

Review of:

The Face of Jizō: Image and Cult in Medieval Japanese Buddhism, by Hank Glassman.
University of Hawai'i Press, 2012. 292 pages. ISBN 9780824835811 (pbk), \$25.00.

Reviewed by:

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As Hank Glassman notes in the opening chapter to this well-researched and richly illustrated work on Jizō (Skt. Kṣitigarbha, Ch. Dizang), the bodhisattva whose charming figure is ubiquitous in Japan: “The history of Buddhism in Japan is from its very origins a history of images” (1). Rather than simply present us with an analysis of images of Jizō, however, Glassman skilfully unpacks some of the tensions involved in the medieval Japanese Buddhist employment of religious images, while simultaneously—via the work of Aby Warburg—raising important questions about traditional approaches to historical scholarship, particularly scholarship on religious images. The reader is presented with an intimate and impressionistic story of the “development and efflorescence” of the cult of this complex deity, one that cuts across sectarian boundaries as well as religious affiliation. The author is to be commended for his careful and engaging account, which resists the temptation to simplify the “meaning of Jizō.” Highly recommended for undergraduate courses in Japanese religion or East Asian art history, this work provides an excellent complement to Zhiru’s *The Making of a Savior Bodhisattva: Dizang in Medieval China* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).