Brief Reviews

Illusory Abiding: The Cultural Construction of the Chan Monk Zhongfeng Mingben. By NATASHA HELLER. Harvard East Asian Monographs, vol. 368. Cambridge, Mass.: HARVARD UNIV. ASIA CENTER, HARVARD UNIV. PRESS, 2014. Pp. xiv + 471. $49.95.

The books title tells us three things: One, *Illusory Abiding* (*huanzhu* 幻住) is Zhongfeng Mingben's appellation for his retreat. Two, *Cultural Construction* is the theoretical framework on which Heller bases her work. Three, *the Chan Monk Zhongfeng Mingben* refers to the influential Buddhist monk of the Yuan period, Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本 (1263–1323). On the inside flap, the book is described as a "monograph which offers a cultural history of Buddhism through a case study." This is precisely what this book does.

Divided into eight chapters, this monograph elaborates on core issues of Mingben's life and teaching. Chapter one discusses his biographies. Chapter two is about Mount Tianmu where the monk spent most of his life and his patronage networks in that area. Chapter three traces the Chan master's practices of reclusion and asceticism through his frequent movements. Chapter four situates Mingben's code *Rules of Purity for the Cloister of Illusory Abiding* 幻住庵清規 into the context of monasteries as organized Buddhist institutions. Chapter five illuminates the monk's understanding of Chan lineage and positions him in these genealogies. Chapter six highlights the importance of the master's advocacy of the use of "critical phrases" (*huatou* 話頭) in religious practice. Chapter seven focusses on the erudite monk's poetry, specifically poems on plum blossoms, and on his literary relationship with the calligrapher and poet Feng Zizhen. Chapter eight turns away from purely textual sources and instead looks at portraits of and calligraphies by Zhongfeng Mingben.

Natasha Heller covers an enormous wealth of material. In this, her book differs from earlier publications on Mingben, which mostly concentrate on certain aspects of his life. All source texts are provided in Chinese within the flowing text with her excellent annotated translations. Not putting the source texts into appendices saves the reader the trouble of constantly flipping pages. One of the strong points of the book is Heller's minutely detailed delineation of Mingben's social network, including his relationships with patrons, other monks, lay Buddhists, and literati. This approach offers a wider and more complex picture than simply presenting the Chan master as an isolated individual. In short, Heller has managed most successfully to describe and interpret the cultural and social context of which Mingben was an active participant.

Occasionally, it would have been enlightening for the less informed reader had a few more words been said about some not so well known people. For example, a certain Guanding 灌頂 (561–632) is briefly mentioned on p. 28, citing a secondary source (Shinohara Koichi), and then again on p. 223, citing another secondary source (Linda Penkower). Guanding was a monk of the Tiantai school of Buddhism, who had written down many of the teachings of his master Zhiyi (538–597).

In some instances, a more critical questioning of the occasionally problematic material history of the manuscripts discussed might have been desirable. For example, the epitaph for Faru 法如 (638–689), mentioned on p. 223, is such a problematic text. Its words were incised into a funerary stele at the Shaolin monastery after the monk's death. Then rubbings were taken from that stele. In 1967, Yanagida Seizan published an edited version of a rubbing. Since the original stone stele seems to be no longer extant, it should explicitly be made clear that the transmission of this text is at least problematic, considering the multiple opportunities to manipulate the text when a change of media took place (manuscript, stele, rubbing, edition of the rubbing, quotation of portions of the texts in other texts).

The emphasis of Heller's book is on explaining various aspects of Zhongfeng Mingben's Buddhist beliefs and practices but not exclusively so. It is one of the great merits of Heller's scholarly work that she breaks down the barriers between established disciplines and through combining approaches from the fields of philology, classical literature, history, sociology, Buddhist studies, and art history, she achieves a clear, enlightening, and differentiated picture of the illustrious monk. The constructivist framework certainly helps to organize the rich material, but it does sometimes seem a bit forced.

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The Drunken Man's Talk: Tales from Medieval China. By LUO YE. Translated by ALISTER D. INGLIS. Seattle: UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS, 2015. Pp. xxiii + 214. $50 (cloth); $30 (paper).

Since its discovery in Japan in the 1940s, Luo Ye's *The Drunken Man's Talk* (Zuiweng tanlu) has remained mostly unknown among English readers of Chinese literature. As acknowledged in the "Translator's Introduction," this eclectic collection of short stories compiled

during the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties (twelfth to thirteenth centuries) provides a rare chance to take a closer look at the medieval Chinese storytelling tradition (pp. xvi–xvii). Although there have been studies and translations of medieval Chinese stories, most of them are selective. Inglis's translation of a complete collection gives readers a taste of medieval Chinese stories in their original "package."

Pieces of evidence point to the hypothesis that *The Drunken Man's Talk* is a sourcebook for storytellers. One of these is the division of the slim collection (about 146 entries in total) into twenty thematic categories, a characteristic that sets it apart from the genre of *biji* (miscellaneous writings, "notebooks") popular during that time. While a scholar-official's *biji* were commonly compiled for reading, the categories of Luo Ye's collection might have enabled storytellers to quickly locate a source story for their performance. Most of the themes are related to romantic affairs, but a significant number of them are jokes. Another characteristic that suggests this collection is a sourcebook for storytellers is that its language facilitates storytelling. For example, whenever Luo Ye made modifications when copying a story from the earlier Tang dynasty anecdotal collection, *Record of the Northern Ward* (Beili zhi), the language of the story was adjusted toward being more suitable for oral storytelling.

Regarding the translation, the idiomatic and "old-fashioned" English contributes to an immersive reading experience. The gem of Inglis's fine renditions is decidedly his translations of poems, which constitute almost a third of all the entries in the collection. Inglis's polished poetic renditions not only capture the meanings of the poems and their literary tone, but also subtly convey their rhymes. This is best demonstrated in chapter 10 (pp. 65–70), which entirely consists of poems. However, a minor incongruity remains when reading the translation side by side with the original. Although the language of Luo Ye's collection is classical Chinese, a language of the educated elite, the original Chinese text gives the impression that it is catering to the vernacular storytelling market. (This may or may not be connected to the fact that no biographical information can be found about Luo Ye in any extant record, indicating he might never have passed any literary exams.) The elegant English of Inglis's translation, on the other hand, gives the slightly different impression that these stories were written in a highly refined language by a scholar-official who was well trained in literary writing.

Compared to the fine renditions of stories and poems, translations of the titles seem a little less polished and occasionally inaccurate. Taking the titles for chapters 9 and 10 as an example, the term *yanhua* (literally, "flowers in the mist") as a literary metaphor is commonly used by Tang and Song writers to refer to courtesans or female entertainers. Inglis's choice of using "ladies, women" for *yanhua* may lead readers to spend some time trying to make sense of why the poems

and stories in these sections are so concerned with situations unusual for ordinary women. For English readers who are not familiar with medieval Chinese conventions of depicting courtesans the loss of this connotation could result in a very different reading experience.

Lastly, I want to highlight Inglis's notes accompanying the translation. Because of the poorly preserved original copy, and notwithstanding the aid from modern annotated Chinese editions, the translation of *The Drunken Man's Talk* also presents thorny textual problems to be solved. Inglis's notes, together with his introduction, not only facilitate reading the stories, but also provide a good starting point for further academic inquiries. There is one point regarding the textual history I would like to add: the existence of a possibly earlier collection with the same title, attributed to an author named Jin Yingzhi 金盈之 (fl. 1126). The relation between the two collections, which partly overlap, awaits further research. Brief introductions under some chapter titles in the notes section introduce important concepts or note the textual history of certain passages. Since these introductions offer decisive clues for the understanding of a stories, they would have deserved to be moved to the main text. Inglis's rendition of *The Drunken Man's Talk* is a pleasant and enlightening read and highly recommended to anyone interested in medieval Chinese short stories.

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The Rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in 145/762: Ṭālibīs and Early ʿAbbāsīs in Conflict. By AMIKAM ELAD. Islamic History and Civilization, vol. 118. Leiden: BRILL, 2016. Pp. xi + 527. $245, €176.

When the Abbasids came to power in 750, they defeated the Umayyads with a revolutionary call for the return of the caliphate to the family of the Prophet Muḥammad, *āl Muḥammad*, from where, they argued, the legitimate leader of the Muslim community must come. The family was broadly defined to include all of the Banū Hāshim, the wider clan of both the Abbasid and Ṭālibid branches of the family. Once an Abbasid candidate had been enthroned, many supporters of the movement claimed to have expected that "the chosen one from the Family of Muḥammad" (*al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad*) would be a closer relative of the Prophet than an Abbasid—such as a Ṭālibid or, even more narrowly, an ʿAlid, an actual descendant of Muḥammad's through his daughter Fāṭima and his cousin ʿAlī.

A more serious challenge to Abbasid authority came only a few years after the revolution, early in the reign of the second caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775). Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī,