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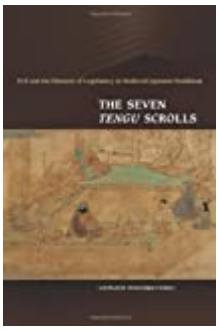

Haruko Wakabayashi. *The Seven Tengu Scrolls: Evil and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy in Medieval Japanese Buddhism.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. Illustrations. 203 pp. $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8248-3416-6.

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Haruko Wakabayashiâs new book, *The Seven Tengu Scrolls*, poses challenging questions. How did those who lived in medieval Japan understand the concept of evil? How was evil represented and used? Were such concepts unchanged, or were they subject to continuous and subtle modifications? And finally, did Buddhist institutions, priests, rituals, and deities play any role in the shaping and reshaping of these notions?

Wakabayashi approaches these questions through the study of *tengu*, the mythical creatures often depicted with beaks and wings that inhabited Japanâs many tales, war chronicles, medieval histories, diaries, and religious texts. Although certainly known in earlier times, *tengu* emerged in the late Heian (897-1185) and Kamakura (1185-1333) periods as manifestations of *ma*, the Buddhist concept of evil. Through their diverse representations in literature, narrative scroll paintings, and other sources, they were understood to be the enemies of Buddhism. In medieval Japan, it was well known that *tengu* played tricks on well-intentioned Buddhist practitioners and could sway even the most illustrious monks into the ârealm of *ma*,â where temptation and desire prevented one from attaining enlightenment or rebirth in the Pure Land.

The study begins with an investigation of the concept of evil, including its subtle categorizations, representations, and uses in medieval Japan. *Ma* thus emerges as a religious and social construct, multiple interpretations of which were developed as a response to the challenges faced by Buddhist institutions. In its second part, this book focuses on the so-called *Tengu ZÃ´shi*, a set of narrative painted scrolls (*emaki*) dating from 1296, and produced by prominent Buddhist temples in Nara and Kyoto.

Esoteric Buddhist priests and deities appear here as the major subjugators of *tengu*, tempting weak-willed practitioners with their seductive powers of deception to fall into the realm of desire. Moreover, esoteric Buddhist rituals, not least those invoking the fierce deity FudÃ´ MyÃ´Ã´, appear to be the effective means to overcome evil–both hidden within oneself and afflicting one externally, such as diseases or curses placed by enemies. However, Wakabayashi finds that esoteric Buddhism, *mikkyÃ´*, emerges as a religion âcapable of both subduing and *creating* evilâ (p. 12, emphasis added). A vivid description of such rituals (for instance, the scene from the *Heike monogatari*, with the monk EryÃ´ smashing his head open with a *vajra* pestle, removing his brain and throwing it into the fire as an offering in a bid to secure success for his protÃ©gÃ©) gives a good idea why

esoteric Buddhism was perceived as a powerful force at court.

Wakabayashiâs detailed analysis of various textual sources implies that *tengu* were known not only as malevolent spirits, which had to be ritually pacified, but also as an integral part of Buddhist discourse and Buddhist institutionsâ assertion of struggle against dark forces and enemies. Existing on the margins of Buddhist discourse, these mythical creatures were nevertheless firmly incorporated into Buddhist cosmology and Japanâs religious landscape.

In Kamakura Japan, Buddhist monks who were unable to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land because of their secular attachments were thought to become *tengu.* The realm into which they were supposed to be reborn was further developed into a concept of *tengudÃ´*, âthe realm of *tengu*,â also known as *madÃ´*, âthe path of evil.â One could almost say that such construction of separate hellish realms for degenerate or neglectful monks lacking in *bodhicitta*, the true spirit of awakening, appears parallel to that of a purgatory created for usurers in twelfth-century Europe.[1] By pointing out these new interpretations of *ma* and using images of *tengu* as a heuristic device, Wakabayashi redraws the balance in the study of Kamakura Buddhism in favor of historical voices speaking for themselves, as opposed to being defined in terms of sectarian affiliation. As a result, it is possible to see in a new light the conflicts between court factions, medieval temples, and their lineages, often framed in religious terms, but in fact, steeped in secular matters–land rights, disputes over succession, and office appointments. This approach, intended to cast light on the politics of marginalization and boost templesâ legitimacy, makes for an engaging argument; it is well supported by the study of historical sources and is a major strength of Wakabayashiâs work.

Another major contribution of this book is its in-depth analysis of the history, contents, and variant scrolls of the *Tengu ZÃ´shi* produced in the late thirteenth century. By investigating multiple versions of this narrative scroll painting collection, Wakabayashi offers detailed observations on the life of medieval Buddhist institutions and religious figures, and not only their rifts and politics but also the rich and inventive religious imagination that underpinned the production of the *Tengu* scrolls, the kind that gives one insight into the workings of the medieval mind. In these scrolls, the monks of KÃ´fukuji, TÃ´daiji, Enryakuji, OnjÃ´ji, and TÃ´ji, as well as mountain ascetics and recluses appear as examples âdepicting myriad [worldly] attachmentsâ and as subjects of criticism, or at times, subtly concealed endorsement (p. 56). Through the painstaking analysis of each of the seven scrolls, the author examines each templeâs claim to superiority, its major rituals and doctrines, and its strategies for disenfranchising others while validating itself as an institution.

By analyzing how and why the scrolls use the *tengu* motif, Wakabayashi casts light on the critical attitude of the scrollsâ author toward established Buddhist institutions and their arrogant and neglectful monks, and finds a discernable touch of satire that these scrolls exhibit. A close study of the KÃ´fukuji scroll reveals how Buddhist institutions responded to the challenges of the Last Age of Dharma, and how secular politics influenced the monastic world. Wakabayashiâs study of KÃ´fukujiâs Yuimae ritual is valuable in itself for the history of religions; the analysis of the role of the Yuimae lecturer casts light on how the general decline of this ritual was perceived to be a result of corruption among late thirteenth-century monks. The KÃ´fukuji scroll criticizes the Buddhist establishment for its attachment to fame, power, pride, and extravagance–a sure way to *madÃ´*.

Wakabayashiâs research further shows that it is not only established Buddhist temples that were the object of criticism by *Tengu ZÃ´shi*; but new Buddhist groups, such as those led by HÃ´nen, or the Zen practitioners and *hÃ´kasÃ´* (entertainers), were also an object of its satirical wit. Wakabayashi compares the variant scrolls of *Tengu ZÃ´shi* from Miidera depicting the new streams of Buddhism that emerged during the Kamakura period with other scrolls, produced by the new schools (for example, *Ippen Hijiri-e*), drawing in the process important conclusions about contemporaneous attitudes of Buddhist monks toward the *nenbutsu* and Zen movements.

Although *Tengu ZÃ´shi* criticizes both established and new schools, Wakabayashiâs close examination of these sources reveals difference in the nature of such criticism. Her study suggests that the author criticized the established schools but did not deny their superiority. Viewed from this angle, the concept of *tengudÃ´*, a hellish realm presupposed for Buddhist monks who were too attached to secular values, thus appears as a monastic path, alternative to the Pure Land and *Ã´jÃ´*, which is also somewhat sympathetic to established institutions.

The book makes thought-provoking suggestions as to who the authors of *Tengu ZÃ´shi* could possibly be, further refining findings made earlier by Japanese scholars. It makes interesting observations about the nature of the

OnjÃ´ji and Enryakuji scrolls, reading them alongside other contemporaneous sources, such as the OnjÃ´jiâs 1319 petition (a comparative table is provided in the appendix). As a result, Wakabayashi discovers the important dynamics in medieval Tendai politics and a crucial junction in the sociopolitical trajectory of Buddhist temples as reflected in the shifting nature of the concept of *Ã´bÃ´ buppÃ´* (mutual dependency between Buddhist and secular leadership); namely, that religious institutions began to stress their close relationship not only to the emperor and the court, but also to the warrior class and the warrior government, *bakufu*. Another exciting discovery, that of the Kanazawa Bunko *Tengu* scroll, and the repeated emphasis on Shingon esoteric teachings suggests a possibility of the involvement of the Saidaiji order and *emaki*-producing environment in Kamakura–a subject worthy of further discussion.

The book concludes with a analysis of the refined definition of *ma*. Examining visual representations of *tengu*, particularly, the scenes in which Buddhist monks undergo gradual transformation into these bird-like creatures, Wakabayashi uncovers a medieval search for the understanding of Buddhist identity and humanity, which, as the *tengu* images demonstrate, can promptly fade and be overtaken by a baser, unprincipled nature, with oneâs monastic sanctity easily erased.

Among the bookâs many attractions are its vivid translations–for example, first-person complaints by an unfortunate t*engu* lamenting his broken wings, or descriptions of illness of a blind emperor with vicious *tengu* standing on his head. The excerpts, such as a passage about the monk of Hanayama from *Zoku honchÃ´ Ã´jÃ´den*, or the case of a courtier whose illness is caused by poisonous serpents, allow a first-person glance on the improbable travails and challenges of being a *tengu*, and the notions of evil possession and disease prevalent in late Heian and Kamakura Japan.

The book discusses ample visual sources and a well-known collection of Buddhist didactic literature, such as various *Ã´jÃ´den* (stories of rebirth in the Pure Land) or *Konjaku monogatarishÃ»*. It also investigates rarely treated medieval texts, such as *Hirasan kojin reitaku* or OnjÃ´jiâs petition, among many others. It offers broad analysis, fascinating amount of detail, skillful translations, and great illustrations (thirty-two figures, four plates). It is well researched, engagingly written, well edited, and tightly packed.

Using the *tengu* images and their transformations as a magnifying glass, Wakabayashiâs study casts light on the changing world of medieval Japan that produced them. No doubt, it would be a delight to use her new book in class, particularly, for students interested in cultural, religious, literary, and art history of premodern Japan.

Note

[1]. Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); and Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages* (New York: Zone Books, 1990).