

label of “Xiongnu” upon these earrings. In fact, after twenty-one pages of detailed discussion of steppe and sedentary interactions, dragon motifs, the ubiquity of belt plaques, and gender roles, the only firm conclusion she is willing to offer her readers is that these earrings were “an indication of wealth and status.”

Such candor is refreshing. But it can also be quite jarring for readers accustomed to Silk Road narratives that take refuge in more definite and familiar interpretive prisms, such as politics and religion. Anchoring one’s narrative in the history of the Kushan or Tang dynasties or the spread of Buddhism and Manichaeism may not represent a very novel approach, but readers of such narratives are likely to come away with a more definite grasp of key concepts, events, and peoples of the Silk Road,

even if that grasp is to some degree deceptive in the end. This is ironic, for, more than any other analytical approach, Whitfield’s focus on material objects would appear on the surface to be rooted in more “tangible” interpretive prisms than any other. And yet rarely does the reader emerge from any chapter with the ability to say much of anything definite about the object on display beyond what might be stated in a simple two or three sentence caption. In that sense, we might characterize this book as offering its readers more a rich and eventful journey than a destination. Each chapter can stand more or less on its own, without reference to the other chapters. And there is no conclusion—after ten chapters and ten objects, the journey simply ends.

- Justin M. Jacobs, American University

Donald S. Lopez, Jr. *Hyecho’s Journey: The World of Buddhism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

In Fall 2018, I was asked to teach an “Introduction to Asia” course at my university for the first time. After taking a look at previous iterations of the course, I decided to eschew their reliance on the canonical texts that are often used to introduce the “great traditions” of Asia to undergraduate students. I did not want my students to leave the classroom with the idea that what Confucius said in *The Analects* or what an ancient Indo-Aryan composer said in the Rigveda was somehow representative of a timeless, enduring cultural trait of today’s China or India. But if an “Introduction to Asia” course is not structured around the classic philosophical and religious texts of India, China, and Japan, among others, how is one to organize the material?

As a historian of modern East Asia who continually reminds his students that the concept of “Asia” itself is a Western invention, I could only think of two alternative paradigms capable of linking East, South, Southeast, and Central Asia in a respectably organic thread. For a course focused on the pre-modern era, “the Silk Road” could serve as a suitably flexible and inclusive framework, even if, as several scholars now regularly remind us, the Silk

Road never really existed. For a course focused on the modern era, the narrative glue would have to be the Japanese, who played the leading role in co-opting, revising, and substantiating the Western idea of “Asia” in an indigenous guise. The modern “Asian experience,” then, could be the study of the awareness of, resistance to, and support for the Japanese order in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As I was wrestling with the problem of how I could cobble together a single course on both the ancient Silk Road and the modern Japanese empire, I stumbled upon Donald S. Lopez Jr.’s new book. And “stumbled” is definitely the correct word: I very nearly bumped into *Hyecho’s Journey: The World of Buddhism* and knocked it off its bookstand while attempting to navigate the narrow aisles of the Freer and Sackler Galleries gift shop in Washington, D.C., just one week before the beginning of the semester. I am glad that I did. Upon further review, *Hyecho’s Journey* turned out to be the perfect thematic companion to the Silk Road for an introductory course on Asia. In this handsomely illustrated book, Lopez does not place the textual productions of Indian, Chinese, Japanese, or Korean political and religious elites on center stage. Instead, the reader is introduced to the visual and oral traditions that Buddhist pilgrims dis-

seminated throughout the lands now included within our present-day definitions of “Asia.”

As the title of the book suggests, Lopez’s pilgrim is Hyecho, an eighth-century Buddhist monk who left his native kingdom of Silla in 724 CE to undertake an arduous pilgrimage that would eventually span three years. During this time, Hyecho traveled overland across Tang China, by sea to present-day Indonesia, and thence by land across northern and northwestern India, Central Asia, and likely even Arabia, before returning to China and taking up permanent residence in Chang’an. This remarkable journey, the longest of any known Buddhist pilgrim at the time, has yielded very little in the way of concrete historical documentation. As Lopez notes in his Introduction, Hyecho “was not the first monk to make the journey from China to India. He was not the last. He was not the most famous. In fact, he was among the most obscure of those whose names are known” (4).

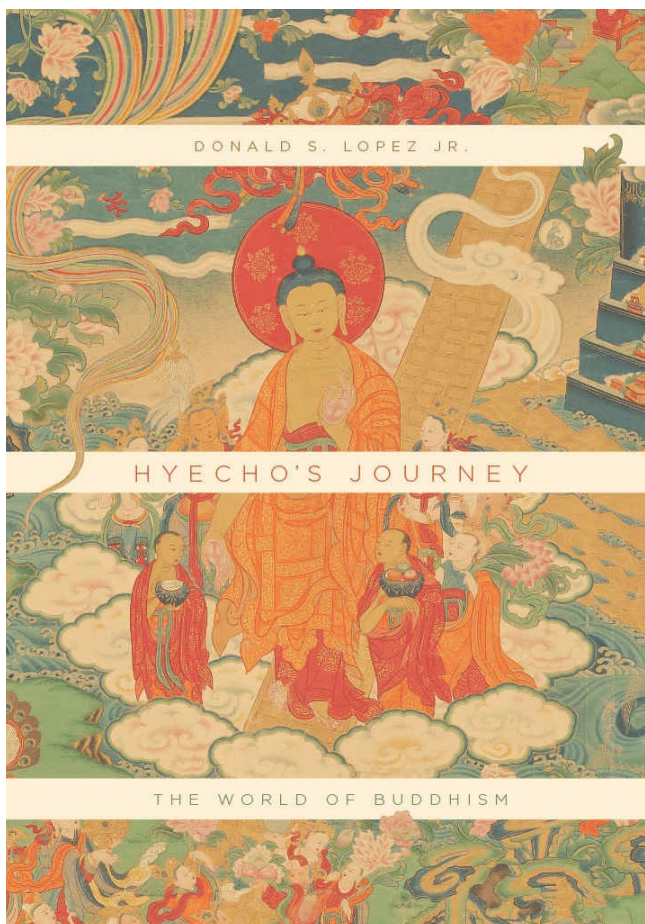
Details of Hyecho’s journey are known only from a single fragment of a manuscript from Cave 17 in Dunhuang. The French sinologist Paul Pelliot was the first to study this fragment, which appears to include a copy of a lost draft of Hyecho’s journal that was deposited in Dunhuang upon the latter’s return to Chang’an from Central Asia in 727 CE. With the aid of a Chinese pronunciation glossary, *Pronunciation and Meanings of All the Scriptures* (*Yiqiejing yinyi* 一切經音義), Pelliot was able to identify key words and phrases in this fragment of Hyecho’s journal, and thus reconstruct the general parameters of Hyecho’s pilgrimage throughout the world of Buddhism.

Lopez’s treatment of this episode provides a pre-

view of the structure he will adopt for each of the other eleven chapters in his book. First, he provides an intriguing story—in this case, the discovery of the secret “cave library” at Dunhuang in 1900 and the subsequent dispersal of its contents over the ensuing decades, with Pelliot’s procurement and study of the fragment of Hyecho’s journal constituting much of the narrative focus. Then comes the “Commentary,” several pages in which Lopez provides an accessible scholarly analysis of one or more intriguing details narrated in the preceding story—in this case, how Pelliot managed to identify Hyecho’s journal and extrapolate its contents. Finally, the reader is treated to a section titled simply “The Art.” This section includes two full-page color reproductions of Buddhist artwork associated in some way with the preceding story and commentary. In this case, the first reproduction is a page from a *Great Discourse on Final Nirvana* sutra found in Cave 17, which Lopez uses to illustrate the central tenets of the Mahayana interpretation of Buddhist scripture. On the next page is a painting of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, likely commissioned by a member of the Dunhuang ruling elite in the late tenth to early eleventh cen-

turies. Lopez uses this painting to highlight the way in which the identity of a pious Korean monk named Jijang could be merged into the identity of a “Chinese” bodhisattva—a transcultural phenomenon likely unfamiliar to students raised in a world saturated with the discourse of nationalism and nation-states.

Subsequent chapters reproduce this three-tiered approach to Hyecho’s world of Buddhism. Chapter 2 narrates popular Buddhist stories in Hyecho’s native kingdom of Silla and analyzes two works of





The Birth of the Buddha, Kushan Dynasty, 2nd-3rd CE. This stone relief, one of a set of four panels narrating the life of the historical Buddha on display at the Freer and Sackler Galleries, is examined in Chapter 7 of Lopez's new book to highlight the pilgrimage site of Lumbini, Gandharan art, and the mythological stories surrounding the birth of the Buddha. Photo by Daderot, Wikimedia Commons.

Buddhist art in Korea. Chapter 3 utilizes Hyecho's sea journey to Southeast Asia to expound on the world of "maritime Buddhism" and the development of tales of salvation by Guanyin. Two Buddhist sculptures from eighth- to ninth-century Indonesia complete the narrative. The next six chapters provide a similar treatment for the major pilgrimage sites of India—Lumbini, Vulture Peak, Kusinagara, Bodh Gaya, Sravasti, Samkasya—followed by single chapters on Gandhara, Arabia, and Mt. Wutai.

Though readers will learn much about the elite canonical texts of Buddhism such as the *Lotus Sutra* and *The Questions of Milinda*, Lopez devotes far more time to the sort of visual and oral productions that "Asians" of all economic classes and geographical backgrounds would have been familiar with. These include not only works of Buddhist art commissioned by those of more humble means, such as a simple Sui-era gilt bronze figurine depicting "Two Buddhas Seated Side by Side," but also a diverse assortment of *jataka* tales—morality plays

from the Buddha's previous lives—local syncretic lore, and mythologized stories about the birth, life, and death of the historical Buddha.

It is not a coincidence that I stumbled upon *Hyecho's Journey* in the gift shop of the Freer and Sackler Galleries. In fact, the entire book is structured around an ongoing exhibit, "Encountering the Buddha: Art and Practice across Asia," which will remain on display until late 2020. Each of the twenty-four works of art analyzed in this book is owned by the museum, with many of them currently on display. For someone like

me, based in the D.C. area, Lopez's book presents a wonderful opportunity to integrate text and visuals both within the classroom and without. In fact, I require my students to visit the galleries in person, and many do so with *Hyecho's Journey* in hand. Whether Lopez intended to do so or not, he has managed to produce the perfect classroom text for an "Introduction to Asia" course, one that captures a visual and oral experience that, to one degree or another, would have been shared by nearly everyone who once lived within the boundaries of our modern conception of "Asia."

- Justin M. Jacobs, American University