

It is noticeable that there are lapses when it comes to the balancing out of the discussion and sources on each subject liberal. For example, the chapters on Romulo and Lopez are extensive and data-heavy, whereas the ones on Osias and Araneta are relatively shorter. Moreover, looking at the materials, there is an apparent imbalance on the idea that each liberal was able to produce their respective ideas with corresponding “canons”. On the one hand, Romulo and Lopez were clear literary luminaries and were indeed notable in that field. On the other hand, Osias and Araneta were, historically and historiographically, relegated to the sidelines and footnotes because of an apparent disconnect with what were supposed to be the dominant tides in the political spectrum of the century. This observation leads us to the question of whether everyone has correlational value when it comes to knowledge production, despite the author’s strong claim identifying and labeling them as the foremost liberals in the postwar Philippines. It is also discernible that the author has strong reservations about diatribes and binary oppositions, but it is apparent that in many instances in his work, he has arduously embraced and submitted to them. For example, he has extensively set into opposition some intellectual traditions, and scholarly-constructed concepts such as Liberalism-Marxism, Liberals-Communists Left, Communists-Social Democrats, Third Worldism-Western Colonialism, among others. Although one can also interpret his approach as a form of highlighting ideas and distancing them from the cloud of vagueness, throughout his work this tendency is observable.

To conclude, Claudio’s bold attempt to propose a new understanding of the intellectual development of the past century engages the academic world to rethink the conventional boundaries of historical and political thinking, and traverse beyond the confinements of traditional national milieu. His work, which sheds light on the unknown and underappreciated Filipino liberals of the twentieth century, serves its purpose in codifying Filipino ideologues’ place in the chartered arena of local and global liberalism.

doi:10.1017/S1479591420000017

Of Beggars and Buddhas: The Politics of Humor in the Vessantara Jataka in Thailand

By Kathrine Ann Bowie. *New Perspectives in SE Asian Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017. Pp. xvi + 357. ISBN 10: 0299309509; ISBN 13: 978-0299309503.

Yukio Yamanaka

Ryukoku University, Email: yyukio6909@gmail.com

Kathrine Bowie’s *Of Beggars and Buddhas* is a mixture of historical and ethnographic studies of the Thai interpretations of the Vessantarajātaka based on her survey of its performances such as ceremonies and festivals in central, northeastern and northern Thailand. Furthermore Bowie treats the actual reception and status of the Vessantarajātaka in Thai modern society. Her discussions are supported by her encyclopedic knowledge of Thai history and rich data gathered through her longtime and extensive fieldwork in Thailand. *Of Beggars and Buddhas* is an excellent contribution to the historical and ethnographic study of Thailand as well as to the study of Thai Buddhist culture.

The Jātaka “Birth-Story” is a genre of Buddhist literature, which tells stories of former existences of the Buddha before he reaches the highest enlightenment. The Vessantara Jātaka is one of the most famous jātakas and tells a story of the prince Vessantara, who is regarded as the penultimate reincarnation of Gotama Buddha. As child, Vessantara makes a vow to perfect his charity-giving in order to become the omniscient (i.e. the Buddha). His limitless generosity brings the kingdom of Sivi to a crisis, and

thus his father, King Sañjaya, banishes Vessantara from his kingdom. In exile he gives his son, Jāli, and his daughter, Kanhājīnā, to an old greedy brahmin, Jūjaka. This extraordinary generosity upsets all the living beings including the highest god Indra. And so Indra, to immediately fulfill Vessantara's vow, disguises himself as a brahmin and asks Vessantara for his wife, Maddī. Directly after Vessantara gives his wife to Indra, Indra appears as god, returns Maddī to the prince, and declares that Vessantara's vow has been fulfilled. The story comes to a happy end: King Sañjaya ransoms his two grandchildren from Jūjaka. Suddenly rich, Jūjaka overeats and dies. The king, accompanied by the queen and their grandchildren, comes for Vessantara and Maddī. So the family reunites and finally comes back to its kingdom. The Vessantarajātaka originated in India and must have been composed before the schism of the Indian Buddhist community: versions of various Buddhist schools other than Theravāda still survive. Further, the interpretations and translations of this jātaka into local languages were carried out in almost every Buddhist country and where Buddhism was propagated, from Sri Lanka as the southernmost country to Japan as the northernmost. However, the places where this jātaka most enjoys its popularity up until today are Sri Lanka and the Southeast Asian mainland, i.e., Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Research on Southeast Asian interpretations of the Vessantarajātaka as well as festivals or ceremonies based on the Vessantarajātaka is progressing. But further extensive studies in this field are still needed. Under the present circumstances Bowie's contribution stands out.

Bowie announces that she divides *Of Beggars and Buddhas* into two main parts. However, practically, this book has four divisions: the Introduction, Part I titled "Diversity in Humor", Part II titled "The Politics of Diversity", and a conclusion. In the Introduction Bowie gives an outline of the story of the Vessantarajātaka and then emphasizes the originality and wider variety of Thai interpretations of this Jātaka, against the general views of previous scholars. Already in the Introduction, Bowie explains that interest in the Vessantarajātaka has diminished in present-day Thai society. The starting point for its decline ultimately lies in the fact that the royal court changed its attitude toward this jātaka. What Bowie pays most attention to is the monastic regulation issued by Rama I in 1782, in which "the recitation of and listening to sermon in song-verse or the expression of buffoonish words for comic purpose is strictly forbidden" (Introduction, p. 27). The first part of this regulation mentions that some monks recited the Vessantarajātaka in a comic and obscene manner. Thus, the kernel of Bowie's discussion in the whole book appears: What is the recitation of the Vessantarajātaka in a comic and obscene manner? And, why did the royal court need to forbid it? Further, Bowie argues that Jūjaka, the antagonist of the story, plays a comic role or more aptly the role of the "trickster". The introduction ends with the paragraph titled "Overview of This Book" explaining Bowie's methodology and providing a compact description of materials as well as of each part and chapter.

Part I is divided into three chapters. They are historical studies and at the same time ethnographic reports on the performances of the Vessantarajātaka. The first chapter discusses its performances in central Thailand, the second in the northeast, and finally the third in the north. Bowie provides a table of "a regional comparison of the Vessantarajātaka" (Part I, p. 166), through which readers can see the overview of these chapters. Nevertheless, the quantity and variety of data in these chapters are overwhelming. They include quotations from historical documents and secondary literature as well as interviews, ranging from with monks to working-class people. Furthermore, reports on festivals and ceremonies of the Vessantarajātaka in which the author herself participated are also included. As for the presentation of Jūjaka, he is never humorous in central Thailand, while he is ambivalent but played with vaudevillian humor in the northeastern region. Finally Jūjaka is most humorous and a beloved trickster in the north.

Part II titled "The Politics of Diversity" is also divided into three chapters. Mainly discussed in the first two chapters is how Thais transformed Jūjaka into a trickster, and also why the trickster was regarded as dangerous by the royal court. The first chapter includes quotations from interviews and audio tapes, which give us a glimpse of the storyteller's art among Thai monks. By contrast, the second chapter mainly includes quotations from written material. This chapter seems to draw a hasty conclusion, and there is no really definitive evidence indicating that Jūjaka as trickster should have been dangerous to the Bangkok court. The third chapter treats Jūjaka from a different angle,

reporting on the worship of him in present Thailand. According to this chapter, Jūjaka is regarded as a deity who promotes personal wealth: Although he is old and ugly, he has a young wife and becomes rich in the Jātaka. Furthermore Bowie reports on the revival of the ceremonies or festivals regarding the Vessantarajātaka in modern Thai society. The promotion of tourism and cultural heritage is the main reason for this revival. In such cases Jūjaka no longer plays an important role. In the conclusion Bowie briefly looks back on what she aims at in this book and ends by emphasizing the diversity of possible interpretations of the Vessantarajātaka as well as the ambiguity of its teaching.

Finally a few minor points needing correction are here enumerated:

- 1) Introduction 14, 7, “The final reference ...” Bowie does not indicate the source of this reference. In which text does this “final reference” occur? In the biography of Gotama Buddha (Jātaka Nidānakathā), this does not occur.
- 2) Introduction 15, 16, Digha Nikaya 26 → Manorathapūraṇī I 87, 3ff.
- 3) Introduction 15, 26, Mahajajati → Mahajati.

doi:10.1017/S1479591420000108

Dispelling the Darkness: A Jesuit’s Quest for the Soul of Tibet

By Donald S. Lopez Jr. and Thupten Jinpa. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. Pp. 302. ISBN 10: 0674659708. ISBN 13: 978-0674659704.

Yoko Nii

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and Rikkyo University, Email: yoko21@rikkyo.ac.jp

A central figure in *Dispelling the Darkness: A Jesuit’s Quest for the Soul of Tibet*, the Italian Jesuit priest Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733), is best known for two achievements. First, he arrived in Lhasa in March 1716 and reopened the Christian mission in Tibet after the first attempt to establish a mission there by António de Andrade (1580–1634) ended after only a brief time. Second, Desideri studied in monasteries in Ramoché and Sera and produced a number of writings on Buddhism and Christianity in Tibetan and European languages. Missionaries and Christians in Japan and China frequently discussed and criticized Buddhism in their writings, including, for example, Alessandro Valignano’s *Nihon no katekizumo* 日本のカテキズモ (Catechism of Japan) and Matteo Ricci’s *Tianzhu Shiyi* 天主實義 (The true meaning of the Lord of Heaven). However, according to an article by the Buddhist scholar Ocho Enichi 横超 慧日, the missionaries’ conceptions of important Buddhist terms, such as emptiness (*śūnyatā*) in *Tianzhu Shiyi*, are Confucianized, indicating that they had obtained their knowledge of Buddhism from Confucian literati.¹ It appears that the missionaries in Japan delved into Buddhism at a deeper level than their colleagues in China because Buddhism had deeper roots in Japanese society than any other religion or philosophy. They used a variety of terms derived from Buddhism not only to criticize Buddhism but also to translate Christianity into the local language.²

I would like to thank Editage (www.editage.com) for English language editing. This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers JP17K13327 and JP18J00160.

¹Ocho Enichi 横超 慧日, “Min matsu Bukkyō to Kirisutokyō to no sōgo hihan, jō 明末仏教とキリスト教との相互批判 (上),” *Otani Gakuho* 29:2 (1949), pp. 12–13.