



PAMELA D. WINFIELD, *Icons and Iconoclasm in Japanese Buddhism: Kukai and Dogen on the Art of Enlightenment*

Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 230 pages.  
Hardcover, \$105.00; paperback, \$29.95. ISBN 9780199753581  
(hardcover); 978-0199945559 (paperback).

PAMELA D. WINFIELD's book, *Icons and Iconoclasm in Japanese Buddhism: Kukai and Dogen on the Art of Enlightenment*, is the latest addition to the growing body of literature concerning the study of Buddhist visual culture. Winfield focuses on two Buddhist figures, Kukai and Dogen, the founder figures of the Shingon School of Esoteric Buddhism and the Sotō School of Zen Buddhism in Japan. The book's main goals are: 1. to liberate Kukai and Dogen from past sectarian scholarship that has primarily locked them into strictly iconographic-ritual or philological-philosophical categories; 2. to restore the fundamental concern of religion with art and art with religion; and 3. to bring the artificially separated academic disciplines of art history and religious studies back together again in their historically inseparable symbiosis. In resolving these issues, Winfield suggests that a comparative approach that utilizes both textual and visual material can provide a more nuanced view of Kukai's and Dogen's understanding of the role of art in Buddhist practice. As Winfield explains,

Together, the generative symbiosis of idea and textual-visual expression construct Buddhism's philosophies of form. These philosophies in turn influence meditative experience, which in turn influence new philosophies of form. This feedback loop explaining the interdependence of text and image, idea and expression, philosophy and experience all account for innovation within tradition. Thus, scholars of art history and religious studies alike need to consider how philosophies of form, visual traditions, and different meditation techniques *together* constitute an inherited religious tradition. (19–20)

This observation regarding the “interdependence of text and image” is valuable, and this monograph stands as a case study of how we may effectively approach this theme.

The main body of this book consists of three chapters, “Mikkyō Space, Zen Time,” “Kūkai on the Art of the Ultimate,” and “Dōgen on the Art of Engaging.” In the first chapter, Winfield discusses both Kūkai and Dōgen’s respective expressions of enlightenment. Although recognizing that the concept of enlightenment necessarily involves a discussion of both space and time, Winfield argues that in terms of relative emphasis, “Kūkai places emphasis on holographic space, whereas Dōgen emphasizes holochronic time” (63). In addressing this issue of the relative emphasis on space and time, Winfield focuses on the inheritance of Kegon (Ch. *Hua-yen*) philosophy. Winfield’s choice to focus on primary textual materials from the Buddhist canon is significant, as she finds earlier attempts of comparative studies based on European theoretical models problematic, and argues that her choice of viewing Kegon philosophy as a common denominator between these two thinkers provides the “essential Buddhist link enabling this associative and comparative project” (23).

In addition to establishing Kegon as the common theoretical ground for comparing Kūkai and Dōgen, Winfield introduces the Two World mandala and the *shisho* (transmission certificate) as iconography that reflect their respective emphasis on the spatial and temporal aspects of emptiness. According to Winfield, the Two World mandala in Kūkai’s thought is a spatialized system in which he “embodies and physically locates all the nondual aspects of Dainichi’s enlightenment: its mind and matter, its noumena and phenomena, its ends and means … and its principle of using compassionate method to actualize potential enlightenment” (43). On the other hand, the *shisho* document for Dōgen “reconciled the tensions between original and acquired enlightenment, universal and individual enlightenment, eternal and momentary awakening, realization and practice” (54). By juxtaposing the Two World mandala and the *shisho* as both visual representations of the Buddhist understanding of emptiness, the differences between Kūkai’s spatial approach and Dōgen’s temporal approach are underscored. Although I found myself hoping for a more detailed discussion of Kūkai’s thoughts on time and Dōgen’s understanding of space to balance the emphasized particularity between the two, the distinctions made here are helpful in understanding important variations in their approaches to enlightenment.

Whereas the first chapter established a conceptual common ground shared by Kūkai and Dōgen, the next two chapters are each devoted to the characteristic features of their perception of iconography. In “Kūkai on the Art of the Ultimate,” Winfield offers an explanation of visual materials in the esoteric Buddhist tradition by employing textual references and introduces concepts that characterize the Shingon tradition, such as the theory of *monji* (word-images), *hosshin seppō* (preaching of the *dharmakāya*), and *ajikan* (visualization of the Sanskrit syllable A). Winfield also coins the word “intericonicity” to describe the function of esoteric images in Kūkai’s thought. According to Winfield, intericonicity is “the citation of iconic elements within another iconic context to produce a metonymic effect of layered inter-resonance” (92). According to Winfield, this “intericonicity” can be seen in the free mixing and matching of sculpted deities in the layout of Buddhist sculptures at Tōji Lecture Hall and the *konpon daitō* on Mt. Kōya, and one who is attuned to paradigmatic mandalas is able to sense an interresonance between the aspects of the universal Buddha in this ritual space. Finally, regarding the relationship between image and the notion of emptiness, we are introduced to Kūkai’s double-level discourse in which there is a distinction made between the conventional level of form and images and the ultimate level of emptiness. In observing the function of esoteric sculpture and Kūkai’s philosophical understanding of form and images, Winfield concludes that esoteric art is both “ontological expressions of, and soteriological agents for, the realization of emptiness (103).

In “Dōgen on the Art of Engaging,” Dōgen’s philosophical ideas are placed in juxtaposition to those of Kūkai. Dōgen’s *mujō seppō* is contrasted to Kūkai’s *hosshin seppō*, Dōgen’s intuitive epistemology of “seeing through ears” and “hearing through eyes” is seen as a move away from Kūkai’s onto-lexicographical focus on sound, letter, and reality, and whereas Kūkai’s vision of language was discussed in terms of “intericonicity,” we are told that Dōgen’s view of enlightenment is expressed in terms of “intertemporality.”

The visual materials used in this chapter to support Winfield’s discussion of Dōgen’s understanding of art in relation to enlightenment are three *chinzō* portraits of Dōgen. By analyzing the relationship between the image and the verse that accompany these portraits, Winfield emphasizes that

the verse is designed to destabilize his students and remind them not to mistake the painting for the real thing or somehow substitute the representation for the experience. When it comes to representing himself, therefore, Dōgen is happy to let imagery stand, as long as he can use text to undercut its treachery. (124–25)

It is here that an important distinction is made between Kūkai and Dōgen. Whereas for Kūkai, images can “collapse form and emptiness on the same plane by virtue of his unobstructed spatial logic,” Dōgen, “refuses to take the personalized image of the dharma at face value and consequently adds text to deconstruct it of any attempt at reification” (114). Their view of the positive and negative function of images is per-

haps one of the most significant differences seen in their understanding of the role of images in Buddhist practice. In the latter half of the chapter, however, Winfield provides a more nuanced vision of Dōgen's iconoclasm through her analysis of Dōgen's writings, in which she concludes that although "as an enlightened master, Dōgen adopts an anti-image stance ... as a teacher attuned to the needs and capacities of his audience, he is pro-image, since he deems them beneficial to beginners" (146).

Although this book is filled with interesting and thought-provoking observations of Kūkai and Dōgen's understanding of enlightenment, one cannot help but think that the differences emphasized between Kūkai and Dōgen may have the unintended effect of simplifying their philosophical positions. However, the author is well aware of this danger and reminds the reader multiple times that the distinctions made should be seen as *relative* differences. As long as the reader keeps this in mind, there exists a heuristic value in employing these models, which help to clarify differences in Kūkai and Dōgen's understanding of the role of art in the Buddhist quest for enlightenment. Another point to keep in mind is that the discussions in the book do not always revolve around Kūkai and Dōgen as historical figures. For example, there is no evidence that Kūkai was responsible for the current placement of the sculptures in the *konpon daitō* at Kōyasan, and recent research has suggested that the *shisho* document used to discuss Dōgen's concept of time is most likely a medieval forgery. This should not be taken as a criticism as Winfield is aware of these facts. One could say that this book is in part a study of the art of enlightenment that has been culturally defined as reflecting the thought of Kūkai and Dōgen as legendary founders, which is just as valuable as a study that focuses solely on these individuals as historical figures. It is, however, important that the reader maintain this distinction.

In conclusion, although the comparative approach that Winfield employs may simplify the historical context of both figures, this does not weaken the significance of this work, as this is not its main purpose. *Icons and Iconoclasm in Japanese Buddhism* stands as an important contribution to both fields of art history and religious studies as it serves to bridge the gap between these two academic traditions. It is successful in clarifying a more nuanced view of these two thinkers and brings to light for a broader audience what may otherwise be an abstruse topic. Winfield has opened up a new space where scholars and students focusing on both text and image can come together for constructive dialogue. It is hoped that this book will become a catalyst that brings together specialists from various fields that will then lead to fruitful discussions regarding the interdependence of text and image.

Eric Haruki Swanson  
*Harvard University*