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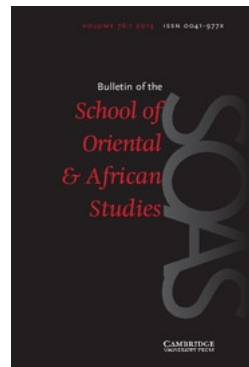
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Jérôme Ducor and Helen Loveday: *Le Sūtra des contemplations du Buddha Vie-Infinie, Essai d'interprétation textuelle et iconographique.* (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Religieuses, volume 145.) xiv, 468 pp. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011. €69. ISBN 978 2 503 54116 7.

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Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies / Volume 76 / Issue 01 / February 2013, pp 177 - 179

DOI: 10.1017/S0041977X12001802, Published online: 12 March 2013

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0041977X12001802

How to cite this article:

Benedetta Lomi (2013). Review of Filippo Magi 'I Rilievi Flavi del Palazzo della Cancelleria' Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 76, pp 177-179
doi:10.1017/S0041977X12001802

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to the modern inventors of Shinto tradition, Breen and Teeuwen indicate, already consisted of heterogeneous sediments.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 form the substantive core of the book, giving a close historical reading of three dominant components of modern Shinto: shrines, myths and rituals. The three specific examples that Breen and Teeuwen select all predate “Shinto” and underwent repeated and sometimes dramatic reinventions. To take the example of Hie shrine, it began as a site where immigrant ritualists subdued dangerous deities. It underwent significant redefinition as the Yamato court expanded into the region, adopting deities and ritual practices that linked the local priests to the court. The establishment of the Tendai Buddhist Enryakuji temple on the summit above the shrine in the ninth century provided another moment of substantial redefinition. Early-modern attempts to break free from the dominance of the Enryakuji monks notwithstanding, Hie would not become unambiguously Shinto until the state-directed reforms of the modern era. The multiple and often dramatic transformations that Breen and Teeuwen document lead them to conclude that shrines, myths and rituals “do not need Shinto” to survive even as modern Shinto cannot define itself without them (p. 227).

Space prevents me from treating each chapter in turn. Suffice it to say that they raise an interesting set of questions about the abiding if mutable presence of shrines, myths and rituals through Japanese history. Breen and Teeuwen conclude that there is “nothing either natural or inevitable about the spates of invention that have resulted in Shinto as we know it today”. Instead of a timeless cultural identity for the Japanese people, the multiple inventions of Shinto point to the “agency of individual actors at every turn” (p. 228). We are left, then, with a complex picture wherein shrines, myths and rituals have, and in many cases continue to, serve, promote and authorize constituencies, spiritual concerns and cultural practices that lie outside the ephemeral superstructure of imperial Shinto promoted by the National Shrine Association in Japan today. The one tension in Breen and Teeuwen’s account lies in the implicit opposite of the “superstructure” they so aptly contrast with the long and varied history of reinvention – is there, in other words, a more primordial “base” that has allowed shrines, myths and rituals continually to redefine themselves and secure a measure of relevance and support? If so, what is that base and does it lie beyond the “agency of individuals”?

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JÉRÔME DUCOR and HELEN LOVEDAY:

Le Sūtra des contemplations du Buddha Vie-Infinie, Essai d'interprétation textuelle et iconographique.

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The *Contemplation Sūtra* (*Fo shuo guan wuliangshou jing* 佛說觀無量壽經 – abbreviated here as *Guanjing*), one of the central scriptures of the Pure Land

tradition, is unquestionably among the most influential texts of East Asian Buddhism. Besides having generated a significant number of commentaries, the *Guanjing* has also been the object of much scholarly research and debate over its origins and authorship – generally attributed to Kālayāśas.

The book under review, by Jérôme Ducor and Helen Loveday, situates itself at the centre of this contemporary dialogue and certainly succeeds in providing a solid and comprehensive analysis of the textual and visual sources related to the sūtra. It is indeed impossible to do justice to the complexities and subtleties of this rich work in such a short review. For this reason, I will try to address specifically those aspects that I believe contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the *Guanjing* as a scripture and as an iconographical authority for Pure Land Buddhism.

In terms of structure, the book is divided into two parts. The first (pp. 13–231), written by Ducor, deals exclusively with the *Guanjing*, providing a thorough historical, philological and critical examination of text, as well as a plain and annotated translation. The second part (pp. 241–384), by Helen Loveday, is interested in the pictorial reproductions inspired by the *Guanjing*, and their iconographical developments in China between the sixth and tenth centuries.

In part 1, Ducor begins by engaging directly with the issues concerning the origin of the text. At the centre of Ducor's argument is the claim, along the lines of Fujita Kōtatsu, that while any attempt to demonstrate the Indian origin of the scripture has not yielded any irrefutable proof, labelling the text as a purely Chinese apocryphal is equally problematic (Fujita Kōtatsu, "The textual origins of the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*: a canonical scripture of Pure Land Buddhism", in Robert E. Buswell, Jr. (ed.), *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990, 149–73). Building on the idea that the Buddhist milieu of fifth-century China was influenced by Indian doctrine and by a wide range of contemplative techniques developed in Central Asia, Ducor breaks down his analysis into three arguments: intrinsic, contextual and doctrinal. In this way, he foregrounds the importance of those philological, intertextual and theoretical aspects that makes the *Guanjing* an essentially Chinese Buddhist product. Therefore, instead of maintaining Fujita's position of compromise, Ducor refutes the thesis of a possible Indian or Central Asian origin of the *Guanjing* and convincingly argues that the *Guanjing* was composed in China in the fifth century. This discussion provides a strong background to the subsequent annotated translation, the merits of which go well beyond the scope of this review.

In the second part of the book, Helen Loveday discusses the emergence of Pure Land representations as well as the impact of the *Guanjing* on Chinese visual culture. Central to Loveday's analysis is the argument that the formation of a distinct Pure Land iconography happened in the course of several centuries, and is better understood as part of a wider process involving the development of Chinese Buddhist thought on the one hand, and pictorial and stylistic advancements on the other. Loveday's discussion is thus articulated in two main phases: a formative period, between the sixth and seventh centuries, and a period of maturation, between the seventh and tenth centuries.

The first phase is exemplified by frescoes and steles found in Gansu, Sichuan, Hebei and Henan provinces which were all, to differing extents, partly influenced by the content of Pure Land scriptures. At this stage, Loveday argues, we find an overall interest in the depiction of Buddha Lands in general – especially of Maitreya and Amitābha – which provides a prototype for phase two examples. These representations are not iconographically detailed enough to be identified as Amitābha triads or as depictions of the Sukhāvātī without the presence of clear inscriptions. However, it is during these two centuries that we witness a gradual

process of change in the spatial arrangement of the pictorial composition that will come to full accomplishment in the Tang period. Here, the strength of Loveday's analysis lies precisely in the way she deals with these sixth-century visual sources. By avoiding and questioning any over-interpretation of the iconographical details in light of later Pure Land imageries, she is able to capture the gradual translation and assimilation of the *Guanjing* into images.

The second phase sees the maturation of the stylistic changes discussed in the previous section and the apogee of Pure Land iconography in China, of which Dunhuang is the most representative site. Here, Loveday discusses how the new spatial and iconographical arrangements, featuring the combination of narrative scenes framed by lateral columns and a central iconic scene, allow for a vertical reading of the representation. This new organization, which "creates around the sequence of actions a unified scenery, dictated by the internal logic of the narration", provides a formal solution to the specific case of the *Guanjing*.

Overall, Ducor and Loveday's book is an extremely successful example of how textual- and visual-based analysis can mutually support each other in providing a more compelling if not consistent narrative. However, the book remains anchored in the division between the philological and iconographical parts, and lacks final comparative discussion of the two, which would have strengthened the authors' overall argument.

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MATT GILLAN:

Songs from the Edge of Japan: Music-Making in Yaeyama and Okinawa. (SOAS Musicology Series.) 220 pp. Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. £55. ISBN 978 1 4094 2404 8.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X12001826

In the 1990s and 2000s, soap operas such as *Chura-san* contributed to the promotion of Japan's postcolonial periphery, the southerly Okinawan islands, as a place of blue skies and sandy beaches, a world apart from the stresses of modern, urban Japanese living, heralding a huge domestic tourist boom to the region. Gillan's text explores how, during the 1990s, a group of Okinawan musicians capitalized on this image, producing waves of laid-back records comprising a "mixture of traditional Okinawan reggae, Hawaiian music and pop", culminating in the concurrent Okinawan cultural boom which continues to the present day. Of the many Okinawan musicians who contributed to the boom, a disproportionate number originated from the most remote corner of an already remote part of Japan, the far-flung Yaeyama islands situated on Japan's south-westernmost rim, close to Taiwan. Drawing on ten years of research in the region, Gillan's text provides a pathway into the musicians and musical culture behind Okinawa's musical boom. The author sets out to ask why Yaeyama, with its total population of 52,000, has such a disproportionately large impact on mainland Japanese cultural life, taking the reader on a journey through islands which are "one of the few regions in Japan where traditional music thrives as a meaningful part of everyday life". A place which is, in the words of the Okinawan scholar Iha Fuyū, "like the island of Zeus from Homer's Ulysses, with music which has the power to lure passing travellers and capture them eternally".