岡和子 considers "*TV People*," along with the other short stories included in the book *TV People*

¹⁷ Miller, J. Hillis. "The Critic as Host," *Critical Inquiry* 3/3 (1977), 439–447.

¹⁸ Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" 157.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122–123.

²¹ Murakami, *Complete Works*, 11.

(1990), a new kind of ghost story by Murakami.²² We have no other way but calling this peculiar feeling uncanny.

At the same time, Freud's etymological investigation into the term has specific bearings on the current case. Citing Schelling, he states that *unheimlich*, "literally 'unhomely'" in German and translated into English as "uncanny," came to assume the same meaning with its presumed opposite, *heimlich*, as "something long known to us, once very familiar...that ought to have remained hidden and secret, and yet comes to light."²³ The Freudian uncanny recurs through "the process of repression."²⁴ As discussed above, however, repression does not have a role in the narrator's psychology. Instead, the uncanny arises extrinsically in the form of TV People. They take advantage of his underlying susceptibilities to impose themselves upon the narrator, because the medium they represent has been "long known" and "very familiar" to him despite his flat refusal to have it at home.

His affinity with TV partly comes from his office work in which he contributes to the further propagation of its influence. More importantly, like everyone else around him, he lives in the society that presupposes the TV's presence as an integral part of its system, and he is exposed to its dominance, whether he accepts it or not. He has become so familiarized with it as to internalize it. For instance, after coming back home from work and waiting for his wife's return, he fails to kill time effectively by deliberately reading the tedious newspaper more than once, and he cannot bring himself to write a letter, due now, declining attendance to his cousin's wedding. The indeterminate suspense of little motivation is typical of what the social norm prescribes as a kind of time to be spent on watching TV aimlessly for the sheer sake of letting time pass. Old-fashioned means, such as reading a novel or a newspaper, which he tries, fail him. Without consciously realizing what he needs but lacks, he misses a regular, functional device to watch. There is no wonder, then, that he has felt a strong fascination with the set from the beginning once TV People install it in his living room even though the machine does not show any recognizable content. The following evening,

²² See Matsuoka Kazuko 松岡和子, "Kyōfu no naka ni tenzai suru azayakana iro: Murakami Haruki cho 'TV pīpuru' 恐怖の中に点在する鮮やかな色: 村上春樹著「TV ピーブル」[The Bright Colors Interspersed in Fear: 'TV People' by Murakami Haruki]," *Murakami Haruki sutadōzu* 3 (1990), 285.

²³ Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" 123–124, 124n, 130.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

however, he cannot even manage to activate the TV, although he tries multiple times with a remote control before it turns on by itself to show the TV representative on the screen.

Although unidentified as such, the representative first appears on the Sony color TV set that a team of three TV People carried around in the narrator's bleak dream of an office meeting. When he wakes up, he finds the same image gazing at him from the living room TV. The correspondence between dream and reality suggests TV People's successful infiltration, like "夢の尻尾 (the tail of a dream)," ²⁵ not only into his private physical space but also into his subconscious. They are neither inhabitants of the dream sphere nor a projection of disturbed or repressed psychology upon reality. Instead, they "ought to have remained hidden and secret" behind the TV screen "and yet come to light" in daily life while getting discreetly internalized without resistance as "something...very familiar" and "long known" in the psychic space that they find congenial. This familiarity partly accounts for their unassertive kind of uncanniness.

TV People are instinctively familiar to the narrator because they, as simulacra, embody the sort of life that he and the other members of society live. By calling them by the *katakana* transcription of the English word, "ビープル (people)," which is highly unusual, if not impossible, in actual Japanese usage, he distinguishes them from humans from the very beginning. He thus considers these human lookalikes from the televisual sphere of artificial illusion alien, even somehow false in contrast to actual humans' existence. But the real as genuine can no longer be validly discriminated from the imaginary as false because simulation compromises the distinction between those binaries and brings forth amalgamated truth or reality as a result. As Baudrillard puts it regarding cartography, "[i]t is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: hyperreal," and TV, along with Disneyland, is the critic's favorite example of such "a hyperspace" in today's world. In other words, our epistemology faces "a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself," which constitutes "an operation to deter every real process by its operational double."²⁶ Emerging as human-like emissaries from the TV hyperspace to affect the external world, TV People function as a metaphor incarnate of "operational doubles."

²⁵ Murakami, *Complete Works*, 38.

²⁶ Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," 169–170.

Though TV People appear like humans, their “効率よく (efficiently)” acted-out purposefulness along with the representative’s precisely regulated way of stepping down the stairs and his paper-thin voice devoid of intonation are more aligned with mechanical qualities.²⁷ This mechanical nature also accounts for the second source of TV People’s uncanny impression, not just for being affiliated with a machine but because, as agents of simulation, they operate to transmute the world into an extension of the televisual space. According to Baudrillard, simulation, by way of “any technical apparatus, which is always an apparatus of reproduction,” constitutes “the place of a gigantic enterprise of manipulation, of control and of death,” and he associates a resulting “anguish, a disquieting foreignness” and “uneasiness” with Walter Benjamin’s theory of the mirror-image.²⁸

Without transforming social reality, TV People manipulatively yet unnoticeably approximate it to the TV hyperspace through simulative reduction, thereby achieving the effect of reproduction that begins with their shrunk physique. To the extent that it hardly brings about any caution or attention on humans, their size is reduced, for “genetic miniaturization is the dimension of simulation,” and, theoretically, they “can be reproduced an indefinite number of times.”²⁹ Their reduced physical size not only defines their proper domain behind the small screen through which they emerge but also corresponds to the reductive way of thinking with which electronic media affects the viewer into accepting their information with little questioning. The process is well demonstrated toward the end of the story when the narrator challenges the TV representative about the shape of an object in the making. The large, black, strange machine on which the other two TV People are assiduously working looks like a “giant orange juicer” to him at first. As the unflustered representative stands next to him and talks as if coaxing a recalcitrant child, he soon accepts the representative’s absurd proposition of the object in question as an “airplane.” In this mindset, the

²⁷ Murakami, *Complete Works*, 22.

²⁸ Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations,” 185. See also Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” in Edmund Jephcott and Harry Zohn, trans., *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 32–33. Originally published in 1935.

²⁹ Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations,” 170.

narrator also comes to accept the subsequent comments made by the representative about his damaged marriage life and the wife's desertion without offering any voiced refutation.

The external reduction of the body turns out to be symptomatic of what undergoes inside mentally. As his intellectual capacity is reduced to merely "repeat" what the representative tells him, the narrator finds his palm smaller than usual. Other symptoms of reduction include the awareness of his very existence as "とてもうすっぺら (very thin)" and his voice that gradually loses depth and human expressiveness like the representative's as he converses with the nonhuman counterpart that watches over his transformation.³⁰

In this way, TV People influence society in order to make it a copy of their own proper sphere without altering its distinct structure and detail. As a token of the simulatively copied world, the phonetically challenging, dissonant noises that the narrator hears in his living room the evening before, especially those of the large clock, prove not to be merely strange, isolated phenomena. Instead, these sounds reveal to be of the same nature as the mechanical noises coming from the huge machinery that the two factory workers are making on television. As these two noises alternate one after another as if mutually echoing from each side of the TV, the narrator begins losing humanity or facing imminent death. Those distorted noises he hears on early Sunday evenings, then, turn out to announce the opening of a passage into the other world of televisual simulacra, thus presaging an arrival of intruders, at once familiar and yet unknown, accompanied by a painless sensation of deep penetration into the brain.

The two sides acoustically correspond to each other, because the TV screen no longer imperviously demarcates the seemingly authentic, yet now compromised, reality from televisual simulation. Not hermetically delimited any more, the TV sphere exudes through the osmotic screen to produce an unpronounced, fundamental change outside in the form of TV People. In this sense, rather than supernatural, their presence proves to be that of the paranormal in Miller's terminology:

A thing in "para" is...not only simultaneously on both sides of the boundary...[but] also the boundary itself, the screen which is...a permeable membrane connecting

³⁰ Murakami, *Complete Works*, 43.

inside and outside...dividing them but also forming an ambiguous transition between one and the other.³¹

TV People traverse the TV screen from the electronic realm to the tangible world of materials and vice versa without much difficulty. At the same time, the televisual space that appears three-dimensional in the apparatus behind the screen, in fact, presents itself nowhere else than on the screen's exposed surface two-dimensionally only when the device is in operation. In this sense, the very screen constitutes their presence, which explains why they never maneuver far away from a TV set, as first demonstrated in the narrator's living room. As for his office, including the reproduced one in his dream, the entire corporate space is solely aimed at designing and marketing such consumer electronic devices as the television for maximal profits, enabling TV People to move around at ease like proverbial fish in the water.

This paranormal nature thus prescribes their spatiotemporal presence. As the protagonist specifies at the beginning of his narration, it is the brief intermediary span of time, a temporal "permeable membrane connecting" day and night, when they first encroach on his living space; hence, he is fully aware that, for their infiltration, they deliberately choose "時刻の薄闇 (the twilight of time)" on a Sunday evening when he habitually lies paralyzed and vulnerable.³² On the way to his office on the ninth floor the following Monday morning, he encounters the TV representative walking down the "四階と五階の間の階段 (stairs between the fourth and fifth floors)."³³ As people rely on the elevator, the unused stairs functioning as a spatially "ambiguous transition" between two populated floors is one variation of Murakami's loci that often take the form of a hole to descend to a fabulous or extraordinary place, as illustrated by "*Doko de are sore ga mitsukarisōna basho de* どこであれそれが見つかりそうな場所で (Wherever I'm Likely to Find It)" (2005). In that short story, a Merrill Lynch trader, who also avoids using the elevator, has seemingly disappeared without a trace on the stairs between the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth floors of his high-rise "mansion" building. Another good example is the abandoned stairway that Aomame goes down from a congested highway to find her unintentional passage into a world with two moons, which she later terms 1Q84.

³¹ Miller, "The Critic as Host," 441.

³² Murakami, *Complete Works*, 16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 29.

Central to Murakami's fiction is an intermediary space of paranormal nature, as the main character often seamlessly transitions through it from a world of normalcy to a new dimension with varying degrees of unfamiliarity. Other examples abound, such as *watashi's* entry through a ladder into Tokyo's subterranean world where insidious creatures, called Yamikuro, are lurking in *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. In *Killing Commendatore*, the narrating painter descends into the other world of "metaphors" via a hole that suddenly opens up on the floor of an older painter's sickroom where he is visiting.

This traversing is not one-directional, and not all the human figures, if fortunate, manage to come back after all. Many kinds of nonhumans also make the transition. For instance, an unidentified, slimy creature of malign nature "squirm[s] out of [dead] Nakata's mouth" before Hoshino succeeds in closing the opened path it seeks by turning a large, heavy stone in chapter 48 of *Umibe no Kafuka* 海辺のカフカ (*Kafka on the Shore*).³⁴ Similarly, the "ominous"-sounding "Little People" come out of the open mouth of a sleeping ten-year-old girl who has been severely abused sexually to the detriment of her mental and reproductive faculties in chapter 19 of *1Q84*.³⁵ In chapter 21 of *Killing Commendatore*, the eponymous character comes alive as a self-proclaimed "Idea" in the form of a reduced copy of one of the figures on a recently discovered painting, while another character from the same painting, who identifies himself as "a Metaphor, nothing more," pops out of the hole in the room of that dying old man who painted it in chapters 51 and 52.³⁶ Both these embodied "Idea" and "Metaphor" as well as the TV representative respectively belong to the compressed, intermediary plane field of a canvas or a TV screen, out of which they emerge.

The transitional space facilitates the traversing and lessens the expected impact of violation, which relates to the East-West difference that Murakami posits. The Western imagination sharply and inviolably separates

³⁴ Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*, trans. Philip Gabriel (New York: Vintage, 2005), 451–454. Originally published in 2002. See also Koyama Tetsuro and Yukawa Yutaka, "Murakami Haruki rongu intabyū: *Umibe no Kafuka wo kataru* 村上春樹ロング・インタビュー: 『海辺のカフカ』を語る [A Long Interview with Murakami Haruki on *Kafka on the Shore*]," *Bungakukai* 文学界 57/4 (2003), 10–42.

³⁵ Murakami, *1Q84*, 240, 249–250.

³⁶ Murakami, *Killing Commendatore*, 236, 550.

this familiar world of the living from the other, unknown counterpart, and the crossing, if any, entails inevitable friction and a great sense of infringement. In contrast, Japan and East Asia show a “unique kind of pre-modernity” in which reality and unreality coexist side by side and “traversing the border this way or that is natural and smooth, depending on the situation.”³⁷ He ascribes the unreal elements of his fiction in general to this traditional East Asian sensitivity to traversable duality. A device that makes the passage hardly laborious and remarkable, if not quite “natural and smooth,” therefore functions in his literature as an intermediary space between two worlds.

Accordingly, even when one of the alien TV People comes out of the TV set, the action only requires on the representative’s part the same amount of physical exertion as going through just a regular, somewhat narrow opening like a window rather than forcibly trespassing upon another dimension. On his part, as if hypnotized, the narrator does not make any reaction or express any horror. It follows that Murakami here is interested in TV not necessarily as a piece of technology per se but as a pathway from another world, and TV People prove to be paranormal rather than supernatural by nature, and more “[t]elevisual virtual images” than “cyborgs, computer simulations or AI...creations.”³⁸ Assimilated into the reality that television as a dominant medium of information, saturated and simulated, their presence is already considered familiar even if no one has seen them materialize before. That sense of uncalled-for, unacknowledged familiarity causes the narrator an unaccountable uneasiness that verges on the uncanny.

What fundamentally renders them uncanny, however, is their ability to transfuse themselves into the human psyche, take over the mind, and dismantle the self in the process. At the end of the story, the self disintegrates as a result of the substantial influence from media. The Western philosophical speculation in the last four centuries has placed primal emphasis on the solidified consciousness of one’s own interiority as irreplaceably unique, independently contained, and sharply contrasted to social exteriority as an individual entity. The construction of the self was posited as a project of increasing importance since Descartes and the Enlightenment, culminating in the apparent actualization with modernity. Now, as Fredric Jameson notes

³⁷ Koyama and Yukawa, *A Long Interview*, 13–14, 16, 38–39.

³⁸ Monnet, “Televisual Retrofutures,” 346.

as "one of the fashionable themes in contemporary theory," the "formerly centered subject or psyche" is considered "*decentering*" in postmodernity.³⁹

This "disappearance of the individual subject,"⁴⁰ therefore, was happening as the sense of the self almost established the status of a given while its basis was eroded through modernization, or more specifically, technological advance for reproducibility, the side effects of which concern Benjamin's main tenet. His interest pertains to the greatly enhanced technology of reproduction in the early twentieth century and its profound implications on artistic practice and sociopolitical reality. He discusses the "authenticity" or the "aura" of an artifact as its "core," arguing that "the destruction" thereof "is the signature of a perception" that "by means of reproduction...extracts sameness even from what is unique."⁴¹ Abundant copies that the technology of reproducibility made readily available began to cripple the artistic "authenticity" when most urban inhabitants already "relinquish[ed] their humanity in the face of an apparatus."⁴² If we treat the self as an intellectual construct with "authenticity," the underlying analogy is obvious.

The constructed self was even more precarious in Japan's modernity that was hastily imported and implemented in a matter of half a century. Self was an ill-fit covering imposed on the Japanese psyche whose orientation was traditionally communal. The resulting conflict is evident, for instance, in *Kokoro* こゝろ (1914) by Natsume Soseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916) with the nation hovering on the threshold into full modernity at the end of the Meiji Period. Of particular interest in this context is *Tomodachi* 友達 (*Friends*) (1967) by Abe Kobo 安部公房 (1924–1993) that came out more than two decades after World War II when individualism supposedly took root on the adoptive soil. A nine-membered, three-generational family without kinship to the protagonist suddenly impose themselves on him and takes over his private living space, claiming that the solitary figure needs their surrogate companionship. Incarcerated in his apartment, he eventually dies thanks to the "comfort" they provide against his will. The play offers an ironic social commentary on the majority principle of the constitutionally implemented,

³⁹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴¹ Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 22–24.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 31.

post-war democratic regime.⁴³ More importantly, Abe exposes the fragile basis of individuality in mid-twentieth-century Japan, where the crafted selfhood remained fragile and vulnerable to the binding force of a communal entity of the family.

Conclusion

In the next few decades, the unstable status of the self did not change, while the communal cohesion that once suppressed individualistic assertion diminished mainly through structural disintegration of the family system from multigenerational to nucleus, and often to even smaller social units. The comparison with Abe's *Friends* reveals that, by the time "TV People" was written, the individual has lost meaningful contact with the rest of the society, including its own immediate relatives, through the social restructuring. Without the familial bond that used to define and sustain a person's social identity, the self is left on its own. In place of a socioculturally hereditary system, what approaches and appropriates the now exposed, isolated, and not fully developed self is electronic media, more specifically TV in this case, to fill the widening relational gap among humans with a pervasively overflowing amount of information.

It follows that Murakami's short story illustrates the process of the dismantlement of the self as a construct of modernity. By definition, the self is supposed to have its solid agency, yet its foundation does not stand very certain as it remains unguardedly susceptible to influences from new inventions of telecommunication for reproducibility and simulation. In this story, the ambiguous ending with external signs of two alternative outcomes to the protagonist, physical petrification or metamorphosis into a nonhuman form, alludes to what is happening internally. The self is not only dismantled to the death of humanness but also reintegrated as one of the simulated "depthless...postmodern subjectivities" of the television system.⁴⁴ Hence, the psychic shell becomes an internal "permeable membrane" to allow and identify with the televisual infusion. That is the ultimate source of the uncanny that the narrator feels upon encountering TV People as they

⁴³ Kuritsubo, "TV People the Intruders," 274–275, 284, discusses the same situation in Abe Kobo's short story, "*Chinnyūsha* 闖入者 [Intruders]" (1951), which is a prototypal text for the play, in terms of the majority principle and an individual's alienation.

⁴⁴ Monnet, "Televisual Retrofutures," 351.

paranormally interpenetrate first through the TV screen, then further into the self, which they find readily transmutable to their simulative image manipulation.

As their identically copied appearance indicates, their human-like form is a temporary result of the necessity to insert themselves into the physical world. Coming from the electronic realm, these beings originate in the TV screen's "白い光、ノイズ (white light, noise)" out of which the representative emerges.⁴⁵ In essence, the televisual system seeks to place isolated individuals collectively under its control. If it achieves the aim, the content of broadcast information does not matter. Therefore, the white noise, stands for the ultimate form of enthrallment of human viewers, as this happens to the narrator as well.⁴⁶ His initial interest in the new TV's blank screen lasts less than half a minute. Later in the middle of that night, he finds himself gazing at the white light with static noise for a longer time. Finally, the following evening, he gets frustrated with the TV that fails to turn on despite his many attempts to the extent that he misses the white noise, signaling his readiness for incorporation into the system just before the representative's embodied emergence.

Murakami leaves certain aspects of the story untold or unexplained. First, while TV People function as manifested agents of the TV system that encroaches on the human psyche, it is not mentioned who or what organization operates them at the center of the system. Second, it is also not clear at what point of time, in what situation, and for what reason the narrator tells his story to the reader. The first question pertains to many of his stories. Indicative of the insidious nature of the postmodern society in which the center of power stays obscure and unidentifiable, those stories do not ascribe the source of manipulation to a single individual, organization, or a cluster of them. Even when those entities are named, such as the star-marked sheep in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the Calcutecs in *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, and Wataya Noboru in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, among others, they are not presented as "the" villain(s) whose immediate removal alone would solve the problem. Instead, these elusive figures are always suggestive of the larger machination that stays behind and unspecifiable

⁴⁵ Murakami, *Complete Works*, 25.

⁴⁶ This reference recalls the postmodern novel by Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (New York: Viking, 1984).

while infusing them with an unmitigated, malevolent will to power,⁴⁷ and its effect goes far beyond mere surveillance as “TV People” illustrates.⁴⁸

As for the second question, the protagonist’s narration in past tenses places the story’s formation after its ending. On the one hand, this makes it awkward for him to be telling his personal account after he has lost his existence as a human being. On the other hand, he offers a narrative of what has transpired to him without critiquing at all how adroitly TV People infringed on his life, which is compatible with his post-human phase. These considerations altogether make it clear again that, while somewhat concerned about a broader aspect of postmodernity, this short story primarily focuses on the fundamental effect of electronic media on humanity in the reductive form of terminal functionaries. They are pervious not only to the TV screen but also to the human psyche, effectually altering and appropriating people’s critical thinking, free will, and emotions that should render them human. Without being didactic, Murakami wrote a cautionary story about too much dependence on the television system. Three decades after the publication, however, the text increasingly seems to have foreshadowed humanity’s current predicament in which far more advanced, pervasive media has profoundly affected our society.

⁴⁷ What Ebisuno in *IQ84* states about Little People is suggestive in this context because Little People approximate TV People in several respects. According to him, in place of George Orwell’s Big Brother who as an easily detectable figure has “no longer any place...in this real world of ours” (Murakami, *IQ84*, 236), the unidentifiable Little People have appeared.

⁴⁸ In this sense, rather than such phrases as “colonized...reality,” “imperialistic...visuality,” and “[d]ictatorship” that suggest a source of power, Monnet’s mention of “a totalitarian and oppressive, if diffused vision” seems more appropriate to “TV People” (Monnet, “Televisual Retrofutures,” 346, 348, 351, 353).

Essays

THE ROLE OF COMPASSION IN ACTUALIZING DŌGEN'S ZEN

George Wrisley
The University of North Georgia

Introduction

The thirteen-century Japanese Zen Master Dōgen is renowned as a towering religious *and* philosophical figure. After returning from China in 1227, with four years pursuing the authentic Buddha Dharma, he founded the Sōtō Zen school of Buddhism. The other main school of Zen in Japan, Rinzai, is often compared with Dōgen's, as Rinzai, unlike the latter, is often understood to view kōans as an essential means to unlocking experiential insight in the context of meditation.¹ In contrast, Dōgen is usually understood to insist on *shikantaza*, or "just sitting," an activity of radical presence to, and letting go of, whatever may arise. In the context of this controversy regarding *zazen* (seated meditation), the emphasis is on how best to unlock the *experiential* realization of enlightenment, where a central aspect of such experience is the apprehension of *sunyata* (emptiness).²

As important as these issues are, there is much more to Dōgen's conception of Zen practice, and much more that is of interest to Western thought. In particular, by turning our focus from *zazen* to compassionate activity (on and off the cushion), we can turn away from a one-sided focus on experience and to a more multifaceted and comprehensive account of Zen practice, one that has activity – *doing* – at its center. This is particularly important as a corrective to the emphasis on experience in understanding Dōgen's Zen, but also because it provides an interesting perspective of how profound emptiness is in the way it transforms everything, including such common "items" as compassion.

Comparisons of Western and Japanese ideas and concepts may bear fruit because of the starkness of the contrast – for example, the wabi-sabi aesthetic with a Western one focused "simply" on beauty – but it may also

¹ For an excellent discussion of Dōgen and the kōan tradition, see Steven Heine, *Dōgen and the Kōan Tradition: A Tale of Two Shōbōgenzō Texts* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

² The nature of *zazen* can be seen to go beyond "mere" seated meditation. That is, everyday activity can become *zazen*, so long as this is not understood as negating the need to practice seated meditation of *shikantaza*.

bear fruit by way of challenging us to reconsider our understanding of our own concepts and practices. I believe this latter is the case with compassion, as we will see in what follows, when we apply Dōgen's understanding of Zen and, more specifically, emptiness, to it.

The central question this analysis attempts to answer is: What exactly is the role of compassion in the experience of one practicing Dōgen's Zen, especially given the usual emphasis of *zazen* and *shikantaza* in discussions of Dōgen's thought? As the question concerns experience, one of the main contentions of this study – and contrary to much of what has been written in the twentieth century about Zen, both in Japan and out – is that Dōgen's Zen is not primarily concerned with cultivating the *experience* of enlightenment, but rather, the *enactment* and *realization of enlightenment* through bodily activities (ones, of course, accompanied by focused attention/intention). One of the most central is *zazen*, but the other, upon which we will focus, is compassion. Compassion and *prajna*, or “wisdom beyond wisdom,” are the dual aspects of the heart of the bodhisattva ideal in Mahayana Buddhism – in Dōgen's Zen. In answer to the central question above, I will argue that the Middle Way of Dōgen's Zen is the *expression* of the *two* sides of reality, form, and emptiness, through the *single* activity of embodied compassion. Thus, the first part of this study will focus extensively on reconstructing, in Western philosophical terms, Dōgen's views of emptiness and how his Zen is not a matter of lingering in emptiness, but, as Nishiarī Bokusan comments, “There is a point in which you jump off both form and emptiness, and do not abide there.”³ This “jumping off” is enacted, at least in part, through compassionate activity, or so I will argue, in the last part of this analysis.

Emotion and Religious Experience

As a Western scholar, two of the most significant issues regarding emotion and religious experience would seem to be the: (1) “Does religious experience provide evidence for religious belief?”⁴ or rather, does emotional

³ Nishiarī Bokusan, “Commentary on Dogen's Genjo Koan,” in Sojun Mel Weitsman and Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans., *Dogen's Genjo Koan: Three Commentaries* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2011), 33.

⁴ According to Keith E. Yandell, this is “[t]he basic question this book tries to answer.” See Yandell, *The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15.

experience provide access to religious truth?; and (2) given the often assumed non/ir-rationality of emotion, what is the relationship between emotion and rationality (including the rational justification) of religious belief? However, approaching Dōgen's Zen and the role of compassion in it, with these questions as central, is problematic. Regarding the first issue, while we might interpret such practices as *zazen* and compassionate activity as means of epistemic access to the truths of Buddhist doctrine, Dōgen vehemently rejects an understanding of these Buddhist practices in means-ends terms. This discussion, then, explains how enlightenment is not the consequence of protracted practice; instead, practice *is* realization: "Know that buddhas in the buddha way do not wait for awakening."⁵ As for the second issue, for instance, Dōgen indeed seems to affirm that, "When emotions arise, wisdom [*prajna*] is pushed aside,"⁶ and elsewhere he warns against our emotions being unmanageable, running away like monkeys swinging through the trees.⁷ Nevertheless, these warnings are not, and in fact, cannot be a part of a wholesale rejection of emotions as either non/ir-rational or as impediments to enlightenment. As for the latter, this is because compassion, as a complex emotion, is so essential to the bodhisattva ideal.

Regarding the non/ir-rationality of emotion, we must be clear about the differences between the Japanese and English/European languages. While in English we might naturally associate reason with the mind and emotion with the heart, this is not so clearly the case in Japanese. The Japanese character found in Dōgen's Zen that tends to get translated as "mind" is *shin* 心 – for example, in his phrase, *shinjindatsuraku* 身心脱落 "dropping away of body and mind."⁸ However, 心 can also be translated as "heart" (and read as *kokoro* instead of *shin*), but, as Thomas P. Kasulis notes, it is often translated as "heart and mind" because of the complexities of the character's possible meanings and associations. According to Kasulis, 心 can

⁵ Refer to Dōgen's fascicle, "Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" in Kazuaki Tanahashi 棚橋一晃, ed. and trans., *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo* (Boston: Shambhala, 2012), 260.

⁶ See "One Bright Pearl" fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 36.

⁷ Kōshō Uchiyama, *How to Cook Your Life: From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment*, trans. Thomas Wright (Boston: Shambhala, 2005), 7.

⁸ Found in various places in Dōgen's work, but a common example is in "Genjōkōan." See Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 30.

be seen as denying the usual Western dichotomies of reason and emotion and body and mind. Speaking of *kokoro* 心 in the context of Shinto, Kasulis writes:

If one has to try to find a single English translation, the “mindful heart” might be a bit closer to the mark – especially if we remember that the mindful heart is not separate from the body. Because the mindful heart is an interdependent complex of responsiveness, *kokoro* can never be just a blind emotion.⁹

In broad agreement with what Kasulis writes, Roger Ames and David Hall also comment on 心 in the context of the Chinese *Daodejing*.¹⁰ In particular, they emphasize the inseparability of mind and heart, and, thus, too, reason and feeling, in the classical Daoist worldview.¹¹ While there is some distance between the *Daodejing* and Dōgen, it still an integral part of the cultural and philosophical history that helped shape Dōgen’s own philosophical and literary context; and, as we see with Kasulis, this broadly conceived inseparability between the cognitive and affective is alive in the Japanese understanding of 心 as well. So, we do not have a clear distinction seemingly found in Plato, for example, between the rational and affective parts of the “soul.” Nor do we have what motivates Robert C. Solomon, for example, so centrally as in *The Passions*, the notion that the underlying theme of Western philosophy is, “The wisdom of reason against the treachery and temptations of the passions.”¹²

A further complication concerns the status of compassion *qua* emotion. As Ronald de Sousa notes, compassion, like love and benevolence,

⁹ Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 25.

¹⁰ The Japanese language consists in part in a syllabic writing system (*kana*) together with characters borrowed from the Chinese (*kanji*).

¹¹ Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: “Making This Life Significant”: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 26.

¹² Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 11.

are names of *both* virtues and emotions.¹³ It is this dual aspect that makes compassion so interesting and useful to consider in the context of Dōgen's Zen. As we were with the Japanese 心, we must be careful not to uncritically regard the Japanese *jihī* 慈悲, which is translated as "compassion" in Dōgen's writings, as synonymous in every respect with the English "compassion." However, given what is said about the bodhisattva in Dōgen's writings, *jihī* 慈悲 does seem to fit well with Lawrence Blum's helpful and thorough analysis of the English "compassion." Blum writes of the complexity of compassion as not simply a feeling but an emotional attitude that attempts to inhabit the position of the other imaginatively.¹⁴ Most importantly, he notes that "Characteristically...compassion requires the disposition to perform beneficent actions, and to perform them because the agent has had a certain sort of imaginative reconstruction of someone's condition and has a concern for his good."¹⁵ As we will explore, this is vital to the activities of the bodhisattva, yet, what this comes to will be reconfigured in the context of Dōgen's understanding of emptiness.¹⁶

Dōgen, Non-Duality, and Expressing Two Sides of Reality

Before we can understand the way compassion enacts and goes beyond the non-dual duality of self and world, we must understand something of Dōgen's views on non-duality more generally – views well-characterized by the expression, "Not one, not two; not the same, not different." To

¹³ Ronald de Sousa, "Emotion," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014), ed. Edward N. Zalta (accessed May 25, 2020, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/emotion/>), section 10.

¹⁴ Lawrence Blum, "Compassion," in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Explaining Emotions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 509. For further important discussions of compassion see Solomon, *The Passions*, 207, 280–284; and Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); For a discussion of Nussbaum's analysis of compassion, see Jeremiah Conway, "A Buddhist Critique of Nussbaum's Account of Compassion" *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 8/1 (2001), 7–12.

¹⁵ Blum, "Compassion," 513.

¹⁶ Instead of "reconfigured," we might use the distinction between *deconstructive* and *reconstructive* aspects of Dōgen's understanding of emptiness. Refer to Hee-Jin Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking: A Reflection on His View of Zen* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), chapter 3.

understand what this comes to and the way it transforms compassion, we need to turn to Dōgen's understanding of emptiness. A thorough treatment of Dōgen's views on emptiness is, of course, not possible here; thus, we will strive to understand the broad strokes without attempting thereby to offer a defense or argument in favor or opposition of them.

Kazuaki Tanahashi notes that the *Heart Sutra* is "regarded as a brief condensation of the entire Mahayana teaching of *shunyata* (emptiness or boundlessness)."¹⁷ Perhaps most famous for its lines claiming that form is emptiness and emptiness is form, it specifies that all dharmas (things/phenomena) are empty. Grasping this emptiness through Buddhist practice is *prajna* or wisdom beyond wisdom. Manifesting *prajna* is the seeing/living beyond dualistic views of self and other, and other and other. This itself is enlightenment – the realization of the non-duality of all dharmas and, ultimately, the enactment and transcending of this non-duality.

Understanding enlightenment as the manifestation of *prajna*, *qua* emptiness, what exactly is emptiness for Dōgen? And how exactly does one manifest it? Lastly, how is it the manifestation of non-duality, and how does one enact and transcend this non-duality? To begin to answer these questions, let us look at what we should think of as the two main aspects of emptiness: (1) transitoriness of all dharmas/things; and (2) the interdependence of all things/dharmas through causal and conceptual/logical conditions.

Beginning with transitoriness: What is it that justifies our saying the (numerically) one and same person, Dōgen, was born in 1200 and died in 1253? In Hinduism, we might appeal to the idea of the *atman* – described, for example, in the *Bhagavad Gita* – as "imperishable and unchanging," perduring through the ever-changing conditions of the body-mind, and taking on new body-minds as we take on new clothes.¹⁸ Yet, Buddhism denies that very thing, i.e., some unchanging substance or essence, making a person self-same over time. As Dōgen writes in his revered fascicle, "Genjōkōan": "If you examine myriad things with a confused body and mind, you might suppose your mind and essence are permanent. When you practice intimately and return to where you are [the present moment, particularly in *zazen*], it

¹⁷ Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, liv.

¹⁸ Stephen Mitchell, *Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000), 48.

will be clear that nothing at all has an unchanging self.”¹⁹ We see here in Dōgen the usual Mahayana extension of the early Buddhist denial of an *atman* to everything else. None of the myriad things is self-identical over time. This is one key aspect of emptiness. Each moment is birth and death – the “self,” which consists of the five skandhas (form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness), “is born and perishes moment by moment without ceasing.”²⁰

The other aspect of emptiness is the interdependent nature of everything, both diachronically and synchronically. Each moment (synchronically) is an interdependent whole that arises (diachronically) from past causes and conditions. This is one way of understanding the central Mahayana (Madhyamika-influenced), Zen notion of dependent origination. In Dōgen, we see it referred to in a variety of ways that show the causal and conceptual/logical interdependence of all dharmas/things. For example, in the “Mountain and Waters Sutra,” Dōgen points out that when the mountains give birth to a stone child at night, not only is a child born but so is a parent – the parent only being such in relation to the child. Thus, Dōgen says the parent becomes a child. As such, the parent and child are not separate in his view. This example, of course, is not merely about literal mothers and children but rather about how each moment gives birth to the next. “Parent” and “child” mutually condition one another in such a way that linear time as a succession of moments whose being is related to other moments but “self-contained” falls apart. *This* moment conditions the next but also is what it is in relation to what comes after.

We should note here further that Dōgen's language often/usually functions on multiple levels. “Mountain” means mountain, but it also can mean nature and the state of meditation.²¹ Moreover, night often represents non-duality. So when Dōgen says that, “A stone woman gives birth to a child at night means that the moment when a barren woman gives birth to a child is called night” we can read him as saying, in part, that when the mother gives birth to the child thus being herself born as a mother, mother and child are not separate, they are non-dual. And the non-duality of mother and child here represents a kind of conceptual/logical inseparability as much as a causal one.

¹⁹ See “Actualizing the Fundamental Point” (“Genjōkōan”) fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 30. Interpolation added.

²⁰ Ibid., 803, “Virtue of Home Leaving” fascicle.

²¹ Ibid., 1072, “Glossary.”

This kind of relationship manifests throughout the world and is seen in the relationship between past and present Buddhas (enlightened beings), nature and the person, the mountains, and the person, but ultimately between the “individual” and her world. In a particularly pregnant passage in the fascicle “Total Dynamism,” Dōgen writes:

Reflect quietly: As for this present birth and all the dharmas that arise in conjunction with it, should we or should we not construe the dharmas as one with birth? There is not a moment or a dharma that is not one with birth; nor is there an event or a mind that is not one with birth.²²

Birth is just this ever-present moment in which all things inseparably arise together. Remember that birth here can mean one’s literal birth but also the moment to moment birth that each *dharma* undergoes, i.e. life. We can gain some further understanding of what Dōgen from this same fascicle:

Birth is like a person riding in a boat. Although the person prepares the sails, steers the course, and poles the boat along, it is the boat which carries him/her, and without which s/he cannot ride. By riding in a boat, s/he makes this boat a boat.²³

The point here is not (simply) that an artifact is a boat instead of a shelter because of how it is used. Rather, we see Dōgen expressing the mutual dependence between a person and “her” world. Without the world of objects and persons, etc., I could not have a life. But it is in relation to me and my activities that the world is what it is (causally, conceptually/logically, perspectively). Yet again, in “Total Dynamism,” Dōgen continues:

By riding in a boat, one makes this boat a boat. We must consider this moment. At such a moment, there is nothing

²² See “Total Dynamism” fascicle in Hee-Jim Kim, trans., *Flowers of Emptiness: Selections from Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 242–243.

²³ Ibid.

but the boat's world. The heavens, the water, and the shore all become the boat's time, which is never the same as the time that is not the boat. By the same token, birth is what I give birth to, and I am what birth makes me. When one rides in a boat, one's body-mind and the dependent and proper rewards of karma are altogether the boat's dynamic working; the entire great earth and the entire empty sky are altogether the boat's dynamic working. Such is the I that is birth, the birth that is I.²⁴

The true self is not some unchanging, eternal *atman* perduring moment to moment, passed on body to body. The true self is "my" world of undivided, total, and dynamic activity, and I only realize it through practicing enlightenment, practicing emptiness, i.e., selflessness. But it is only "my" world given the particular perspective on it I have, given the positionality of my body, given my activities. Here we have a kind of breakdown of a clear distinction between realism and a solipsistic idealism. I make birth my birth through my activities in the world of "my boat," and this world is not the same as the world that is "not the boat's," with *this* sky and *this* water and *this* shore. However, at the same time, I must open up to the ways the world manifests and unfolds, not trying to control them, not taking my world as absolute.²⁵ What we have seen so far helps us to understand Dōgen's all-important formulation of enlightenment: "To carry the self forward and illuminate the myriad things is delusion. That myriads things come forth and illuminate the self is awakening."²⁶ The "self" of the first line is the small, egoistic self, which suffers the pains of old age, sickness, and death. The "self" in the second line is the true self that is the selfless unfolding of the world as it is in emptiness, i.e., arising only through the vast interdependent web of causes and conditions. One upshot is that where we may be tempted to ask: "Is this world of mine, mine alone, i.e., separate from your world seen from your perspective?" Here, the question breaks down, since, for Dōgen, an answer must go along these lines:

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cf. "Only a Buddha and a Buddha" fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 880.

²⁶ See "Actualizing the Fundamental Point" ("Genjōkōan") fascicle. Ibid., 29.

The entire great earth and the entire empty sky are all within birth and all within death. This does not mean, however, that one totally actuates the entire great earth and the entire empty sky as a fixed entity in birth and death. Though not identical, they [the entire great earth and the entire empty sky] are not different; though not different, they are not one; though not one, they are not many.²⁷

At this point, Dōgen addresses the non-dual relationship between birth and death, and the great earth and the empty sky, and the same holds for the synchronic and diachronic relationships between self and other. My life on Dōgen's view, then, is everything I encounter, and all that I encounter (causally and conceptually/logically) conditions me, I (causally and conceptually/logically) condition it, and everything else conditions everything else in the same way. One "thing" I encounter is your life and the lives of others. All of this is non-dual in emptiness in the way we have seen above.

Most notably, in our understanding of the role of compassion in Dōgen's Zen, the nature of emptiness implies neither that "I" am nothing nor that nothing exists. I am a living, breathing, thinking, acting individual, different from other individuals; to deny this is to fall into the opposite danger of taking form as exclusive, namely, the impossible: emptiness-without-form.²⁸ Rather, it is "simply" that each dharma, myself and the entire world, constitute the total dynamism of reality – this non-dual situation which is my-our lives. Hence, unity and difference are both diachronic and synchronic. Synchronically, at any given moment, variable m , the world consists of discrete "things" (difference) that are simultaneously empty and, as such, form a non-dual whole (unity). Diachronically, a person, each "thing," consists of unique moments, $m_1, m_2, m_3, m \dots n$, of birth and death (difference). Yet, they make up a diachronic whole, via causes and conditions, which is my life (unity). But we must be careful in understanding this diachronic, non-dual unity. It is not the unity of a temporal parts theory; that is, it is not that different, completely discrete parts at separate times "add" up to a person

²⁷ See "Total Dynamism" fascicle in Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness*, 243–244.

²⁸ Perhaps this is a kind of "living in the cave of demons on black mountain." See Norman Waddell and Masao Abe 阿部正雄, trans., *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 33, n. 7.

such that the whole person cannot be said to exist at any given *m*. If anything, Dōgen's view of time might be classified as a kind of presentism – only the present moment exists – but this must be understood in the context of emptiness.²⁹ This can be observed by briefly considering Dōgen's firewood analogy:

Firewood turns to ash; it cannot become firewood again. Still we should not regard ash as succeeding and firewood as preceding. Note that firewood abides in the dharma-situation of firewood and has preceding and succeeding; although there is before and after, it is cut off from before and after. Ash abides in the dharma-situation of ash and has succeeding and preceding. Just as firewood does not become firewood again after it has been turned to ash, human being [*sic*] does not return to birth after death.³⁰

Not returning to birth after death does not simply refer to what we ordinarily call bodily death at the end of a life, but rather the moment by moment birth and death we undergo. At the moment of firewood, we have discreteness, i.e., just firewood, but that discreteness simultaneously contains (causally, logically, conceptually) before, after, and all else. Before, as the conditions that gave rise to that moment. After, as what is conditioned (burned) firewood. All else, as the firewood is both diachronically and synchronically non-dual. Hence, Dōgen writes: “there are myriad forms and hundreds of grasses [all things] throughout the entire Earth, and yet each form

²⁹ As with emptiness, Dōgen's views on time cannot be done justice in this study. For more on this topic, see Steven Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985); Hee-Jim Kim, “Existence/Time as the Way of Ascesis: An Analysis of the Basic Structure of Dōgen's Thought,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 11/2 (1978), 43–73; Rein Raud, “The Existential Moment: Rereading Dōgen's Theory of Time,” *Philosophy East & West* 62/2 (2012), 153–173; and for important discussions of Dōgen's views on time, see Masao Abe, *A Study of Dōgen*, ed. Steven Heine (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

³⁰ See “The Realization-kōan” (“Genjōkōan”) fascicle in Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness*, 52.

of grass and each form itself is the entire Earth.”³¹ And, thus, contrary to temporal parts theory, regarding whether a whole person exists at any given *m*, we should appropriate Dōgen’s wording to express this non-duality of all moments synchronically and diachronically, i.e., each moment in relation to all other moments: “although not one, not different; although not different, not the same; although not the same, not many.”³² Thus, in this radical synchronic and diachronic non-duality, each moment is empty of substantial, independent existence, but nothing is lost.³³ And each moment contains all the rest.

We now turn to Shohaku Okumura, who emphasizes that in Zen, we are the intersection of equality (unity) and inequality (difference). In his commentary on “Genjōkōan,” he writes that the foundational position of Mahayana Buddhism and Zen is seeing the same reality from these two sides: sameness/difference, unity/separation, equality/inequality.³⁴ However, and pivotal to the argument of this analysis, he points out that for, “Dōgen... to see one reality from two sides is not enough; he said we should also *express* these two sides in one action.”³⁵ As Hee-Jin Kim writes, “to see, understand,

³¹ See Dōgen’s fascicle “The Time Being” in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 105. Interpolation added.

³² See “The Mind Itself is Buddha” fascicle. Ibid., 45.

³³ See Dōgen’s explicit treatment of this in “The Time Being.” Ibid., 105.

³⁴ Shohaku Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan: The Key to Dogen’s Shobogenzo* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 18. For a commentary on the various nondual dualities as *indeterminate* aspects of the world to be navigated see George Wrisley, “The Nietzschean Bodhisattva – Passionately Navigating Indeterminacy,” in Robert H. Scott and Gregory Moss, eds., *The Significance of Indeterminacy: Perspectives from Asian and Continental Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

³⁵ Note that these two sides, unity and difference, are often glossed in terms of “Two Truths,” and in the Tendai the third of going beyond them is referred to as “the third truth,” Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan*, 133. The ultimate truth is that things are empty; conventional truth is the illusory claim of self-same, independently existing things perduring. See chapter 9 in Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007) for a helpful yet flawed discussion of the Two Truths. As concerns Dōgen, I follow Kim who sees the two aspects of “conventional truth/reality, i.e., delusion” and “ultimate truth/reality, i.e., enlightenment”

and express buddha-nature [is] tantamount to acting out buddha-nature.”³⁶ Moreover, as Taigen Dan Leighton comments in the introduction to his and Okumura's translation of Dōgen's other main work, *Eihei Kōroku*, “For Dōgen, Buddha nature is not an object to merely see or acquire, but a mode of being that must be actually lived and expressed.”³⁷ In the next section, I argue that the practical way to do this in Dōgen's Zen (in Buddhism) is properly understood through compassion.³⁸

Enlightenment as Activity

There are myriad ways by which Dōgen refers to the “state” of enlightenment: “dropping off the body-mind of the self as well as the body-mind of the other”³⁹ is one of them; realizing the earth as one's true human body is another.⁴⁰ For a variety of reasons, there seems to be some confusion about what this “state” of enlightenment is. Dōgen is (in a sense) quite clear: “Just understand that birth-and-death [living] itself is nirvana, and you will neither hate one as being birth-and-death, nor cherish the other as being

not as ontological opposites, contraries, nor the conventional as a stepping stone to the ultimate, but rather as foci or perspectives on the world of birth and death. See Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking*, 4.

³⁶ Hee-Jin Kim, *Eihei Dōgen: Mystical Realist* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 137.

³⁷ Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, ed. and trans., *Dōgen's Extensive Record: A Translation of the Eihei Kōroku* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010), 30. See also Taigen Dan Leighton, “Zazen as an Enactment Ritual,” in Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, eds., *Zen Ritual: Studies of Zen Buddhist Theory in Practice* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 2008), 167–184.

³⁸ In correspondence, Eido Frances Carney has expressed concern about an overly *Americanized* compassion, where to be compassionate is first and foremost to be nice, to make people feel good. Whereas, she suggests, and I agree, that compassion must be more in line with Nietzsche's idea of it. That is, we must be willing to help not simply by being nice but by being honest and sometimes allowing pain to be there, if it is productive. See Wrisley, “The Nietzschean Bodhisattva,” 321ff.

³⁹ See “The Realization-kōan” (“Genjōkōan”) fascicle in Kim, *Flowers of Emptiness*, 52.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Dōgen's fascicle on “Shinjingakudō.”

nirvana. Only then can you be free of birth-and-death.”⁴¹ This human life, moment to moment, wherever, whenever we are, whatever we are doing is nirvana. We are free of birth and death, free of suffering, old age, sickness, and death, when we leap clear of the one and many in the context of everyday tea and rice. From this and from what we have seen so far, I hope it has become clearer how we can, and should, understand enlightenment, this “leaping clear,” as something other than simply a mental state. Instead, I suggest we think of it as more akin to Aristotle’s *eudaimonia*, i.e., a lifelong activity, one that clearly concerns and incorporates various “mental states.” However, enlightenment, particularly in the context of Zen, is often taken to be some “rarified” mental state. Kim is helpful in clarifying the difference in the conception of Zen as the attainment of a mental state versus a practice-oriented life:

often unjustifiably welded into the notion of non-duality has been the most prevalent conception of Zen – largely attributed to D.T. Suzuki – that the essence of Zen consists in the unmediated enlightenment experience (or state of consciousness), totally untainted by ideational and valuational mediations as well as by historical and social conditions. The pure experience (or pure consciousness) – sui generis, ineffable and ahistorical – is as such the universal experiential core from which all religions originate and to which they all return. This is the Zen version of *philosophia perennis*, with added Zen and Japanese flavors. Such a Zen, as I see it, is not Dōgen’s, because nonduality in this view is thoroughly metaphysicized, rarified, and disembodied so much so that it is ineffective, and ineffectual from the standpoint of practice.⁴²

D.T. Suzuki is in the Rinzai school of Japanese Zen, which often emphasizes *kōan* study as a means to achieve *kenshō*, i.e., “seeing the nature” of self/reality, often understood to be a kind of momentary glimpse of enlightenment experience. Okumura comments:

⁴¹ See “Birth and Death” fascicle in Waddell and Abe, *The Heart of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō*, 106. Interpolation added.

⁴² Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking*, 35.

The term [*kenshō*] appears many times, for example, in the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Ancestor, Huineng. Dōgen, however, did not like this word. In Shōbōgenzō [*sic*] Shizenbiku (The Bhikshu in the Fourth Dhyana) he writes:

The essence of the Buddha Dharma is never seeing the nature [*kenshō*]. Which of the twenty-eight ancestors of India and the seven buddhas [in the past] said that the Buddha Dharma is simply seeing the nature? Although the term seeing the nature [*kenshō*] appears in the Platform Sutra, that text is a forgery. It is not the writing of a person who received the transmission of the Dharma Treasury.⁴³

We should note that the line from Dōgen here reads that Buddha Dharma is not “*simply* seeing the nature,” where the ‘simply’ seems to indicate that while seeing into the nature of things is important, it is not the only thing of importance, nor is it the essence of practice or the essential thing to practice-realization.

Robert H. Sharf does an excellent job discussing the problems with, and lack of justification for, seeing Buddhism and Zen as essentially the cultivation of a (pure) state of consciousness. In reference to the seemingly all-important terms *satori* and *kenshō*, he notes that:

In traditional Chinese Buddhist literature, such terms are used to denote the full comprehension and appreciation of central Buddhist tenets such as emptiness, Buddha-nature, or dependent-origination. There are simply no a priori grounds for conceiving such statements of insight in phenomenological terms.⁴⁴

⁴³ Okumura, *Realizing Genjokoan*, 116. Regarding Dōgen's claim that the Platform Sutra is forgery, it is noted that, “We can safely conjecture that Dōgen must have read an unknown Sung edition of this work that might have been highly idealistically oriented (as compared with the Tunhuang text, which Dōgen was unfamiliar with) ... Be that as it may, Dōgen, [was] an ardent admirer of Hui-nêng.” Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, 56.

⁴⁴ Robert H. Sharf, “Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience,” *Numen* 42/3 (1995), 249.

Perhaps we should say, not in purely phenomenological terms, for we need not deny a phenomenological aspect outright. While these issues cannot be fully addressed here, it is vital to emphasize the non-phenomenological aspects of enlightenment. First, because as Kim points out, Suzuki emphasizes the essence of Zen as an unmediated, pure, perennial experience, and as Sharf points out: “This approach to Zen exegesis has since been adopted by a number of Japanese intellectuals, including two who have been particularly active in Buddhist-Christian dialogue: Nishitani Keiji and Abe Masao.”⁴⁵ And we should note, too, that Suzuki was one of the most prolific and influential popularizers of Zen in the West.

None of this is to deny the importance of concentration and mindfulness in either Buddhism or Dōgen’s Zen. Nor is it to deny that insight may well occur on the cushion, insight that is vital to realizing the depth of the Dharma. However, concentration and attentiveness – even states of absorption – practiced in meditation, and in daily life, are not pure or bodily practice (engagement with the world).⁴⁶ Moreover, they are simply one more thing to let go of and not be attached to. Kōshō Uchiyama explains: “Whether fantasies arise one after another or whether you sit there with a perfectly clean slate, let go of either one. Seeing both, illusions and realizations, with the same eye is what is critical here.”⁴⁷ “Enlightened” experiences, however insightful, cannot be privileged over other less pleasant ones, where, on pain of failure of achieving those states, one suffers, for that privileging would simply conduce to suffering itself. Privileging the activity of letting go, on the other hand, is different from privileging an experience since we can (correctly) say that if you fail to let go, that will conduce to suffering; that holds for letting go itself – one has to let go of letting go – and practice is letting go, all the way down. Yet this letting go is not value-free, so to speak.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 248.

⁴⁶ See Dale S. Wright, *The Six Perfections: Buddhism and the Cultivation of Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter 4; and Dale S. Wright, *What is Buddhist Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), chapter 8. For more on the question of unmediated experience, refer to Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, chapter 3–4; and Kim, *Dōgen on Meditation and Thinking*, chapter 3.

⁴⁷ Kōshō Uchiyama, *Deepest Practice, Deepest Wisdom: Three Fascicles from Shōbōgenzō with Commentaries*, trans. Daitō Tom Wright and Shōhaku Okumura (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2018), 124.

Rather, it is attentive, *compassionate* activity marked by this radical letting go, in the moment to moment free fall of emptiness, that is the expression of both sides of reality through a single action, thereby jumping off of form and emptiness, and enacting enlightenment.

Compassion as the Heart of the Bodhisattva Ideal

In considering the importance of compassion for Dōgen's Zen, it is not my aim to offer a theory or definition of emotion. One of my objectives is to argue that compassion, as an emotion, goes well beyond a feeling or attitude in that it is fully embodied in the practice of the bodhisattva. Further, in the context of Dōgen's Zen, specifically his understanding of emptiness, the dichotomy of mind/heart/feeling and body, break down.

Dōgen does not have any particular fascicle, or formal or informal talk, that focuses solely on compassion, so we must piece together his views on compassion from those writings which speak to it either explicitly or implicitly. Let us begin with the following:

There is an extremely easy way to become Buddha. If you refrain from all evil, do not cling to birth-and-death; work in deep compassion for all sentient beings, respecting those over you and showing compassion for those below you, without any detesting or desiring, worrying or lamentation – that is Buddhahood. Do not search beyond it.⁴⁸

We see from this short passage that compassion is central to becoming a Buddha. This is not surprising given that Dōgen is writing in the Mahayana tradition, which has as its ideal the bodhisattva. We might well say that the essence of the bodhisattva is given by the bodhisattva's vow. One version of which is:

Beings are numberless; I vow to free them.
Delusions are inexhaustible; I vow to end them.
Dharma gates are boundless; I vow to enter them.
The Buddha way is unsurpassable; I vow to realize it.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See "Birth and Death" fascicle in Waddell and Abe, *The Heart of Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō*, 107.

⁴⁹ Shohaku Okumura, *Living by Vow: A Practical Introduction to Eight Essential Zen Chants and Texts*, ed. Dave Ellison (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 257, n. 7.

According to Kim, “These vows are recited, reflected upon, and meditated on, by monastics, day and night, to such an extent that the lives of monastics are, in essence, the embodiment of vows.”⁵⁰ In Mahayana Buddhism, the Bodhisattva takes the world of the other as their body, as they are said to take their vow so seriously that they delay parinirvāna, returning birth after birth to help free sentient beings from suffering. As Kim further notes, there is usually a distinction made between bodhisattvas and Buddhas; however, while Dōgen seems to write in agreement with this view, he ultimately rejects it.⁵¹ Quoting Kim’s translation:

All bodhisattvas are all Buddhas. Buddhas and bodhisattvas are not different types of beings...this bodhisattva and that bodhisattva are not two beings, nor are they distinguished by the self and other, or by the past, present, and future...At the time of the initial desire for enlightenment, one becomes a Buddha...and at the final stage of Buddhahood one [still] becomes a Buddha...The assertion that after becoming a Buddha, one should discontinue spiritual discipline and engage in no further endeavor, is due to an ordinary person’s view that does not yet understand the way of Buddhas and ancestors.⁵²

We see here, again, Dōgen’s identification of practice and enlightenment, as well as the important point that enlightenment is not some final goal or state of mind/being that once achieved requires no further practice. Indeed, Dōgen admonishes us to “go beyond Buddha” in the fascicle, “Going Beyond Buddha,” and references it in his “Genjōkōan”: “there are those who continue realizing beyond realization.”⁵³ Dōgen’s identification of the bodhisattva path with that of being a Buddha is important for our understanding of the role of compassion in his Zen.

There are at least two senses of the bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism, including Dōgen’s, of course. There is the bodhisattva as a model

⁵⁰ Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, 204.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 204–205.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ See “Manifestation of Great Prajna” fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 28.

of practice, one that specifies its end, i.e., the pursuit of liberation for all, but there is also the bodhisattva as an “object of faith and devotion.”⁵⁴ Dōgen venerates the mythical bodhisattva of great compassion, Avalokiteshvara,⁵⁵ who, with her thousand arms with an eye in each palm, is:

“One who perceives the cries of the world,”...This bodhisattva is regarded as the parent of all buddhas. Do not assume that this bodhisattva has not mastered the way as much as buddhas. In fact, Avalokiteshvara was True Dharma Illumination Tathagata in a previous life.⁵⁶

The vast multitude of arms/hands and eyes symbolize Avalokiteshvara's ability and desire to extend “infinite compassion” to all beings.⁵⁷ According to Dōgen's identification of Avalokiteshvara as the “parent of all buddhas,” and given that she is the bodhisattva of great compassion, it is not hard to see why Kim would conclude that, “The essence of the bodhisattva ideal [is] great compassion.” All importantly for our purposes, Kim continues:

[The bodhisattva ideal] was [for Dōgen] the reconciliation of the dualistic opposites of self and nonself, sentient and insentient, Buddhas and sentient beings, man and woman, and so forth. As Dōgen stated, “The way of the bodhisattva is ‘I am Thusness; you are Thusness.’” The identity of “I” and “you” in thusness [emptiness/Buddha-nature], rather than identity in substance, status, or the like, was the fundamental metaphysical and religious ground of great compassion. This was why Dōgen said that when we study ourselves thoroughly, we understand others thoroughly as well; as a result, we cast off the self and other.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, 204.

⁵⁵ Avalokiteshvara is also the central speaker in the *Heart Sutra*.

⁵⁶ See “Avalokiteshvara” fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 397–398.

⁵⁷ Kim, *Eihei Dōgen*, 207.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 208. We will explore below what is meant by reconciling these opposites, including what is meant by the reconciliation of the sentient and insentient.

The bodhisattva way, the Buddha Way for Dōgen, is the embodiment of compassion for the suffering of other beings, a suffering that is recognized as one's own, in the dual sense of "just like the kind of suffering I as a human experience" and in the sense of "not one, not two; not the same, not different." Thus, in the context of emptiness, the bodhisattva-defining acts of compassion constitute and express the two sides of reality in a single action. The bodhisattva does not dissolve into the other when they act compassionately, embodying the bodhisattva ideal. Rather, as Kim writes, they reconcile, "the dualistic opposites of self and nonself," thus jumping off of form and emptiness. Let us look at this reconciliation and expression now in more detail.

Enacting Enlightenment Through Compassionate Activity

While there are other Western works that take up issues concerning compassion in Buddhism, a notable one being Jeremiah Conway's short "A Buddhist Critique of Nussbaum's Account of Compassion," their purpose is other than ours. An important, purported aspect of the Western notion of compassion that Conway challenges is the idea that it is deserved only by those who are *not* responsible for their (appropriately intense) suffering. However, as important as these other discussions are, they do not try to specify how it is that compassionate activity in the context of Dōgen's Zen is the expression of the two sides of reality, emptiness (unity) and form (difference), which is our primary concern.

Unity-and-difference characterizes the nature of reality as it unfolds in time. Living in accord with this reality is central to Buddhist practice. The central way to live in accord with it is, as Okumura intimates, to express both sides of reality in every single action. And, again, as Leighton writes, "For Dōgen, Buddha nature is not an object to merely see or acquire, but a mode of being that must be actually lived and expressed."⁵⁹ In the context of (practicing) emptiness, compassion *expresses* both sides of reality because it (a) involves the recognition of an *other* (i.e., difference), but at the same time, (b) that "otherness," that difference, is overcome (in unity) by the acts of compassion actualizing the non-duality between self and other. The latter is achieved through the kind of selflessness expressed in the cognitive, affective, and actional aspects of compassionate activity.

While I have argued that enlightenment experience should not be thought of solely in terms of achieving some sort of pure, undifferentiated

⁵⁹ Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, 30.

mental state of oneness with the world, there is clearly a mental or phenomenological aspect to “enlightened” activity. Here we may note two important ones, namely, attentiveness and feelings of care, concern for, or being troubled by, the condition of the other, whether the other is the world at large, a group of beings, a particular person, etc.

Regarding *attentiveness*, an essential aspect of Buddhist practice is the practice of being attentive to the present moment, since that is all that exists and so that is the only “place” one may be effective in one’s compassionate activity (all the while recognizing, at least implicitly, the non-duality of *this* moment and all others).

Turning to *the care and concern* or *being troubled*, it would be a mistake to think that enlightened activity is untroubled, free of pain. For example, in Dharma Hall Discourse 392, Dōgen is recorded as having said, “Whenever it comes to the evening of the ninth and this morning of the tenth and I see the winter snow, I recall that time on Shaoxi Peak at Mount Song, so that deep emotion fills my chest and tears of sadness wet my robe.” This is in regard to the story of the second ancestor Dazu Huike, who, to prove the authenticity of his aspiration for practicing Buddhism to Bodhidharma,⁶⁰ stood in the snow overnight, cutting off his arm and offering it to him.⁶¹ Dōgen is here expressing his deep compassion for his students, his fellow monks, and is saddened by the thought of them not having such a teacher and the thought of his monks not being as committed to the Buddha Dharma as Huike.⁶² In what follows, we will see, as well, a variety of other mental and affective aspects of enacting enlightenment – expressing both aspects of reality, unity, and difference – through compassion.

Returning now to the apparent difference between self and other, Dōgen, in “The Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance,” makes clear that the bodhisattva’s compassionate activity bridges that apparent duality. The four methods are giving, kind speech, beneficial action, and identity action.⁶³ Let us look briefly at kind speech, beneficial action, and identity action. To

⁶⁰ “Regarded as the Twenty-eighth Indian Ancestor and the First Chinese Ancestor of the Zen tradition” (See Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 964, “Glossary.”). Bodhidharma is understood to have brought Chan/Zen Buddhism to China.

⁶¹ Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, 351.

⁶² Dōgen is expressing humility here.

⁶³ Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 473.

begin, notice that all of these are actions, not simply the cultivation of one's mental state. Regarding kind speech, Dōgen writes, "'Kind speech' means that, upon seeing living beings, first of all, to inspire affectionate thoughts and offer them caring words; in general, it is having no harsh words."⁶⁴ The bodhisattva does this because of the recognition of the universal suffering of all sentient existence and the spontaneous concern for that suffering. Continuing the passage:

In the secular world, there is the etiquette of asking after [others'] well-being; in the way of the buddhas, there is the expression "take care of yourself" and the respectful "I hesitate to inquire [of your health]." To speak filled with thoughts that "she thinks on living beings with affection, as if they were her babies" is "kind speech."⁶⁵

As Carl Bielefeldt notes in a correspondence, the last line contains "a passage from Chapter 11 of the *Lotus Sūtra*, giving Mañjuśrī's description of the daughter of the dragon king." This calls to mind the more generalized compassion (going beyond "mere" speech) that is to be expressed in everything we do. In his "Instructions for the Zen Cook," Dōgen writes:

Rōshin is the mind or attitude of a parent. In the same way that a parent cares for an only child, keep the Three Treasures [Buddha, Dharma, Sangha] in your mind. A parent, irrespective of poverty or difficult circumstances, loves and raises a child with care. How deep is love like this? ... In this same manner, when you handle water, rice, or anything else, you must have the affectionate and caring concern of a parent raising a child.⁶⁶

The cook for the monastery is to oversee every activity with this nurturing, parental mind.⁶⁷ But Dōgen did not intend such an attitude to be simply for

⁶⁴ Carl Bielefeldt, e-mail message to author, 2015.

⁶⁵ See also Carl Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁶⁶ Uchiyama, *How to Cook Your Life*, 18. Interpolation added.

⁶⁷ Ibid., "Glossary." One of the three minds: *rōshin* (parental mind), *daishin* (big or magnanimous mind), and *kishin* (joyful mind, regardless of the task).

the cook. It is to be the attitude of moment by moment engagement with life, especially when confronting the ubiquitous recalcitrance that characterizes so much of life.

A further example of the kind of care that Dōgen is emphasizing is: "Handle even a single leaf of a green in such a way that it manifests the body of the Buddha. This in turn allows the Buddha to manifest through the leaf."⁶⁸ Compassionate activity, concern for the integrity and well-being of all things, does not stop at the sentient; it is extended to all things. This is counter to Blum's intuition that, "Compassion seems restricted to beings capable of feeling or being harmed."⁶⁹ Perhaps this is so in ordinary, unenlightened contexts. But for Dōgen, emptiness implies that the boundary between what we ordinarily think of as the sentient and the insentient breaks down.⁷⁰ Mountain colors and valley sounds are themselves Buddha nature; they are the "long broad tongue of the Buddha." These "insentient" beings "speak" if we are willing to listen. And if we do, we realize the non-duality between them and us, that they are nothing other than the true self.

In addition, in the "Mountains and Waters Sutra" fascicle, Dōgen writes that, "Green mountains are neither sentient nor insentient. You are neither sentient nor insentient."⁷¹ To flatfootedly say that the mountains are insentient would be to ignore their non-duality with our lives. To flatfootedly call them sentient would be to ignore that they are, after all, "just" mountains. The same can be said for us in relation to nature. Hence, our being and theirs are entwined – and mindful care and concern, as well as compassion for their well-being, is called for. While they do not precisely suffer, they can be damaged, but more importantly, lack of concern for their integrity through either carelessness, i.e., lack of attentiveness, or treating them merely as means to one's own ends, both go counter to the buddha way. Similarly, being damaged may produce suffering for human and non-human animals, in which case the damage is non-dual with the suffering.

Returning to "The Bodhisattva's Four Methods of Guidance," Dōgen writes about beneficial action that, "Stupid people think that, if they put benefitting others first, their own benefit will be left out. This is not so.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7–8.

⁶⁹ Blum, "Compassion," 507.

⁷⁰ Consider in this context the "Valley Sounds, Mountain Colors" fascicle in Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 86–87.

⁷¹ Ibid., 155.

Beneficial action is a single dharma; it universally benefits self and other.”⁷² Here, according to Bielefeldt, “single dharma” means “single thing,” i.e., when we move to benefit others through our actions it is the same as benefitting ourselves.

In the context of Dōgen’s Zen, this “benefitting ourselves,” is ambiguous, but its ambiguity is a further aspect of expressing the two sides of reality, form, and emptiness. That is, in compassionate action, we move to help others, and in so doing we create beneficial (karmic) cause and effect, as shown in the fascicle “Identifying with Cause and Effect”: “Those who act in an unwholesome way decline, and those who act in a wholesome way thrive.”⁷³ But we also benefit the other, the other who is non-dual with ourselves, neither the same nor different, and who is not truly a separate other.

This leads us nicely to “identity action.” “Identity action” is, perhaps, odd sounding. In correspondence, Bielefeldt writes that the Japanese *dōji* 同事 is a standard translation for *samānārthatā*, the bodhisattva virtue “shared concern,” in the sense of “working together” with others. He thus translates it as “working together” instead of “identity action.” One may surmise that the Tanahashi edition uses, “Identity action,” because it is through working together that we (1) identify with the plight of others, and (2) come to have a shared, i.e., non-dual, identity. Dōgen further explains:

“Working together” means not differing. It is not differing from self; it is not differing from the other. For example, the Tathāgata⁷⁴ among humans is the same as humans. From his being the same in the human world, we know that he must be the same in other worlds. When we know “working together,” self and other are one.⁷⁵

⁷² Bielefeldt, e-mail message to author, 2015.

⁷³ Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 857.

⁷⁴ This is an honorific for the Buddha. It is Sanskrit for, “one who has thus gone; one who has thus come; or one who has come from thusness” and “thusness,” i.e., things as they are, i.e., emptiness. See Tanahashi, *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, 1126, “Glossary.”

⁷⁵ Bielefeldt, e-mail message to author, 2015.

The Buddha is seen as having more than one “body.”⁷⁶ Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, is the manifested body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*, *ōjin*). In becoming human, the Buddha took on the pain of old age, sickness, and death, and he did so for our sakes. And just as he did, we collapse the boundary between self and other through our compassionate working together with/for others, and thereby “self and other are one.”

In closing, I would like to mention two issues worthy of note. The first is that it is important to consider the exact nature of the compassionate action found in, “The Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance,” and Dōgen’s thought more generally. That is, it might be all too easy to think that the compassionate activity of the bodhisattva is simply spreading the dharma, i.e., something akin to proselytizing. This it surely is not.⁷⁷ Think, again, of Dōgen’s notion of “identity action” or “working together” (*dōji* 同事). The bodhisattva takes on the plight of their community for themselves. If we take this seriously, then the bodhisattva does not “remain above the fray” but lives in the midst of others’ suffering. While a bodhisattva/buddha may not experience the “pain of the fray” as suffering in the same way as those who are unenlightened, she nevertheless experiences that pain for herself – both her own in that situation and that of the “other.” Thus, in “working together,” she is moved to minimize the pain/suffering of others, though not “merely” in the sense of attempting to free them from the delusion and ignorance, which is seen as the root of suffering from the Buddhist point of view.

The second issue to note is one raised by Blum. He writes, “Compassion can hurt its recipients. It may, for instance, cause him to

⁷⁶ Stone describes the three bodies of the Buddha, found for example in the *Lotus Sutra*, one of Dōgen’s most beloved Sutras, hence: “the manifested body (*nirmāṇa-kāya*, *ōjin*), or physical person of the Buddha who appears in this world; the recompense body (*sambhoga-kāya*, *hōjin*), or the wisdom the Buddha has attained through practice, conceived of as a subtle ‘body’; and the Dharma body (*dharma-kāya*, *hosshin*), or the Buddha as personification of ultimate truth. These three ‘bodies’ originally represented attempts to organize different concepts of the Buddha, or to explain the differences among various Buddhas appearing in the sutras.” See Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999), 184.

⁷⁷ See Wrisley, “The Nietzschean Bodhisattva,” 317ff.

concentrate too much on his plight.”⁷⁸ Compassionate activity can also go awry in a variety of ways, like through ignorance of the details of a situation, for example. In other words, compassion requires wisdom. Such problems are addressed in Dōgen’s Zen, since great compassion (characterized by emptiness) together with *prajna*, wisdom beyond wisdom, is the heart of the bodhisattva ideal, characterizing every movement of body, speech, and thought.

We saw the combination of wisdom and compassion in Dōgen’s discussion of the *Heart Sutra*, where the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, Avalokiteshvara, expounds on emptiness and *prajna*, and that wisdom concerns the emptiness of everything, including emptiness, and thus the transcending of all dualities. I have been arguing that a, or perhaps, the central way to do that in Dōgen’s Zen is through properly understood compassionate action, i.e., compassionate action in the context of the teachings of emptiness and *prajna*. It is the wisdom that realizes emptiness through (wisely) discriminating, compassionate action.

⁷⁸ Blum, “Compassion,” 516.

HOW JOURNALISTS' BIAS CAN DISTORT THE TRUTH: A CASE STUDY OF JAPAN'S MILITARY SEIZURE OF KOREA IN 1904–1905

Daniel A. Métraux¹
Mary Baldwin University

Today we live in a society that champions freedom of the press. A vibrant press is a key ingredient for a successful democracy, but writers and publications must separate hard news from news analysis and editorials. Unbalanced reporting or deliberate misrepresentation of the facts represents the antithesis of responsible journalism. Problems arise when several journalists covering the same event allow their own biases to influence their coverage. This phenomenon may be labeled the “Rashomon effect,” where there are varying interpretations of what is going on that it becomes difficult for the reader to know the whole truth. I examine this issue through a case study of how six Americans and one Canadian journalist covered the Japanese seizure of Korea in 1904 and 1905 during the Russo-Japanese War.

Rashomon, a 1950 Japanese film directed by Akira Kurosawa (1910–1988), is often cited as one of the finest films that investigates the philosophy of justice. On the surface, it is a crime thriller, but the narrative goes much deeper. The viewer is asked to confront multiple personal perceptions of reality in a vain attempt to get the final truth. Kurosawa asks viewers whether it is ever possible to look at certain circumstances and to arrive at a definite conclusion. Can we, as humans, ever really agree with absolute certainty about anything? Are we able to be objective about anything, or are we forced away because our subjectivity gets in the way?

The *Rashomon* storyline is very straightforward. A medieval samurai and his bride are journeying through a thick forest on their way to Kyoto when they are apprehended by the notorious bandit Tajimaru, who kills the husband and rapes the wife. Tajimaru is quickly arrested and questioned at a police station. The testimony that he gives is substantially distorted from that of the wife. A psychic is brought in to hear the testimony of the murdered husband, which is also inconsistent with that of his wife and

¹ Author's note: Published by permission, a portion of this essay appears in *How Journalists Shaped American Foreign Policy: A Case Study of Japan's Military Seizure of Korea* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2017).

killer. A woodsman witness later reveals another interpretation of the story. The viewer is left in a quandary – what really happened? The audience will beg Kurosawa to provide some resolution, but he leaves them hanging. An even bigger question is – what is truth?

Western news coverage of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) presents us with the same problem. If reading the newspaper during the time of the war, one might be confused as to the efficacy of Japan's seizure of Korea. The articles, written by seven American and Canadian journalists, provided seven different viewpoints, respectively: George Kennan (1845–1924), Frederick Palmer (1873–1958), William Elliott Griffis (1843–1928), William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925), Frederick McKenzie (1868–1931), Thomas Millard (1868–1942), and Jack London (1876–1916). What was Japan pursuing? Was its move into Korea an act of “brotherly love and respect,” or was it an act of pure unadulterated imperialism? President Theodore Roosevelt read their work and likely based US foreign policy on information and perspectives provided by some of these writers.

The basic facts are clear. Japan and Russia went to war in 1904 to determine which power would control Korea. Japan saw any foreign power taking Korea as a mortal threat to its national security. Japan's military chief, Yamagata Aritomo, explained that the purpose of the war was to secure Korea as a bulwark of Japan's national security and to remove Russia as a threat to Korea. This was Japan's chance to build a strong sphere of influence on the Asian mainland.² One of Russia's main goals was to control one or more warm water ports in Korea and to dominate the country both politically and economically.

When Japan declared war on Russia in February 1904, it forced the Korean government to sign an agreement allowing Japan to station troops in their nation. Most of these troops then marched up from Seoul through North Korea to confront Russian forces in Manchuria. By mid-1905, the Japanese government had forced the Korean government to agree to a Japanese takeover of the Korean state and a termination of all relations with other

² Yamagata told American journalist Frederick Palmer at the start of the war that “If you look at the geographical position of Korea you will see that it is like a poniard pointing at the heart of Japan...If Korea is occupied by a foreign power, the Japan Sea ceases to be Japanese and the Korean Straits are no longer in our control.” Quoted in Frederick Palmer, *With Kuroki in Manchuria* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), 17.

nations. In effect, Japan had turned Korea into a fully occupied protectorate by the end of 1905 and a colony by 1910.

While Japan's 1904 move into Korea was principally for national security, its propaganda machine declared that its war aim was the creation of a truly independent nation. Korea, the Japanese declared, was hopelessly backward, corrupt, and weak. This inherent weakness exposed it to a takeover by a foreign power. Russia, eyeing Korea's strategic position and its warm water ports as well as the backward and corrupt nature of its society, was poised to invade the Korean Peninsula. Japan saw it as its duty to protect its neighbor by helping Korea gain its independence by driving out the Russians and modernizing their society to create a new and more efficient government while introducing modern technology and administrative reforms to the beleaguered land. As a result, Japan would play the role of big brother to its closest Asian neighbor.

Most Western reporters agreed that Korea was a corrupt and backward land and that Japan, in contrast, was a modern and efficiently run state. Where they decidedly disagreed was the nature of Japan's incursion into Korea. Several of these journalists lauded Japan for its unselfish devotion to the protection and modernization of Korea. It urged President Roosevelt and the United States to support the Japanese subjugation of Korea actively. Others were more contrarian, denouncing Japan's pledge to fight for Korean independence and accusing Japan's takeover of its neighbor as a wanton act of aggressive imperialism that the US should renounce in no uncertain terms.

Veteran war correspondent George Kennan was a major supporter of Japan's seizure of Korea. He wrote:

The first thing that strikes a traveler in going from Japan to Korea is the extraordinary contrast between the cleanliness, good order, industry, and general prosperity of one country, and the filthiness, demoralization, laziness and general rack and ruin of the other...The Japanese are clean, enterprising, intelligent, brave, well-educated and strenuously industrious whilst the Koreans strike a newcomer as dirty in person and habits, apathetic, slow-witted, lacking in spirit, densely ignorant, and constitutionally lazy...Korea is an organism that has become so diseased as to lose its power of growth; and it

can be restored to a normal condition only by a long course of remedial treatment.³

Kennan accepted Japan's announced goal of entering Korea to improve the welfare and independence of Koreans. He applauded Japan's unselfish, noble, and brotherly act to "uplift and regenerate" its most unfortunate neighbor. This bold experiment of one state to voluntarily modernize its disadvantaged neighbor was a measure of true benevolence.

Frederick Palmer, like Kennan, was already a celebrated war correspondent and friend and informal adviser to President Roosevelt at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. Resembling Kennan, Palmer's work suffered from a lack of balance. He was mesmerized by the Japanese – they could do no wrong and were wonderfully clean and modern people. They represented the "cusp" of Western Anglo-Saxon civilization in Asia and were using their highly modern military to benefit the Koreans. Palmer believed that the Koreans were a pitiful, almost uncivilized people who could only be saved by a bold Japanese occupation that would and could by sheer force bring them into the modern world.⁴

Palmer sees the coming of the Japanese to Korea as an act of benevolence. The Koreans, he feels, are sick and helpless drowning in their own corruption, filth, and poverty. What they needed most was the helping hand of an obliging big brother who will rescue them from their oppression: "We are passing through a Korea that has been keenly and subtly made Japanese in two months – a country conquered by kindness, fair treatment... Now the Japanese army is marching across Korea spreading modern civilization like a crashing wave."⁵

Roosevelt regarded both Kennan and Palmer as informal advisors, and it is evident that the President actively sought them out for information and advice when it came to questions concerning Japan's involvement in Korean affairs. Furthermore, Roosevelt wrote encouraging notes to Kennan after reading his articles on Korea as a "degenerate" nation, and when Palmer visited Washington in early 1905 while taking a break from war coverage,

³ George Kennan, "Korea: A Degenerate State" *The Outlook*, October 7, 1905, 307.

⁴ Palmer, op. cit., 35.

⁵ Frederick Palmer, "All Ready for Action in Northern Korea," *Collier's*, April 30, 1904, 13.

Roosevelt invited him several times to the White House to elicit his views on Korean affairs.⁶ It is worthy of note that Roosevelt's later policy statements on Korea reflect the thinking of both Palmer and Kennan very closely.

Two other reporters, William Elliot Griffis and William Jennings Bryan, admired Japan's modernization process and assumed that Korea was a backward state when compared with Japan. Griffis, a highly dedicated Japanophile, had spent several years in Japan in the early 1870s as a teacher and was known for writing the first comprehensive history of Japan in English, *The Mikados Empire*. Bryan was a major political figure for the US (three times the Democratic Party's nominee for President and later Secretary of State in the Wilson administration). In 1905, Bryan and his family did a "world tour" in both Korea and Japan for up to a month. Griffis wrote articles for news magazine *The Outlook* while Bryan contributed numerous articles to his own widely read publication, *The Commoner*.

Griffis and Bryan agreed that Korea could benefit from Japanese intervention, but also reported that the Koreans did not appreciate the Japanese depriving them of their freedom and sovereignty. Japan, they reported, was ready to impart the best of their civilization on Korea, but Koreans were not content with the presence of thousands of Japanese troops in their country. They said that the Japanese would fail in their stated mission if they first did not win the friendship and confidence of the Korean people and that Japan's moves there were far too imperialistic for their liking. These reports significantly vary from what Kennan and Palmer reported as to the Korean reaction to Japanese activities in their country.

Frederick McKenzie, a Canadian working as a reporter for a British newspaper, painted a distinct picture of the Japanese incursion into Korea, where he directly counters the writing of Kennan and Palmer. McKenzie argues convincingly that the Japanese probably intended from the start of their modernization efforts in the 1870s to exert their authority over Korea. Japan's goal by the 1890s was to become the leader of a revived Asia, and according to McKenzie: "She is advancing today along three lines – territorial expansion, increased fighting power, and an aggressive commercial campaign."⁷

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Frederick McKenzie, *The Unveiled East* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 19. This book consists of articles that McKenzie wrote during and immediately after the Russo-Japanese War.

Korea was to be the heart of its growing empire in northeast Asia. The Japanese told the world that their goal was the benevolent modernization of Korea – that Japan would invest in the people and resources to create a secure and truly independent nation. This country was to become a showplace of Japan's modernization program. The reality, according to McKenzie, was contradictory: Japan was prepared to use crude aggressive force to seize full control over Korea and to employ whatever brutality was necessary to subdue the Koreans. In short, the Japanese military and police sought to bulldoze it into total submission employing sheer terrorism, which included beating and murdering their innocent civilians, torturing many others, and physically harming and humiliating the women. In other words, McKenzie felt that the Japanese had descended to the lowest depths of barbarism to get their way. He wondered why the British entered an alliance with such people, one which he determined the Japanese would inevitably break.

Thomas F. Millard, the top journalist for the *New York Herald* covering the Russo-Japanese War and later a reporter for the *New York Times* covering East Asia, was a determined anti-imperialist who strenuously opposed British and Japanese rule. This stance caused Millard to write extensively that Japan's seizure of Korea was a blatant case of extending their rule over another country. He held a highly pragmatic and objective view of Japan's growing influence in East Asian affairs after 1900 and was appalled that Japan had opted to become an imperialist in Asia akin to its American and British "allies" in East and Southeast Asia.

Millard, always the anti-imperialist, reminds his readers that neither Russia nor Japan had any proprietary rights in either Korea or Manchuria. Korea was already a long-standing independent kingdom, and Manchuria had been an integral part of China for several centuries. The great truth was that both Japan and Russia were fighting to dominate land that belonged to neither:

Much has been written about the causes of this late war, so much so that there is now danger that the real causes will be entirely lost sight of in a chaos of comment and advocacy. We heard much of the rights of Japan on one hand, and the rights of Russia on the other. As a matter of fact, neither belligerent had any rights involved. Both had interests, but no rights. This constitutes a difference as well as a distinction. The chief bones of contention were Korea and Manchuria, and neither Japan nor Russia had any more

rights in these countries than the United States, France, or Germany. Manchuria is part of China and Korea is, or was when the war began, an independent kingdom. Any rights foreign nations have been under treaties which may be modified or reinstated at any time. This distinction should be kept clear, for it is vital in any intelligent discussion of the issues of the war and their settlement.⁸

Millard states that before the war, unscrupulous British and American journalists had fed Americans reams of false pro-Japanese propaganda. The truth was that when the war began, Japan staged a successful coup in Korea. It took control of several Korean government ministries and now ultimately ruled the nation: on paper, they looked intact, but the reality was quite different. Millard notes that “[t]here exists in the heart of every Korean a deep and bitter hatred of Japan and everything Japanese.”⁹ Japanese soldiers were everywhere, but outwardly the Korean government still functioned. Nevertheless, every Korean knew that their country was doomed.

The most objective correspondent in Korea was Jack London, then one of the most popular fiction writers in the US. As a journalist, he was known for being a feature writer for newspapers or weekly news magazines. His long, well-developed essays in the Hearst chain of newspapers reflected his points of view. However, unlike war correspondents Kennan and Palmer, London's more balanced writing did not seek to promote the agenda of one nation over another. In the era of “yellow journalism,” when few reporters wrote objectively or sought true balance in their coverage, London kept a fully independent voice even when a more pro-Japanese stance may have won him more favor with the Japanese. His own obstinacy made him a pain in the backsides of the Japanese, who eventually forced London to return to the US but permitted him to offer American readers fine penetrating coverage of the early stages of the war.

London, in his writing, is neither pro-Korean nor pro-Japanese. He has personal gripes about the Japanese high command, but he admires the

⁸ Thomas Franklin Millard, *The New Far East: An Examination into the New Position of Japan and Her Influence upon the Solution of the Far East Question* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 110.

meticulous organization and good order of the Japanese army. London also depicts the plight of the frightened Korean peasant and pities the misery of captured Russian soldiers. In short, he writes objectively about the war going on before him without bias for one side or another. Overall, London does realize that the days of Western dominance in Asia are almost over and that China and Japan would become major world powers later in the twentieth century.

As an ethnologist at heart, London investigates the dynamics of East Asian societies. A close examination of his writing shows that he was neither an alarmist nor a bigot, as some writers claimed. His Russo-Japanese war dispatches offer balanced writing, evincing concern for the welfare of both Japanese and Russian soldiers and the Korean peasants, as well as respect for the ordinary Chinese whom he met. As a widely read journalist covering the war, London emerges as one of the era's few writers who sensed that the tide of white "superiority" and Western expansionism was receding.

Furthermore, London was especially sensitive to the plight of the Korean peasant. Through his writing as well as his photography, he captured the poverty of the land and the misery of its people. He reaches the conclusion that the cause of their misery was their exploitation by the dominant aristocratic *yangban* class, which did little or nothing to advance their nation. The common man in Korea led a miserable and exploited life suffering at the cruel and corrupt whims of the aristocracy. While the *yangban* lived in comparative luxury, the common Korean lived in filthy and impoverished homes in both towns and villages. The Korean government forced the commoners to pay heavy taxes but spent virtually no money for the edification and education of the people.

It was portrayals such as these that dominated London's writing and gave readers an inside view of Korean life behind the scenes. He was alone among these writers in that he never really discussed the possibility of the Japanese seizure of Korea. His comprehensive coverage of its conditions was both critical and sympathetic, yet his photographs, which numbered over a thousand, pictured a country that was poor, where the faces of the people were worried and glum, and where the land was barren.

London's writing on Korea follows along the lines of his 1903 book, *The People of the Abyss*, where he describes the great poverty and misery of the British living in London's infamous East End. London's attitudes towards the East Enders is a mixture of pity and disdain – he is distressed by their miserable poverty but is also disgusted with the way they lived their lives. London's views on the common Korean are quite similar. His widely

published articles photographs show desperate Korean refugees, dressed in white, suffering from the devastating effects of the war and the Japanese military occupation of their land. One is especially impressed by a very poignant photograph of a young girl, perhaps only six or seven, carrying her younger sister on her back with a terribly worried look on her face. Leading scholar Jeanne Campbell Reesman writes:

London's photographs from Korea signal his developing photographic goals and his compassionate view of humanity. His socialist views on labor and class are illustrated in his many images of people at work, and the images of war orphans [in Korea] echo the suffering of the children he observed in London's East End. His photographs [of Koreans] preserve the dignity of even the most destitute of subjects, such as refugees.¹⁰



**Figure 1. Young Korean Refugee carrying her sister.
Jack London, 1904**

¹⁰ Jeanne Campbell Reesman and Sara S. Hodson, *Jack London: Photographer* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2010), 65.

In conclusion, we come back to the main thesis of this study featuring the Rashomon effect: *Caveat Lector! Let the Reader Beware!* When we read history, we must carefully examine not only what the writer is saying, but also his or her perspectives and biases. History does not provide absolute answers. As it happened in World War II, we know for a fact that Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and that Japan earlier initiated a war with Russia with a surprise attack on Port Arthur, but as historians, we must decide for ourselves *why* a certain event occurred. Let the reader derive his or her own perspectives on history.

Book Reviews

Jacqueline I. Stone, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. 624 pp. ISBN: 978-0824856434, \$68.00.

Reviewed by Elaine Lai

Jacqueline Stone's latest book, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan*, is the first comprehensive study in a western language to explore how the Buddhist ideal of mindful death was appropriated in medieval Japan, with a focus on the latter Heian and Kamakura periods (from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries). Stone utilizes a range of pre-modern sources including ritual manuals, hagiographies, doctrinal writings, didactic tales, courtier diaries, letters, which can be categorized under two broader genres of writing: 1) *rinjū gyōgisho* or instructions for practice; and 2) *ōjōden*, hagiographical accounts of people who were believed to have achieved birth in Amida Buddha's Pure Land.

The larger aim of the entire book is to understand religion on the ground in early medieval Japan, which for Stone entails how people interacted with and understood death and its associated practices, the kinds of concerns and anxieties surrounding the moment of death, and how Buddhist doctrine and practice both shaped and was shaped by these concerns. Central to "right thoughts at the last moment" is the cultivation of right mindfulness at the moment of death. In early medieval Japan, this was connected to practices of *nenbutsu* or recitation of the Buddha's name and Pure Land aspirations, with the trust that Amida Buddha and his assembly would descend to the dying person's side and guide them to the Pure Land. The special status assigned to the final moment before death finds its roots in a broader South Asian Buddhist context where the force of one's final thoughts was regarded as karmically "weightier." As such, a dying person's final thoughts were believed to hold particular salvific power by circumventing otherwise destitute karmic fruition, such as birth in the lower realms.

Drawing from a theoretical framework derived from anthropology and the sociology of culture, Stone frames Buddhism in early medieval Japan as a repertoire or toolkit of resources from which multiple and sometimes seemingly contradictory symbols, discourses, schemas, normative claims, tropes, idioms, and narratives are interwoven (4). The merit of using this kind

of analytical lens to examine deathbed practice is that it allows scholars to access Buddhism as a lived religion that incorporated different strands of thought and practice that might otherwise be judged as incommensurable. Stone, however, is careful to note that most people engaging in deathbed practices probably saw little incongruity between their views and actions, most likely moving from one perspective to another depending on life circumstances and with great fluidity too (376). To bolster her point, Stone's argument forefronts the divergent deathbed logics should not be seen as deviations from some original imaginary norm for Buddhist death, but rather that these multiple logics are themselves "constitutive of Buddhist approaches to death and dying" (9). Stone masterfully weaves examples from a variety of Japanese literature throughout every chapter of the book to illustrate this theory of multiple logics, demonstrating that there was never a single, uniform ideal of death, but instead a spectrum of understandings, responses, and coping mechanisms which sought to shape and partake in the attractive possibilities that an ideal death could offer.

The book is organized into seven chapters, which can roughly be subsumed under two main themes: 1) chapters one to four describe the characteristics of an ideal death; and 2) chapters five to seven describe the coping mechanisms created in response to the difficulty of achieving the ideal death. The first chapter traces the emergence of deathbed practices, which according to Stone comes about in the late tenth century as the result of the confluence of three main events: 1) Yoshishige no Yasutane's publication of the first collection of hagiographic accounts of people believed to have achieved the Pure Land (*ōjō Gokuraku ki*); 2) Genshin's instructions for deathbed practice, which effectively inscribed the whole bodhisattva path within a Pure Land framework (*ōjō yōshū*); and 3) the founding of the Twenty-Five Samādhi Society in which its members promised to look after one another at the moment of death.

Through tracing the historical predecessors to death bed rituals, Stone shows that while the conceptual framework for merit transference and liberating birth in Pure Lands had been formed by the Nara period, it was not until the late tenth century that we see exemplary death emerge as a distinct cultural form in literature. Chapter 2 examines the social expectations which shaped medieval Japanese approaches to death and cosmological conceptions of the Pure Land. In the latter part of this chapter, Stone offers penetrating analyses into the way that gender hierarchies played out in *ōjōden* and how even instances that celebrate female attainment tended to depict these women

as approximating a masculine ideal of renunciation and asceticism and thus continued to perpetuate inegalitarian gender conventions.

Chapter 3 looks at the characteristics of an exemplary death and how this ideal was achieved. Preparations for this crucial moment included withdrawal into a separate room where disturbance would be minimal; adorning the secluded room with the right ritual objects to facilitate mindfulness of Amida Buddha; the actual practice of recitation, which would be conducted until the moment of death, and finally the signs of *ōjō* that would ideally appear after a person had passed on. The next chapter elaborates upon the different kinds of extraordinary signs, which marked successful *ōjō*, for example, revelatory dreams of *raigō*-like images, seeing purple clouds in the sky, or even corporeal signs such as the body remaining fresh and omitting a fragrant scent after death.

Most significantly, the many narrative accounts that Stone highlights reveal that the interpreters of *ōjō* signs were not restricted to monks and religious adepts, but instead included people from all facets of society, demonstrating that belief in *ōjō* signs was not exclusive to the religious elite. Sometimes these signs were used to render tragic or inauspicious death – as was the case for Chōmei Hosshinshū and Emperor Horikawa – in a more bearable and meaningful light. As for whether or not these revelatory signs did indeed appear, Stone states that this is beside the point since “belief in the reality of such signs, along with their proper identification and interpretation was integral to religious culture of the time” (219). Stone’s position shows that she takes seriously the signs of *ōjō* insofar as she believes that people in early medieval Japan did so too, treating these signs as positive signifiers of a deceased person’s liberation from an otherwise uncertain existential predicament. I will return to this at the end of the review.

The second part of the book explores the darker side of the ideal of mindful death, namely how individuals coped with the potential failure of not being able to attain this ideal and the measures that were taken to prevent such a thing from happening. Chapter 5 begins with examining several possible hindrances to an ideal death, such as losing mental focus due to physical anguish, losing consciousness, possessing strong worldly attachments, or coming under the influence of demonic interference. The rest of this chapter shows how not-so-ideal deaths on the part of Buddhist lineage holders such as Master Enni were recast in a more positive light by their disciples, a move that was crucial for validating the authority and authenticity of one’s particular lineage. Other coping mechanisms included the sponsorship of Buddhist images dedicated towards the aim of achieving *ōjō*

as well as adopting a quantitative approach to amassing merit, such as by chanting one million *nenbutsu*. As a result of these anxieties about creating the perfect conditions for the right kind of death, the need for a ritual specialist, a kind of death bed attendant (*zenchishiki*) to care for the distinct needs of the dying and in particular for chanting on behalf of the dying one, emerged. Who these attendants were and what functions they played is the topic of Chapter 6. Finally, Chapter 7 outlines innovations in deathbed practice during the Kamakura period, beginning with a discussion on how death bed rites accommodated warriors who often met with violent and sudden endings. This final chapter also provides a short presentation on doctrinal innovations to the soteriological status of the last thought before death. Notable innovations include the Zen practice of “no mind” or “no thought” at the moment of death and A-syllable contemplation (*ajikan*), which gained an association with the name of Amida starting with figures such as Jippan and Kakuban.

Throughout the book, Stone demonstrates a high degree of self-reflexivity about the limitations of the material she uses as well as the analytical categories she applies in ways that current and future scholars in religious studies should note. From the very beginning of the book, Stone expresses a keen awareness of the potential bias in the material she uses – pre-modern sources were generally written for cultural elites. Moreover, most of the sources in the book represent prescriptive hagiographic literature which cannot tell us for certain whether or not people did die in the scripted forms that are described. Nevertheless, whether merely prescriptive or indicative of ways in which people did die, the literature Stone presents us with reflects the ideals that were important to pre-modern Japanese who became increasingly preoccupied with cultivating right thoughts at the last moment of life. As such, Stone treats this literature with the utmost consideration and care.

As for why early medieval Japanese people chose to adopt deathbed practices in the ways that they did, I was delighted to find that Stone does not try to psychologize hagiographical descriptions of *ōjō* signs or offer any kind of rationalization for narrative accounts that may not be immediately comprehensible or believable to contemporary scholars. She takes the opposite stance of endeavoring such rationalization in the conclusion of the book when she problematizes Peter Berger’s thesis that human beings have an overriding need for meaning and thus are willing to embrace uncomfortable and burdensome explanations “as a shield against the terror of meaninglessness” (381). Stone writes: “One problem with arguments for

religious meaning as a social construct lies in their tacit privileging of the observer, according her the superior status of one able to see through the ‘thaumaturgic bonds’ of pre-modern people” (381). This passage echoes Stone’s conclusions in Chapter 4, where she says that quibbling over whether signs of *ōjō* like purple clouds were really seen is missing the greater significance of *ōjō* literature itself. For Stone, the premise of the entire book is not to debate over the experiences people did or did not have, but to unpack what was at stake for those who conceptualized death practices in certain ways and why the attraction of the ideal – *ōjō* – outweighed the risks and anxieties of falling short of this ideal.

Skillfully working with a variety of Japanese literature while integrating useful analytic categories from which scholars can begin to make sense of the diverse repertoire of multiple deathbed logics, Stone eloquently and artfully takes the reader through pre-modern Japan and how Japanese people may have understood and attempted to achieve exemplary death. While the nature of the elite sources used cannot provide hard evidence of whether or not deathbed practices and ideals were taken up by Japanese people more generally, given the vast corpus of literature regarding exemplary death, it is probably more than safe to say that these were issues that people cared about deeply.

Encyclopedic in scope and meticulously written, *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment* is not only a must-read for those working in Japanese religion, literature or pre-modern Japan, but I would suggest that it is a necessary addition to the bookshelf of all scholars of Buddhist studies, Asian religions, and medieval studies more generally. Any scholar seeking to respectfully and critically represent or reconstruct communities, practices, and time periods that have the potential to be othered, misread or misappropriated, would benefit immensely from the benchmarks of reflexivity, caution, and care that Stone’s book exemplifies.

Kan Kimura, trans. Marie Speed, *The Burden of the Past: Problems of Historical Perception in Japan-Korea Relations*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019. 249 pp. ISBN: 978-0472054107, \$29.95.

Reviewed by Jason Morgan

The relationship between Japan and her counterpart in the southern half of the Korean peninsula has changed over time. As circumstances have shifted, the Japan-South Korea affairs have grown in complexity and depth. Their long-shared history, both beneficial and rancorous, freights whatever new exchanges the present brings. And yet, despite – or perhaps because of – this manifold depth, there is a tendency for the parties of this relationship to lose sight of the past in the heat of the moment. Proximity does not necessarily engender familiarity, and it can be as easy to reduce one's neighbor to a mere caricature as one's distant rival. Stereotypes readily pass for analysis when in close quarters, and we often tune out the nuances of a given situation on the assumption that we have heard it all before.

Kobe University professor Kan Kimura's *The Burden of the Past: Problems of Historical Perception in Japan-Korea Relations* provides an in-depth study of the historical strains between Japan and South Korea. In recent years, there has been a spate of unpleasant incidents, which have come to overshadow all other interactions between the two nations. These occurrences can make it all seem as though bad blood and ill will were the only aspects that South Korea and Japan ever had in common. Kimura's book (the deft English translation of the 2014 Japanese original from Minerva Shobo) is a welcome opportunity to take a step back and see the granularity and detail that are so often washed out in the glare of rhetoric. It is also vital to remember that the way the situation is now is not the way it has always been.

Take the comfort women issue, for example. Japan-South Korea relations took a nosedive in 2014 and 2015 after hundreds of US scholars issued a statement condemning the Japanese government for protesting counter-factual passages on comfort women in a world history textbook. Relations also went south after the *Asahi Shimbun* retracted comfort women-related articles from the previous two decades once it became clear that the source of the articles' narrative, Yoshida Seiji, had fabricated claims of having abducted young women on Jeju Island during the Second World War. What had been a reasonably effective working bond darkened into open enmity. The leaders of the two governments tried to create a resolution by

signing an agreement on the comfort women issue in late 2015 but to no avail. Comfort women statues continued to multiply in South Korea – and around the world – and poll after poll found that people in both countries had grown weary of interacting with the other side. Newspapers in Korea and Japan blared one comfort women headline after another. Whatever else was going on between the two nations got drowned out in the latest comfort women-themed round of the “history wars.”

However, this one-issue filter obscures the complicated interplay of factors that allowed for comfort women to become a point of discord between Japan and South Korea in the first place. As Kimura shows, it was mainly the local and global modulations of the Cold War in the 1980s that cleared the field for historical memory of sexual labor to become a bone of contention in the 1990s and beyond. Although it is difficult to imagine today, comfort women had been a non-issue for most of the postwar. But then two poignant factors occurred: Japan got rich, and South Korea transitioned – messily – to democracy. Kimura clearly explains that Japan’s rise to a world economic powerhouse, particularly during the “bubble era” of the 1980s, caused consternation and unease in South Korea. Was Japan preparing to reassert its might militarily and economically? At the same time, the loosening of censorship controls in South Korea led to what Kimura calls an “explosive receptiveness to Marxism.” This 1980s-style Marxism arrived on the shores of South Korea in large part as “dependency theory,” which was the ideological mix out of which the comfort women issue would eventually emerge (95–96).

According to dependency theory, Kimura explains, many in South Korea came to believe (96–97):

the modern world was controlled by multinational capital, and particularly that of the economic superpowers, Japan and the United States. This capital was using the power of its agents—the Japanese and US governments—to control the Korean peninsula, ruthlessly exploiting the Korean people. As the military regime ruling South Korea was no more than a puppet of Japanese and US giant capital, there was no way that it could seriously serve the interests of the South Korean people. The democratization of South Korea was a battle with this foreign-controlled regime, so the South Korean people had to take on not only the military regime but also its US and Japanese backers.

Kimura goes to point out that the comfort women issue took on an important meaning in this context:

Which group among the exploited South Korean people was in the weakest position? The answer was women, and particularly sex workers, who were placed in the most humiliating position of all. As exemplified by the fact that most of their customers were American soldiers and Japanese tourists (this was the peak of the *gisaeng* tourism era), prostitutes were the ultimate embodiment of the oppression and exploitation of the South Korean people. Comfort women represented the past of those Korean women exploited through their engagement in prostitution. In other words, in addressing the comfort women issue, one was also addressing the issue of women in capitalist society, and indeed contemporary South Korea in general.

Kimura concludes that, “In this manner, the comfort women issue was imbued with symbolic status within the new framework of the historical perception dispute, which clearly identified South Korea’s ruling elite as the enemy while positioning the ‘conscientious intelligentsia’ and the women’s movement in Japan as allies of the movement in South Korea.”

Coupled with this rapidly evolving ideological situation in South Korea, the Japanese government failed to understand that the political landscape of its peninsular counterpart was transformed by the democratic shift and its breakdown of elite hegemony. Japanese politicians, nonplussed by the sudden irruption of an issue that had been settled in the 1965 treaty, attempted to engage with the South Korean side, but to no avail. The comfort women issue had taken on an emotionally charged, nationalistic valence, and countless apologies by a long train of Japanese politicians from across the political spectrum did little but further antagonize the South Korean public. What we see as a historical issue today, then, is two historical issues at once: the comfort women issue, and the changes in East Asia – especially South Korea – brought about by the ongoing transmogrification of the Cold War.

Kimura’s book shines in foregrounding this intervenient Cold War period. Throughout his text, Kimura reminds readers that the Japanese-South Korean past did not end in 1945, but continued to unfold thereafter, often in counterintuitive ways. Particularly enlightening is Kimura’s use of databases to show how newspapers in both countries have focused on various issues

over the past eight decades. Comfort women, for instance, merited just eight mentions in the *Asahi Shimbun* from 1945 to 1989, and then 600 from 1990 to 1994, while there were only three mentions of the same issue in the *Chosun Ilbo* from 1945 to 1994, and then 459 from 1995 to 1999. As the Cold War waned, the comfort women issue was moved to the fore. Kimura also skillfully uses databases to show that the “textbook issue,” much touted in both South Korea and Japan as indicating a hard lurch to the right by the Japanese public, was almost entirely the product of bad *Asahi* reporting and picayune revisions to educational review procedures among Japanese bureaucrats (who are hardly known for their strident nationalism). What we think we know about the Japan-South Korea relationship has been greatly distorted by “historical memory” failures of our own. The data do not support the past version of the Japan-South Korea history rehearsed today.

Divided into three parts and seven chapters, *The Burden of the Past* is a step-by-step re-introduction to these and many other complexities between South Korea and Japan. The “theoretical examination” comprising part one is a helpful entrée to the case studies – the textbook and comfort women issues – which make up parts two and three. Serialized over a three-year period from the spring of 2011 to spring of 2014 for *Kiwameru* magazine, Kimura’s book has a lively immediacy. The English-language translation is especially welcome as it will make accessible to a wider public (both academic and lay) Kimura’s balanced approach to this topic. Students are especially encouraged to read it as an antidote to the often-shrill voices that portray Japan-South Korea interactions in stark, one-dimensional terms.

I have one quibble, however. Like many others in the academy and the media who write about East Asian history, Kimura speaks of South Korea’s “colonial” history under Japanese rule, but this is not quite correct. It is more than semantic hairsplitting to point out that, after 1910, the Korean peninsula was not a colony of Japan, but a part of Japan proper. Annexed in August of that year, the Korean peninsula became just as Japanese as Hawaii is American. This distinction has enormous consequences, some of which Kimura details. Indeed, the peace treaty signed between Japan and South Korea in 1965 contains language reflecting a compromise between these nations over whether the 1910 annexation was legal at all. Kimura’s use of the word “colonial” to describe the annexation period is likely an irenic linguistic gesture by a scholar striving to present his subject in a balanced way. Nevertheless, as the legality of the 1910 document impinges upon all subsequent Japan-South Korean matters, Kimura might have spent a little

more time explaining how his choice of terminology fits in with the larger rhetorical field.

That said, this cavil should not deter anyone from reading *The Burden of the Past*. Kimura's fine-tuned historical analysis and perceptive political insights stand to bring some much-needed perspective to a contested subject. The University of Michigan Press (in cooperation with the steadily growing Japan Library series) is to be commended for bringing into print this valuable addition to English-language scholarship on Japan-South Korean relations.

Bryan D. Lowe, *Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan*. Honolulu: Kuroda Institute, University of Hawaii Press, 2017. 296 pp. ISBN: 978-0824859404, \$60.00.

Reviewed by Justin Peter McDonnell

Bryan Lowe's *Ritualized Writing: Buddhist Practice and Scriptural Cultures in Ancient Japan* examines eighth-century scriptoriums and colophons to assess writing practices and ritual copying of religious scriptures and its role in constituting ethical beings and communities. His study pays particular attention to the functions and effects of ritual practice in different social and religious circles, including nonroyal officials, laborers, and scribes. In providing an account of Nara Buddhism that looks beyond elites and state-popular binary narratives, we bear witness to how religion was practiced across the archipelago.

Divided into six chapters, including an introduction and epilogue, Lowe's book traces the developments of the reproduction of East Asian traditions and how recitation and transcription come to be ritualized practices. The author draws from Saba Mahmood's ethnographic work, *Politics of Piety*, to explore how sutra copying could "create merit" (13) and help practitioners follow the bodhisattva path. It could, as we will see in the final three chapters, also reconfigure communities and imperial lineages. It is in the final chapters that Lowe delves into the 10,000 documents at the Todaiji Scriptorium in Nara, which illuminates text among monks and laity and ritual practice.

In Chapters 1 and 2, or Part One on "Ritual Practices," the author surveys tales across the Buddhist pantheon that describe transcribing religious texts and precautionary steps to ensure ritual purity. In texts as varied as *Nihon Ryoki*, *Fayuan zhulin*, and Gilgit's *Ratnaketuparivarta*,

defilement, including sexual misconduct and meat-eating while copying scriptures resulted in great consequences and even death. Furthermore, there is an abundance of stories of sutras seeking their owners to provide them with dedications, especially if proper attention to Buddhist ritual was not followed. Sutras were often dedicated to ancestors, parents, and emperors, and tied up with notions of karma and the repayment of debt. They also bestowed virtue on copyists and the commissioners of transcription. That is, they could serve as vehicles to the bodhisattva path for people from various walks of life. Furthermore, prayer texts or *gammon* employed Chinese literary and Buddhist canonical traditions and poetics, offering patrons a rich and appropriate way to express their understanding of Buddhist scripture and Buddhist cosmology creatively. In short, texts were objects of worship and were ritualized in their production and use.

Part Two, "Organizations," comprised of Chapters 3 and 4, focuses on communities of religious practitioners in the Nara period and the emergence and development of a systemic bureaucratic state to secure and administer large-scale ritualized writing. Chapter 3 delves into fellowship groups (*chishiki yui*), where faithful Buddhists participated in shared textual practices, as this ultimately helped spread Buddhism across Japan. Fellowships, Lowe argues, were active at every level of society and maintained dual loyalties between both the state and the local. Members of the collective served the interests of powerful figures and institutions, but the fellowships also gave them opportunities to cultivate themselves and foster solidarity with like-minded individuals. Women, too, could cultivate themselves via religious observances and practices and often held leadership roles in these collectives. In examining the Ketaji scrolls, Lowe posits that while fellowships could be harnessed by regional hierarchies to strengthen their lineages and affect local politics, there may also have been ecclesiastical fellowship groups composed entirely of monks of varying stature, nuns, and lay practitioners. True or otherwise, fellowships encouraged the deepening of religious practice and efficacy and the forging of bonds to create new ideas of friendship and community.

Chapter 4 traces the institutionalization of sutra transcription and the birth of the scriptorium. Large-scale projects commissioned by wealthy patrons required institutional expertise, resources, and skilled workers and administrators. In its early manifestation, scriptoria functioned as household organizations of wealthy patrons who could rely on and seek help from the state, but whose projects did not always overlap with the interests of the state. Prince Nagaya, for example, commissioned projects at his

household scriptoria to mourn and memorialize the dead. Komyoshi's scriptoria, whose household office would later become the Todaiji scriptorium, commissioned the largest canon up until that period. Though it became an official scriptorium, it also fulfilled Komyoshi's ritual needs to become a bodhisattva, mourn the dead, and bring stability to the political realm. The escalation of bureaucracy also benefitted private projects of transcription. Patrons outside the imperial line and beyond the capital could practice ritualized writing and utilize Todaiji for human resources and materials to mourn the dead and fulfill their ritual needs. Lowe underscores that there were multifarious interrelations with the social, cultural, and political fabric in the emergence of sutra copying that did not fit neatly into rigid categories of state and popular Buddhism.

The latter half of his book includes significant contributions to Japanese scholarship and, more broadly, to the field of religious studies. Using a micro-historical approach, Chapter 5 provides a glimpse into the life of a scribe named Kurakuni no Muraji Hitonari. While the work required of a scribe was difficult and the pay meager, the scriptorium allowed him to cultivate himself as a Buddhist practitioner and learn the skills necessary for full ordination as a monk. Indeed, power and politics are always present – as the reader is never sure whether he was forced to work at the scriptorium – but this narrative also reminds us that power was not always consumed passively by those from humbler origins. In participating at the Office of Sutra Transcription, he was able to embark upon a monastic path and gain the necessary qualifications, including calligraphic, literary, recitational, and bureaucratic skills. Others participating in administrative and laborious roles within these specific structures and institutions may also have been able to pursue monastic ordination or create other opportunities for themselves. Lowe demonstrates that low-ranking individuals “shouldered the rise of Buddhism in early Japan” (169). More scholarship is warranted that tells their stories, their abilities to craft meaning and opportunities for themselves in the face of adversity, and the meaning of religious practice in their daily lives.

In his final chapter, Lowe uses the same micro-historical methodological approach to examine those who have been privileged in scholarly narratives, members of the royal elite. However, he provides a new perspective on the relationship between ritual and state, asking us to rethink the control of Buddhism by the state as well as the theater-state model, first coined by Clifford Geertz and elaborated upon by Stanley Tambiah to describe the demonstration of statecraft and power through performance and ritual. Lowe begins by trying to appreciate why queen consort Komyoshi has

taken up the transcription of *Scripture on Saving and Protecting the Body and Life*, *Golden Light Sutra*, and *Scripture on Brahma's Spirit Tablets*. Noting the timing of the project and its timeline at Todaiji, he traces the political context of the period. At a time when there was uncertainty over whether Princess Abe would be able to preserve the future royal lineage, Komyoshi and newly abdicated Emperor Shomu began commissioning specialized Buddhist texts for fear of retribution for the illegitimate killing of political rivals. Whereas the copying of sutra has often been understood as a justification of authority, here it served to appease demons and deities and to ensure the safe passageway to the throne. In so doing, the deities not only "defended the realm from enemies of the throne; they also observed humans and punished them for misconduct" (202).

Although not mentioned by Lowe, there is a similarity to the Chinese Mandate of Heaven. Where the ruler had to be virtuous or otherwise be overthrown, elites were controlled by a heavenly system. Where there was agency for nonelites, there was also discipline for elites under a watchful divine. In copying and reciting sutras to rectify a violent past, were Komyoshi and Shomu trying to bend the deities and spirits to their will, or were they primarily concerned with upholding the ideals of the sutras and the Buddhist way? For the author's aims of this chapter, this question is not asked, but this reader is interested in whether the imperial relationship, in this instance, is more of an act of transaction than one of piety.

In conclusion, Lowe's argument that sutra copying was not necessarily in the service of state Buddhism is persuasive and nuanced. The approach – examining how religion was practiced and how the relationship between text and society was for the faithful Buddhist – provides a way of thinking about individuals beyond a kind of exclusive focus on elites and founders. Throughout the book, the fluidity between state and popular networks, and between individuals as well as communities, helps us to reimagine Japanese Buddhism that does not give prominence to demarcated social and economic divisions.

Furthermore, *Ritualized Writing* is the first piece of scholarship in English on documents from the Todaiji scriptorium and the Shoshoin; they are a vital and unique archival collection which he confidently details in his final historical narratives in Chapter 5 and 6. Lowe opens an essential world of further research and study, as only a portion of the documents have been studied here. Finally, his ability to wield tremendously compelling narratives from scriptoria sources that might typically seem of better use to an economic historian reminds scholars and writers to re-evaluate approaches to archival

research and the narrative qualities of historical writing. Lowe's work joins recent scholarship on the reconsideration of state Buddhism in early Japan, including Asuka Sango's *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan*, which illuminates monks' sense of agency and power within state structures. His research also complements other works focused on the cult of the book, sutra religious practices, and the body, particularly Charlotte Eubank's *Miracles of Book and Body: Buddhist Textual Culture and Medieval Japan*.

Providing an intriguing portrait of early Japanese culture, the accessibility of this book makes it a worthy option for use in courses in Buddhist and religious studies, Japanese history, and courses at the nexus of ethics and politics. The book could also prove worthwhile for non-specialists of the Nara period and ancient Japan, especially because of the section of the micro-histories. By paving the way for greater consideration of agency and society as well as peripheral figures in scholarly accounts, Lowe's contribution to the field will hopefully be followed by other researchers.

Steven Heine, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. 312 pp. ISBN: 978-0231182294, \$35.00.

Reviewed by Jundo Cohen

This review can be titled, "Doin' Dōgen Right!" which is what Steven Heine provides in his excellent new book on Dōgen and his masterwork, the *Shōbōgenzō*. Indisputably, *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* may be considered the single best and most-detailed survey and explanation of what Dōgen philosophized about that I have ever read by a leading scholar. I offer that opinion as a Sōtō Zen priest and longtime student of the *Shōbōgenzō* who is well aware of the tasks involved in analyzing it. Heine covers most of the same ground as other members of the "Dōgen Club" (such as the wonderful volumes by Hee-jin Kim, Shohaku Okumura, Kazuaki Tanahashi, Taigen Leighton, Carl Bielefeldt, Francis Cook, and others). However, Heine's presentation is unusually clear, comprehensive, and focused. It is well organized and well expressed, especially given the difficult subject matter.

I do not believe that Dōgen can be presented more completely and, most importantly, as accurately and comprehensibly as is done in this book.

For that reason, I believe the book will become the main “go-to” guide ahead of others, as the first book to turn to for a serious dive into Dōgen’s bottomless depths. Many priests and practitioners are sometimes heard to criticize “academic” as being unable to “get Dōgen” because they are not practitioners and thus are considered outside of the field or lost in their own ideas. That is very true quite often. However, it is not at all true in this case: Heine truly knows the teachings of Dōgen better than about anyone alive, has Dōgen’s number, gets his game. Period. Nine Bows.

Now, the book may not be easy for newcomers to Dōgen: Steven Heine’s presentation is precise and intelligent and avoids academic jargon, but the prose can be dense. The professor’s writing style consists of winding vines of beautiful words and multi-perspectival layered observations, although the density of his writing style is necessary for precision in expressing Dōgen’s equally tangled and layered interpretative offerings. The author’s elegantly structured sentences work to hit the target on what Dōgen was examining, and I feel that Heine succeeds in making the mark time and again. Nonetheless, it may be difficult for readers who are not already exceptionally well versed in Dōgen’s ways to get started. Equally so, anyone who already deeply appreciates Dōgen and gets his music will savor this as a tour de force.

Heine’s book should be on the shelf of every true Dōgen fan. Personally, if anyone asks me in the coming years what they should read for a comprehensive explanation of Dōgen and the *Shōbōgenzō*, especially if it is someone who already has some good understanding of the topic, I will point them to this book. This is where they should go, besides the *zazen* sitting cushion, of course!

Although I agreed with more than 99% of Heine’s interpretations of Dōgen, I found myself disagreeing with, or perhaps misunderstanding, two passages of the book. First, Heine’s explanation of the opening sentences of the “Genjōkōan” fascicle lost me a bit. Generally, I take the more obvious view of the effect that mountains are mountains, mountains are not mountains, mountains are mountains again, and yet we still live in a world where we cry sometimes. In other words, the first sentence refers to the divided world of birth and death, flawed human beings down here and ideal Buddhas on high, ignorance versus a distant and quite separate state of enlightenment, and the practice to move us from one to the other. Then, there is the realm of emptiness, where all the opposites drop away. Next, through just sitting meditation (*shikan taza*), we encounter such a level of wisdom that all these “opposites” are “not two,” so that there is no birth and no death. Even in a

world of birth and death, ignorant beings who are Buddhas yet do not know and act as Buddhas find that their liberation comes from such a realization, so sadness is felt, and flowers continue to fall.

I also struggled with Heine's view of four main stages of awareness, which (if I read it correctly) he finds in the lines, "Those who have great realization of delusion are buddhas; those who are greatly deluded about realization are sentient beings. Further, there are those who continue realizing beyond realization, who are in delusion throughout delusion" (迷を大悟するは諸佛なり, 悟に大迷なるは衆生なり. さらに悟上に得悟する漢あり, 迷中又迷の漢あり). I do not see this as four stages. I believe that Buddhas, in this world, have great realization about delusion even if they still live in a world of delusion, while ordinary people are just deluded both about what is their delusion and what is "enlightenment" that they think is far away. Further, those same wise folks do not stop with such insight but keep on each moment, making the realization come alive in circumstance after changing circumstance, while the ordinary deluded folks stay deluded in delusion after delusion. Therefore, the contrast is more between the two kinds of folks (which, by the way, in practice enlightenment, human beings can have both within at different times and situations), rather than "four stages." However, these are mere minor quibbles in trying to digest what is otherwise an altogether significant achievement in the field of Dōgen studies.

EDITORS/CONTRIBUTORS

STEVEN HEINE is Professor and Director of Asian Studies at Florida International University and a specialist in Japanese Buddhism in relation to society. His latest books include *Readings of Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (2020) and *Flowers Blooming on a Withered Tree: Giun's Verse Comments on Dōgen's Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (2020).

MARIA SOL ECHARREN is Program Manager of the Asian Studies Program at FIU and PhD candidate in the Department of Modern Languages. She has assisted with the editing of JSR for many years, as well as numerous other publications and documents produced by the program.

B. BRYAN BARBER is Teaching Fellow in Human Geography at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan. He received his PhD in International Relations from FIU and has recently published *Japan's Relations with Muslim Asia* (2020). His research interests are Japan's foreign policy and security policy, and Asian geopolitics.

JUNDO COHEN is a teacher and founder of Treeleaf Zendo (treeleaf.com), a Sōtō Zen community in Ibaraki, Japan. He was ordained by Gudo Wafu Nishijima, the Shōbōgenzō translator. Jundo is a Japanese translator and author of *The Zen Master's Dance: A Guide to Understanding Dōgen and Who You Are in the Universe* (2020).

VICTOR FORTE is Professor of Religious Studies and Co-director of the Asian Studies program at Albright College in Reading, PA. He is currently the General Editor for the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, and has published articles primarily concerned with both Japanese and Pali Buddhist ethics.

ELAINE LAI is a PhD candidate in Religious Studies at Stanford University. She focuses in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, specifically tantra, and is currently researching the *Seminal Heart in Four Parts* to understand the development of Great Perfection contemplative techniques and the transmission of tantra.

RACHEL SERENA LEVINE is a PhD student in East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Rachel earned her MA in Asian Studies at FIU and currently teaches an online course on anime and manga. Her research is on sexual assault and consent in Japan.

JUSTIN PETER MCDONNELL is Digital Editor for Rakuten based in Tokyo. His research interests include cross-cultural affairs with regional experience in Latin America, Europe, and East Asia. He completed his MA in Asia Pacific Studies at the University of San Francisco.

DANIEL A. MÉTRAUX is Professor Emeritus and Adjunct Professor of Asian Studies at Mary Baldwin University. He has written extensively on modern Japanese and East Asian history, culture, and religion. His most recent work is *The Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Farm Colony and the Birth of Japanese America* (2019).

JASON MORGAN is Associate Professor of Global Studies at Reitaku University in Japan. His PhD is in Japanese history from the University of Wisconsin, and his research centers on Japan and US history and politics. His most recent book is *Law and Society in Imperial Japan: Suehiro Izutarō and the Search for Equity* (2020).

MASAKI MORI is Associate Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature and Intercultural Studies at the University of Georgia. He received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Pennsylvania State University in 1990. He is the department head and directs five Asian language programs.

GEORGE WRISLEY is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Georgia. He researches metaphilosophy and normative questions about the good life, drawing on Wittgenstein, Nietzsche, and Dōgen. His article on “The Nietzschean Bodhisattva” appears in *The Significance of Indeterminacy: Perspectives from Asian and Continental Philosophy* (2019).