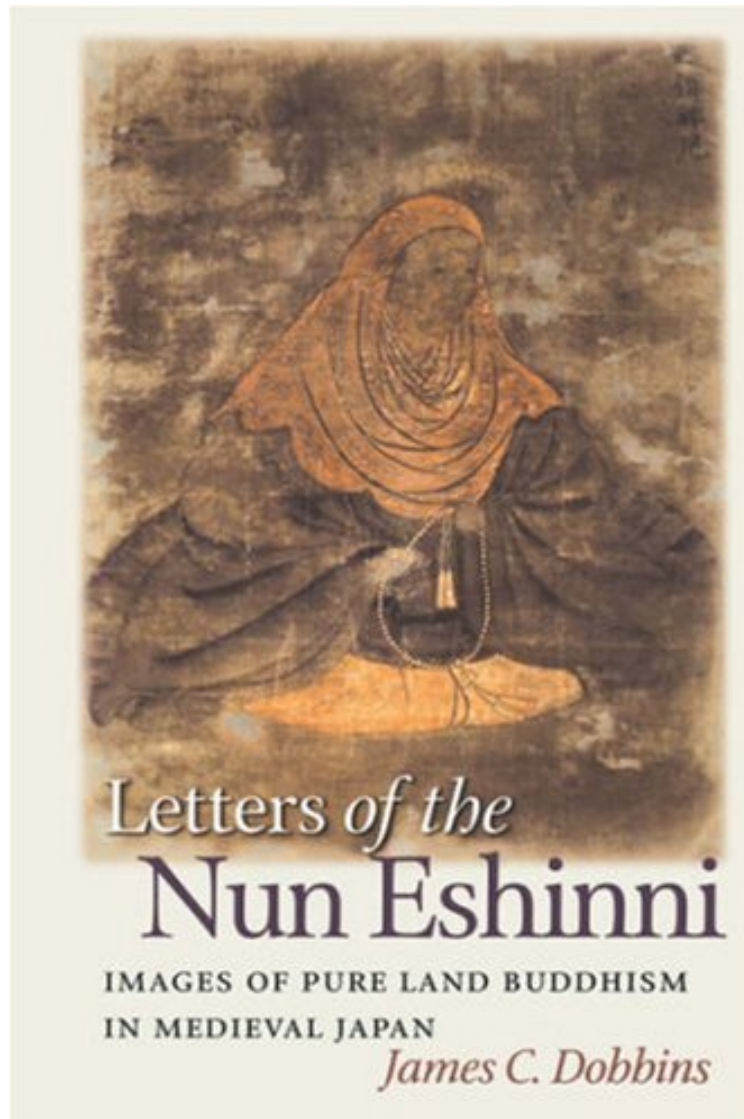


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## Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan

*James C. Dobbins*

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**James C. Dobbins : Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Letters of the Nun Eshinni: Images of Pure Land Buddhism in Medieval Japan:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating academic read By E. Boydston This academic text includes primary sources, the translations of the letters (10) of Eshinni (1182-1268?) a woman of medieval Japan. The

letters were discovered in 1921. I was anticipating more letters, however, it is amazing that they exist at all. The text is an exploration of actual living conditions in 13th century Japan. It is an excellent resource for students of Buddhism, Japanese history, and the role women played in medieval Japan. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Annette Tashiro the book was a recommended reading. Enjoying the read. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The woman who didn't listen to other men. By Margaret M. Elwell I have been studying Jodo Shin Shu Buddhism for eight years and Dr. Dobbins uses all his research and puts the medieval women in Japan in a clarified spot-light. Easy reading and very informative. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in Japanese history and Buddhism.

Eshinni (1182-1268?), a Buddhist nun and the wife of Shinran (1173-1262), the celebrated founder of the True Pure Land, or Shin, school of Buddhism, was largely unknown until the discovery of a collection of her letters in 1921. In this study, James C. Dobbins, a leading scholar of Pure Land Buddhism, has made creative use of these letters to shed new light on life and religion in medieval Japan. He provides a complete translation of the letters and an explication of them that reveals the character and flavor of early Shin Buddhism. Readers will come away with a new perspective on Pure Land scholarship and a vivid image of Eshinni and the world in which she lived. After situating the ideas and practices of Pure Land Buddhism in the context of the actual living conditions of thirteenth-century Japan, Dobbins examines the portrayal of women in Pure Land Buddhism, the great range of lifestyles found among medieval women and nuns, and how they constructed a meaningful religious life amid negative stereotypes. He goes on to analyze aspects of medieval religion that have been omitted in our modern-day account of Pure Land and tries to reconstruct the religious assumptions of Eshinni and Shinran in their own day. A prevailing theme that runs throughout the book is the need to look beyond idealized images of Buddhism found in doctrine to discover the religion as it was lived and practiced. Scholars and students of Buddhism, Japanese history, women's studies, and religious studies will find much in this engaging work that is thought-provoking and insightful.

An elegant depiction of the landscape and the daily life of the medieval Japanese countryside. --Monumenta Nipponica (60, 2005) Dobbins's book is rich with highly engageable issues relevant to all areas of premodern Japanese cultural history.... In some ways Eshinni and Shinran are a more complex pair than Abelard and Heloise in the religious and sexual tensions that characterize their spiritual programs. --Journal of Japanese Studies (32, 2006) The book will be of great value in the classroom ... [It] offers an accessible introduction both to methodological issues central to the study of religion and to the religious landscape of premodern Japan. --Journal of Asian Studies (May 2005) Excellent . . . Letters of the Nun Eshinni will be a resource referred to many times in coming years by those who seek to better comprehend the history of women's Buddhism. --Tricycle (fall 2005) In this finely studied edition of the letters, James Dobbins gives not only the first complete translation but also indicates the real value of the correspondence. --Donald Richie, Japan Times (April 3, 2005) --<https://www.uhawaiiipress.com/p-3389-9780824828707.aspx> "An elegant depiction of the landscape and the daily life of the medieval Japanese countryside." Monumenta Nipponica (60, 2005) "Dobbins's book is rich with highly engageable issues relevant to all areas of premodern Japanese cultural history.... In some ways Eshinni and Shinran are a more complex pair than Abelard and Heloise in the religious and sexual tensions that characterize their spiritual programs." Journal of Japanese Studies (32, 2006) "The book will be of great value in the classroom ... [It] offers an accessible introduction both to methodological issues central to the study of religion and to the religious landscape of premodern Japan." Journal of Asian Studies (May 2005) "Excellent . . . Letters of the Nun Eshinni will be a resource referred to many times in coming years by those who seek to better comprehend the history of women's Buddhism." Tricycle (fall 2005) "In this finely studied edition of the letters, James Dobbins gives not only the first complete translation but also indicates the real value of the correspondence." Donald Richie, Japan Times (April 3, 2005) (<https://www.uhawaiiipress.com/p-3389-9780824828707.aspx>) About the Author James C. Dobbins is Fairchild Professor of religion and East Asian studies at Oberlin College.