

temple), they effectively controlled the use of land and other resources. The author concludes that “the idea of plants’ salvation did not stem from environmental attitudes, but was primarily part of a larger ideological discourse aimed at legitimizing the place of Buddhist institutions in medieval Japanese society. Even though aesthetic and ecological concerns were not completely absent, they were essentially part of an ideological project aimed at accumulating for temples and their leading lineages what Pierre Bourdieu has called ‘symbolic capital.’” (94)

While this book’s main thrust of argument seems to be convincing, the author’s choice of interpretative labels for Buddhist discourse on the environment, especially that of *ecosophia* (doctrinal denials of Buddha nature for nonsentient beings), are not really understandable for the present reviewer, they appear to be rather arbitrary. Leaving this minor criticism aside, the book’s major contribution is that it challenges traditional and widespread perceptions of “nature” in Japan. Even if one does not agree with the author in part or in the whole, it can be assumed that this study will trigger a new and lively discussion on the topic.

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Payne, Richard K. And Kenneth K. Tanaka.

Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitabha.

Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 17. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004. 304 pages.

This work consists of nine essays on aspects of Pure Land Buddhism in Asia; it was produced by a group of well-known Western scholars originally in relation to a 1995 conference at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California. The book is another entry in the Kuroda Institute’s very useful series on East Asian Buddhism. As is usual for a conference volume, the topics are somewhat eclectic despite the general theme.

Matthew Kapstein’s essay discusses how Pure Land imagination and practice had a strong, generalized, nonsectarian presence throughout Tibetan Buddhism. Daniel Getz’s essay studies the Song period Chinese monastic figure Shengcheng, who was in later generations identified with a Pure Land lineage but who in his own time displayed no clear sectarian affiliation. Jacqueline Stone’s essay examines the elaboration of Japanese Heian period nenbutsu practices specially associated with the deathbed and the related debates over the karmic logic of those practices. James Stanford’s essay deals with the Japanese Shingon priest Kakuban, whose schismatic notions about esoteric “secret nenbutsu” Pure Land teachings came to constitute one of perhaps six different strains of Japanese Pure Land thought. Hank Glassman’s essay analyses the Japanese cult of Chūjōhime, a mythic figure whose story was closely associated with Amitābha but which acquired a strong independent cultic identity as a special source of women’s salvation. Fabio Rambelli’s essay discusses the energetic, interactive fluidity of medieval Japanese interpretations of

Pure Land teachings, which in some phases included a carnivalesque antinomian radicalism. Richard Jaffe's essay describes the experience of the Tokugawa period Rinzai Zen monk Ungo Kiyō, who presented Pure Land practices to his lay followers and for complex reasons set off intrasectarian controversy as a result. Todd Lewis's essay discusses how Pure Land imagination and practice in Nepal had a strong, generalized, nonsectarian presence which was similar to that in Tibet and which was actualized in important rituals. Finally Charles Jones's essay offers a thick description, in anthropological style, of a one-day Pure Land recitation retreat in contemporary Taiwan.

The editing of the material in the volume is impeccable, the academic research work is highly professional and marvelously detailed within each topic area, and as a whole the essays offer great stimulation for future research. Payne provides a short introduction: conceptually the volume engages a methodological challenge facing Buddhist studies, which is to get away from a research focus structured by texts and nations (the latter involving sometimes evolutionary assumptions leading to Japan as the "culmination") and instead concentrate quite broadly on patterns of ritual practices (technically, cults) as seen by Buddhists themselves as well as informed by the anthropological ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and others. It emerges from the essays that not only has Pure Land practice been extremely widespread, but that notions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy fluctuate according to sociohistorical location.

A couple of things in the presentation of the work are worth quibbling about. First, there is no (one) cult of Amitabha as the title might suggest. If these essays show anything, it is that Pure Land myth, semantics and symbology demonstrated diversity of application and expression throughout the regions where Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism existed. (On this point see Payne's own comment, p. 12). (Christian scholars do not effectively speak of a "the" cult of the Bible, for example, across Christianity in general.)

A second, though perhaps too obvious point is the omission of any essay on Japan's Jodoshinshu Buddhism, although Shin has been one of the key Pure Land developments in Asia. (And both editors, strikingly, are affiliated with Shin Buddhist educational institutions.) It might be assumed that some degree of focused attention to Shin would be requisite in a volume of this kind in order to fill in a comprehensive picture of the total interpretive range involved in Pure Land teachings. (To reapply a very loose Christian comparison, this volume is like a self-described "history of the Bible cult in Christianity" which bypasses the Protestant Reformation.) Instead, in fact, although the point is unstated, the selection of essays appears to show an intentional effort to marginalize the pressure of Shin Buddhism, which seems to be perceived as having such an a priori distorting effect on the whole story of Pure Land that sharp counteraction is required to achieve balance. The assumptions are apparently that already Shin is extremely well known in the Western Buddhological literature, or perhaps that its claims, imperialistic or otherwise, are thoroughly and multidimensionally understood. While such motivations can be guessed at, the silent maneuver seems odd nevertheless, because few specialists think that *even* the supposedly well-known Shin version of Pure Land

is so far actually adequately understood in the West – and *even* among Buddhologists. Thus the volume’s implicit correction against Shin influence seems to put the cart a considerable ways before the horse. In any case the authors would have done better to deal with this major issue openly.

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Monika Schrimpf

Zur Begegnung des japanischen Buddhismus mit dem Christentum in der Meiji-Zeit (1868-1912).

Wiesbaden: Harassowitz Verlag 2000.

As one who has had the privilege of studying the dramatic interactions between Buddhism and Christianity in the latter half of the nineteenth century (*Buddhism and Christianity in Japan*, University of Hawaii Press 1987), I enjoyed reading Monika Schrimpf’s analysis of Buddhist encounters with Christianity in the Meiji period. Our books inevitably cover much of the same history and to a great extent use the same material. However, since her concern is primarily to investigate the religious encounter as part of a Buddhist “Geistesgeschichte,” with particular emphasis on the causes, motives and contents of the Buddhist attitudes to Christianity, she is able to leave space for a more detailed presentation of institutions, movements, and literature on the Buddhist side.

The structure of the book is divided in four: A brief introduction describes central aspects of anti-Christian attitudes of Buddhists in the Tokugawa period. The second chapter deals with the Buddhist criticism of Christianity in the first part of the Meiji period (until the early 1890s), with emphasis on the rejection of Christianity as incompatible with patriotic values as well as with modern science and philosophy. The third chapter analyses the rapprochement between Buddhists and Christians in the later Meiji period, with emphasis on the Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893); the Japanese Religious Conference in 1896, and the series of inter-religious organizations and conferences that followed; and the various Buddhist movements to establish a “New Buddhism” in the same period.

The book is well-written and balanced in its evaluations, and certainly adds to the understanding of Buddhist apologetics and reform movements in the period, and in that way broadens the understanding of changes in attitudes to Christianity.

The strength of the book, its focus on the Buddhist side of the relationship, however, is perhaps also the reason for some of its weaknesses. I will limit myself to a few points. Christianity and its role for the development of Buddhism are of course present in Schrimpf’s book, but the focus on Buddhism seems to weaken the understanding of the enormous impact Christianity made on Meiji Buddhism, not only as a challenge creating anxiety, aggression, and reactionary apologetics, but also in terms of reform, renewal, and new energy. Christianity came as a vigorous religion regarding itself as the spiritual backbone of the West, representing