

meeting the requirements of the SCAP. Besides the description of various organizations involved in the distribution of films, the author examines the role played by individuals such as Charles Mayer, the managing director of CMPE, in the dissemination of American cultural images. The role of the American film industry in this process is balanced in this study by informed accounts of how various Japanese contributed to the outcome. The author describes the creation of Japanese fan culture, the construction of exhibition places and the reaction of various intellectuals to Hollywood films. Each level of film distribution and reception is exemplified with specific cases such as the construction of Marunouchi Subaru-za, a prestigious theater attracting its patrons with inventive exhibition schemes. Another example is the detailed study of the rebirth of the magazine *Eiga no tomo* (Friends of the movies) and its founder's passion for American movies. The entire last chapter outlines the factors contributing to the popularity of this magazine as a promoter of Hollywood films.

Aside their entertainment value Hollywood films are perceived as sources of healing, hope for creating a new society, and civilizing inspiration and confidence in life. Japanese moviegoers imagined these to be genuine traits of American culture, a culture worthy of emulating. This ground level reaction together with the clear mission of the SCAP to use American films as tools for reforming the Japanese, explain the well-chosen title of the book. Although the author successfully describes the popularity of Hollywood films as a "joint creation" of various institutions in both countries, some readers might find fault with the absence of a more critical attitude towards American expansionism. However, the lucidity of the analysis, the complexity of details and its multilayered structure make this study a very important resource for film scholars and historians. The book enriches and continues the research framework of cinema as a global cultural phenomenon.

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Hokkeji and the Reemergence of Female Monastic Orders in Premodern Japan. By LORI MEEKS. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010. 408 pp. \$50.00.
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Lori Meeks has crafted an excellent book that will be of interest to students and specialists of Japanese religion, history, and literature, and should become a definitive resource regarding nuns and convents in medieval Japan. In her monograph, Meeks eschews the notion of female monastic life as being either repressed or for that matter, liberated; instead, she shows how women acted within the monastic community and explains how their performance of religion differed greatly from what one might assume based on doctrinal assertions

about female salvation. Women did not rebel against these doctrines, but rather exploited ambiguities, and so were able to practice Buddhist rituals and create a vibrant community at the revitalized five-hundred year old convent of Hokkeji over the course of the thirteenth century.

Meeks suggests that the female body was not invariably perceived as being a hindrance to enlightenment. Through analysis of the *Heike nōkyō*, she shows how denizens of the court, both male and female, shared the belief that women could attain rebirth in the Tusita Heaven during the Heian era (794–1185). She explains how some Buddhist writings suggested that gender was not an absolute distinction, in that women could achieve salvation by becoming more “masculine.” Meeks deftly elucidates the tension between the negative ramifications of being born a woman with Buddhist ambiguities regarding gender, particularly in Chapter 7. She also explores the irony of how reformers such as Honen emphasized female salvation through their mediation, but by doing so, they relied upon doctrines that made absolute distinctions between women and men.

Chapter 5 clarifies the economic and social functions of Hokkeji, and reveals the social and religious distinctions that existed among women at convents in thirteenth-century Japan. Social divisions played an important role in determining religious status, as *bikuni*, or fully ordained nuns, were often individuals with ties to the court, although Meeks emphasizes how women of a much lower status could adopt *bikuni* precepts as well. Some *bikuni* can be documented as being drawn from regional warriors, but most women from provincial landholding families tended to become *gyōdō shamini*, or “female novices in outward form” (p. 173). Finally women who performed menial functions were known as *saikai-shū*, and mostly hailed from Yamato province, in the vicinity of the nunnery.

Meeks’s fourth chapter provides an invaluable overview of Eison, a “reformer” of the Ritsu (“Rules”) sect, which was concerned primarily with rules of monastic discipline. Until recently, Eison has been less studied because he did not “create” a new sect, and therefore become associated with the trope of “new” Buddhism. Her work shows the vibrancy and significance of “old” Nara Buddhist sects in the Kamakura age (1185–1333). In addition, in Chapter 6, Meeks persuasively argues that most Buddhists practiced their beliefs through ritual, rather than doctrine.

Meeks reveals links between Zen and Ritsu meditative practice, but she lets the Zen discourse of “authenticity” overly influence her narrative. She also slights the connections between Ritsu and Shingon (Mantra) Buddhism. This is all the more surprising because Meeks admits that a Shingon ritual dedicated to Kōmyō allowed Eison’s disciples to argue that these ritual practices transcended distinctions of status and gender. That Shingon rituals could blur the significance of gender means that “esoteric Buddhism” should not be conceived as merely leading to the exclusion of female ordination, and the “institutional decline of convents” (p. 5).

Meeks amalgamates the rival epistemes of Shingon and Tendai under the rubric of esoteric (*mikkyō*) Buddhism, and almost exclusively analyzes Tendai practice as being representative of all *mikkyō*. Nevertheless, Tendai possessed

fewer links to Ritsu Buddhism than Shingon. Eison was initially trained as a Shingon monk, and adopted Shingon rites as part of his Saidaiji ritual practices. Ritsu and Shingon Buddhism also shared liturgies, but the ramifications of these connections are not fully examined. Hopefully Meeks will further explore the link between Shingon ritual, gender, and Eison's reforms in future research.

The significance of Meeks's monograph is not confined to the topics of religion and gender. Her first chapter provides insight into how worship of the empress Kōmyō, the purported founder of the temple, allowed it to become a cultic site, and enabled the temple to survive the administrative collapse of the Japanese state in the ninth century. Likewise, although Meeks suggests that the court was in decline during the Kamakura age, her narrative conversely reveals the enduring wealth and patronage of courtiers, and court ladies who entered the convent. Her account of the remarkable, high-ranking nun Jizen, who played an instrumental role in revitalizing Hokkeji, and Jizen's teacher, Kūnyo, highlights the influence that these court women possessed. May it spur further research into monasteries and convents such as Hokkeji in eighth century Japan; female cultural patronage, or "court salons" in the Heian and Kamakura eras; and the so-called "old" schools of Buddhism during the Kamakura age.

Overall, this book is well produced, and solidly written but not with some minor problems. Meeks has decided to translate the term *sō* as both priest and monk, distinguishing "'priests' and those who were less clearly engaged in public ministerial and ceremonial roles as 'monks'" (p. 20). This is a good idea in principle, but in practice, it causes some confusion, as Eison shifts from being a priest (p. 118) to a monk (p. 120), with his disciples appearing in the same paragraph as both priests and monks (p. 138). Likewise, the term "elites" lacks precision. Should both courtiers and warriors be described as "elites"? If so, then why distinguish between these "elite warriors" (p. 114) and "nonlocal regional elites" (p. 175), who presumably constituted the same social strata? But these minor issues aside, Lori Meeks has crafted an important study, which should be read widely, for it will assuredly spur further research in this fascinating topic. I recommend it highly.

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Babylon East: Performing Dancehall, Roots Reggae, and Rastafari in Japan. By MARVIN D. STERLING. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010. xiv, 299 pp. \$84.94 (cloth); \$23.95 (paper).
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As a researcher of mainstream Japanese popular music, I might be tempted to discount reggae's impact in Japan, but anthropologists know that sub-cultural