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*Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism.* Edited by Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8248-1949-7. Pp. 515.

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Based on a panel at the 1993 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* raises serious issues regarding the understanding of Buddhism in the academy, the role of the scholar, and the possibility of objective scholarship. Specifically, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* examines a recent movement in Japanese Buddhist Studies led by Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriaki, scholars and practitioners of Sōtō Zen whose work calls into question basic assumptions in much of Japanese (and all of East Asian) Buddhism. Matsumoto and Hakamaya are highly critical of the widely accepted doctrines of *tathāgata-garbha* ("womb/embryo of Buddhahood") and "original enlightenment" (*hongaku*), considering them "un-Buddhist." According to both scholars, such doctrines promote sloppy thinking that embraces "no-thought" and denigrates language as a conveyor of truth. They call this type of thinking "topical" and claim it leads to a naive tolerance that masks discriminatory, totalitarian, and ethnocentric agendas. Instead, they advocate a "Critical Buddhism" based on the doctrines of *anatta* (no-self) and *pratītya-samutpāda* (dependent origination) that stress clear thinking and compassionate action. Both Matsumoto and Hakamaya have a distinctly political agenda, and much of their work counters the *Nihonjinron* atmosphere in Japan during the past decade. Their work also echoes Western postmodern discourse in questioning the possibility of objective, "value-free" scholarship (although Hakamaya decries the postmodern fashion currently sweeping Japan).

The book is divided into three sections, each containing essays by Matsumoto and Hakamaya with responses of other scholars. Part One, "The What and Why of Critical Buddhism," focuses primarily on the distinction between "critical" and "topical" thinking that Hakamaya traces to the work of seventeenth century scholar Giambattista Vico and his "debate" with René Descartes (56–63). Part Two, "In Search of True Buddhism," concerns Matsumoto and Hakamaya's extensive critique of the *tathāgata-garbha* tradition. Matsumoto terms this teaching "*dhatu vada*," equating it with "original enlightenment" thought so prevalent in Japanese Buddhism, and is adamant that this teaching is *not* "true Buddhism" (165–73). Part Three, "Social Criticism," highlights the political aspects of "Critical Buddhism." The authors show how the theory of "original enlightenment" works to maintain the status quo, and argue that *hongaku* promotes strong ethnocentric sentiments glorifying the unique Japanese "essence," a notion that has often been employed in support of totalitarianism and military ventures.

Each of the essays in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* has something to recommend it. Matsumoto and Hakamaya's essays are insightful, interesting, and show

both scholars' vast erudition to good avail (Matsumoto and Hakamaya studied with Yamaguchi Zuihō, Japan's leading Tibetologist). Hakamaya's "Critical Philosophy versus Topical Philosophy" and "Scholarship as Criticism," along with Matsumoto's "The Doctrine of *Tathāgata-garbhā* Is Not Buddhist" and "Buddhism and the Kami: Against Japanism" stand out in particular for presenting both scholars' main points. These essays make clear that "Critical Buddhism" is *not* a search for an "original Buddhism," draw a sharp contrast between "Critical" and "Topical" thought, and highlight disturbing aspects of Japanese politics as well as Sōtō Zen's complicity with social discrimination.

Most of the essays by other contributors to *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* take Matsumoto and Hakamaya to task for their claims. Among the best of these are Sallie King's "Buddha Nature Is Impeccably Buddhist" (174–92), which argues that "Buddha Nature" thought may not imply a monistic ontology, and that its teachings can have positive social repercussions, and Peter Gregory's "Is Critical Buddhism Really Critical?" (286–97), which notes that Hakamaya's account greatly oversimplifies doctrinal and historical developments in Buddhism, especially in the Chinese context. However, other contributions are equally worthy. Paul Swanson's "Why They Say Zen Is Not Buddhism" (3–29) is highly recommended for the balanced overview it gives of the whole Critical Buddhist movement.

*Pruning the Bodhi Tree* encourages critical questions, so it is no surprise that I have many of my own. I will put only three. First, is Critical Buddhism really new? It seems to me that a "critical" spirit consistently appears in the history of Buddhism and many contributors to *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* argue similar points. Second, why favor Critical over Topical Buddhism? Hakamaya's assertions that "Topical philosophy" is morally impoverished and promotes "not-thinking" certainly hit the mark in many cases. But will "Critical philosophy" *always* be better? I, for one, am also unsure that Matsumoto or Hakamaya are fair in their characterization of Topical Buddhism. At the very least their stance leads to an essentialist definition which excludes many Buddhists from the "True" Buddhafold. Third, *must* "original enlightenment" thought lead to social discrimination? Although both Matsumoto and Hakamaya are outraged at social problems and structures in Japan (and the supporting role that Buddhism has played in their formation), nowhere do they make a convincing case that Topical Buddhism will *always* lead to institutionalized social discrimination. I also doubt that either Matsumoto or Hakamaya have an adequate understanding of "religion" since both stress that "true Buddhism" entails *belief* in basic teachings rather than ritual participation or community membership.

All in all *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* is an important book for bringing major issues in Japanese Buddhist scholarship to a greater audience. The book's dialogical structure and controversial claims promote active and critical engagement on the reader's part. For these reasons it is excellent yet problematic. I admire Matsumoto and Hakamaya's work, even when I disagree with them, as they force students of Buddhism to reconsider what Mahayana really is and

how Buddhist discourse may be shaped by political agendas. Moreover, the last section of Matsumoto's essay "The *Lotus Sutra* and Japanese Culture" (388–403) should be required in courses on Japanese religions if only to counter romanticized views such as those presented in D. T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture*. As an aside, the provocative tone both Matsumoto and Hakamaya assume (it comes through even in translation and is somewhat reminiscent of neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty) makes for an amusing read.

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*Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*. By Donald S. Lopez, Jr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. ISBN 0-2264-9310-5. Pp. 283.

Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism have long been objects of Western fantasy. Since the earliest encounters of Venetian travelers and Catholic missionaries with Tibetan monks at the Mongol court, tales of the mysteries their mountain homeland and the magic of their strange—yet strangely familiar—religion have had a peculiar hold on the Western imagination. During the last two centuries, the valuation of Tibetan society and, particularly, its religion, has fluctuated wildly. Tibetan Buddhism has been portrayed sometimes as the most corrupt deviation from Buddha's true dharma, sometimes as its most direct descendant. These fluctuations have occurred over the course of this century, at its beginning as Tibet resisted the colonial ambitions of a European power and at its end as it succumbed to the colonial ambitions of an Asian power (3).

The Western world's relationship with Tibet has been a passionate one. Serving variously as the last preserve of mystical purity, the last society uncontaminated by contact with the West, and recently as the most just political cause around, Tibet has been asked to fulfil many roles for the outsider. In his latest book, Donald Lopez examines this complex construction westerners refer to as "Tibet" and, finally, breaks the news as gently as he can: Tibet, as the Western imagination conceives of it, does not exist.

*Prisoners of Shangri-La* is a daring book because it deals with a subject that cannot help but be political as well as intellectual. In it, we witness the disarmament of an unexpected occupying force; namely, the Western desire for a pure and purely "other." When Edward Said dismantled "The Orient" in *Orientalism*, the only thing at stake was a mode of Western thought whose time had come. Not so in the case of Tibet. While the exercise is the same, there seems to be much more at stake—in this case, an occupied territory that the world fears to designate as a "country" where the native inhabitants are having their culture, language, religion and, in many cases, lives unceremoniously erased. If Tibet, as Westerners like to imagine it, does not exist, what is there, after all, to preserve?