

discourse,” and that, indeed, these are concerns that need to “be more thoroughly studied” (p. 12) because, even after all of these years, a dragon is still not a 龍.

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Tsai Suey-Ling 蔡穗玲. *The Life of the Buddha: Woodblock Illustrated Books in China and Korea*. Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 76. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012. 314 pp. 74 illustrations. Paperback €78.00, ISBN 978-3-447-06621-1.

*The Life of The Buddha: Woodblock Illustrated Books in China and Korea* offers a thorough description and analysis of the illustrated books on the life of the Buddha printed on woodblock in China and Korea. Each woodblock compilation contains episodes on the life of the Buddha; most are followed by the subsequent history of Buddhism in China. Each episode is accompanied by an illustration. Tsai Suey-Ling, author of *The Life of the Buddha*, has identified eight different compilations, three in China, one in Korea, and four in Japan. In this work, she concentrates on the Chinese compilations, the earliest of which was completed in 1425, the latest in 1794 (and published in 1808).<sup>1</sup>

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The initial Chinese compilation, the *Shi shi yuanliu* 釋氏源流 (The origin and transmission of the Śākya's House) was made by the monk Baocheng 寶成 (Baocheng I) between 1422 and 1425. It contains 400 pairs of illustrations and text and is analyzed critically in the first chapter of the current book. A revised version of Baocheng I (Baocheng II), discussed in the second chapter, was also compiled by Baocheng, between 1434 and 1436. It contains 410 pairs of illustrations and text. As shown by Tsai (pp. 12, 138–142), it was probably the Buddhist monk Zhiguang 智光, at that time, the great national preceptor (*Da guoshi* 大國師), who had the contents changed, so that his role in Chinese Buddhism became acknowledged. Half a century later, a new edition was made under the auspices of the Chinese emperor, with an imperial preface dated 1486. It contains the same 400 episodes as Baocheng I, but with a much changed layout. Calligraphy and design were also changed. Chapter 3 of the book is devoted to this edition. Finally, as discussed in chapter 4, at the end of the eighteenth century, a Manchu prince, Yongshan 永珊, started a new compilation based on Baocheng II, the *Shijia rulai yinghua shiji* 釋迦如來應化事蹟 (Events during and traces from the incarnation of Tathāgata Śākya[muni]). It only contains the 208 episodes on the life of the Buddha; it does not describe the history of Chinese Buddhism. In addition to the four chapters, Tsai provides very useful appendices that compare the episodes of the different compilations, as well as the titles of all episodes, and most important, the source texts of these (pp. 248–290). This meticulous work forms a most useful basis for any further research on Chinese Buddhist illustrated compilations. It is very unfortunate, however, that no index has been provided.

*The Life of the Buddha* carefully and meticulously introduces the illustrated compilations, starting with a critical overview of previous research (pp. 15–19), and a short but very useful terminology list (pp. 23–24). Apart from clarifying the relationships between the various compilations, editions, and impressions, many more questions have been tackled: the artistic and historical aspects of the compilations, the history of illustrations, issues of Buddhist iconography, and the interdependence of woodblock illustrations and paintings. Tsai further investigates why particular compilations, editions, or impressions were produced; under which historical circumstances; and with what intentions of the makers. Although all these questions are certainly most interesting, it might be a task too ambitious for one single work to give satisfactory and detailed answers to all of them. At times, the overwhelming quantity of data also seriously hampers the readability of the text.

The first chapter is the most important. It introduces the subject and analyzes the basic compilation, Baocheng I, in detail. First, we get a summary of all the episodes, with a particular focus on the initial scenes, which are very well contextualized. We learn how Baocheng makes use of pseudo-Confucian, Daoist, and apocryphal Buddhist texts to show how Buddhism was introduced in China, well before the Common Era. This is a very interesting example of appropriation of

texts and traditions (pp. 58–71). Second, the Baocheng compilation is discussed in detail with particular attention to the production process. Tsai hereby shows convincingly how illustrated books were aiming at an audience that had the political power to influence the state of Buddhism in the Chinese empire. These books are, thus, to be seen as apologetic works (pp. 97–104). Finally, Tsai Suey-Ling also devotes quite a lot of space in her work to a careful analysis of the pictorial strategy and style of the illustrations, along with a short but interesting introduction to the illustrator, Wang Gong 王恭 (pp. 82–83). She directs our attention to the facial expressions, gestures, and size of the figures and describes features of architecture and furnishings. She offers an interesting and enjoyable perspective on Wang Gong's narrative skill in simultaneously presenting different sequences described in the text. In addition, the many figures included in the book are most helpful in understanding how text and illustration are perfectly matched in a unified narrative.

While Tsai Suey-Ling offers a good structure of the texts and illustrations—showing how three aspects, an appeal to the politically powerful, the superiority of Buddhism over Daoism and Confucianism, and an emphasis on Buddhist magical power, continuously come to the foreground—many data mentioned in her work remain difficult to grasp. Contextualization is often reduced to a minimum. For instance, what is the exact impact of the concept of *mofa* 末法 in Chinese Buddhism, and how is it related to the episodes (p. 32)?<sup>2</sup> Although the reader does receive a little information, a more thorough treatment of the concept could have deepened the reader's understanding of Baocheng's intentions. Equally, the compilations contain a mass of fascinating information on donors offering money for new compilations or editions, monastic and lay people, male and female. But what exactly is their role? Although Tsai Suey-Ling certainly tries to give an initial analysis (see, for instance, pp. 106–128), many more questions could have been raised, for instance: Who are these donors? To what social classes do they belong? Would they spend equally on other projects, Buddhist and others? Of course, answering such questions would imply another study in its own right, which might go beyond the aims of the present work. It shows, however, how rich the data are, and how difficult it is to discuss and contextualize all of them.

Apart from some major issues, such as the *mofa* theory or the donors to the monastery, which understandably could not be considered in detail, the present work also refers to many smaller issues and data, which, in my opinion, could have been contextualized in a more precise way. Particularly for readers less familiar with Chinese or Buddhist history, many of these data will be hard to place, so that their relevance to the topic becomes very unclear. Some well-structured information on the impact of theories of and events and persons in the Buddhist history of China would certainly have enhanced the reader's understanding of the content of the episodes and illustrations mentioned in the book. What, for instance, is meant by “five hindrances” (p. 37)? What are the Northern Buddhist Canon and the

Southern Buddhist Canon (pp. 40–41)? To which tradition is the year of birth of the Buddha, given in Baocheng I (1129 B.C.), linked (p. 44)? Who are all those representatives of various Chinese schools mentioned by Baocheng and how important are they (pp. 58–59)? Why are these representatives mentioned and others not? Many names remain unexplained throughout the book. Some more information on these names could have helped the reader to get a better grasp of the choices made by Baocheng. Furthermore, in some cases, the little information given on historical names or concepts does not take into account relevant research. So, for instance, on page 78, the monk Huaihai (the dates mentioned by the author are 720–814; more probable dates are 749–814) is represented as a monk who established the disciplinary rules of the Chan school. However, although he is, indeed, portrayed as such by the Chan tradition, the historical basis for this attribution is highly contested. While it cannot be denied that Huaihai might have had some interest in monastic regulations for his monastery, none of the rules later ascribed to him were unique. Rather, they testify to a growing demand for regulations applicable in large Chinese monasteries.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, on page 99, a monastery classified as *lüzong* 律宗 (precept school) is defined as a monastery whose adherents emphasize the observation of precepts with the eventual aim of becoming a Buddha. However, as clearly shown by Morten Schlütter in a discussion of Song (10th–13th centuries) texts, *lüzong* 律宗 can just as well refer to hereditary monasteries, as opposed to public monasteries. Only in cases in which it is made very clear that the institution is public can the term *lüzong* be associated with the Vinaya School.<sup>4</sup> This aspect has been ignored in the present book.

The second to fourth chapters of Tsai's work are devoted to additionally revised or new compilations of woodblock illustrated books. In each chapter, great care is devoted to the development of the compilation, and each time the first edition, later editions, and impressions are discussed in detail. It brings the author to a most interesting stemma that will remain a reference point for all future research on illustrated books in China and Korea (p. 242). Attention is also paid to the aesthetic value of the illustrations and to Buddhist iconography. Tsai equally provides an analysis of the production process that is very interesting and takes into account the people behind it. One might wonder, for instance, why Baocheng undertook the second compilation only a few years after he had finished his first book. A detailed comparison of the texts and illustrations of Baocheng I and II shows that the differences are not many, although some stand out. First of all, as mentioned above, a much greater role is attributed to the monk Zhiguang, a dominant figure in fifteenth-century esoteric Buddhism, and the great national preceptor, a title bestowed upon him by the emperor (pp. 138–142). Another change might point to some uneasiness or maybe criticism toward one scene in Baocheng I describing an eccentric monk. It has been replaced by a more delicate episode about Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty becoming a Buddhist (p. 147). Tsai

describes the monk in a vivid way, thus giving the reader a good picture of how text and illustration complement each other.

In summary, Tsai Suey-Ling successfully offers a first comprehensive analysis and comparison of a most fascinating genre, the illustrated life of the Buddha and the history of Buddhism. Her work is marked by the careful use of terms and source material throughout the book. The relationships between the various compilations, editions, and impressions are clearly indicated, thus offering a thorough, almost encyclopaedic, basis for any further research on illustrated compilations. Tsai's research puts an end to the confusion about the provenance and relationships of the several extant illustrated books in China and, therefore, constitutes a most valuable contribution to the history of Buddhism and Buddhist art. Equally, the work contains an enormous amount of detail, revealing the didactic intentions of the makers of these compilations, regarded as apologetic works aiming to prove the superiority of Buddhism. This wealth of data, however, is also the weakness of Tsai's study. Many details have been left unexplained, hampering the readability of the text. At times, contextualization is reduced to a minimum, and several controversies remain unnoticed. In particular, readers less experienced in Chinese Buddhist history might feel at a loss when confronted with lists of names or events that are not easy to place and yet are necessary in order to grasp fully all the intentions of the illustrated compilations. Nevertheless, the overall aim of the compilations clearly comes to the fore, providing readers with a vivid insight into late imperial Buddhist apologetics.

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#### NOTES

1. Research on the Korean compilation (15th century), the first prose work written in the Korean alphabet Han'gŭl, has been summarized (pp. 19–20). The Japanese compilations (17th–19th century) are not discussed.

2. The concept of *mofa* has repeatedly been used by Chinese emperors in an attempt to control the Buddhist community. For a discussion, for instance, on how Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (r. 502–549) used the concept to his advantage, see, in particular, Tom De Rauw, "Beyond Buddhist Apology: The Political Use of Buddhism by Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty" (PhD diss., Ghent University, 2008).

3. For a discussion, see, among many others, Jia Jinhua, "The Creation and Codification of Monastic Regulations at Mount Baizhang," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 33 (2005).

4. Morten Schlütter, "Vinaya Monasteries, Public Abbacies, and State Control of Buddhism under the Song (920–1279)," in *Going Forth, Visions of Buddhist Vinaya, Essays Presented in Honor of Professor Stanley Weinstein*, ed. William M. Bodiford (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), pp. 136–160.