

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Much Ado About Nothingness: Essays on Nishida and Tanabe.* By James W. Heisig. Nagoya: Chisokudō Publications. 2015. vi + 451 pages. Paperback: ISBN 978-1-5176-9030-4.

ROMARIC JANNEL

The story of William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* takes place in Messina, an Italian city located in Sicily. At the end of the sixteenth century, when he decided to write his comedy, Europe was considered by Europeans to be the center of the civilized world. Even though the title of James Heisig's *Much Ado About Nothingness: Essays on Nishida and Tanabe* is not so different from that of William Shakespeare's comedy, his essays take place in a very different world. From Shakespeare's century to Heisig's, even the meaning of the word "world" itself has changed for almost everybody; a shift that can be explained, among other reasons, by globalization.

Nevertheless, many specialists in the field of the history of ideas—and even more so in the field of the history of philosophy—were not ready to give up on their Eurocentrism. On the contrary, under the influence of thinkers such as Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger, philosophy appeared as a purely occidental discipline, which was born in Greece and developed in Europe. It cannot be denied that, from a historical point of view, philosophy is a Western invention. But the interest of European philosophers like Schopenhauer, Schelling, and Nietzsche in oriental ways of thinking is also generally accepted. Regarding East Asia, Europeans were at first interested in Indian and Chinese ways of thinking. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Japanese philosophers learned the occidental philosophies, some in Japan, and some in occidental countries. And they started to study what Anglophones call "continental philosophy" (another way to look at the history of philosophy from a European point of view).

In the twentieth century, a school of philosophy was born in Japan: the Kyoto school. According to many works related to philosophy in Japan, the foundations of the Kyoto school were mostly laid by the writings of

three authors: Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), Tanabe Hajime (1885–1962), and Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990). The most influential specialist of the Kyoto school in the English-speaking world is probably James Heisig. He is a Permanent Fellow at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture and Emeritus Professor at the Faculty of Arts and Letters of Nanzan University (Nagoya). He has dedicated the major part of his career to the study of the philosophies of Nishida, Tanabe, and Nishitani. Among other contributions, he is the author of *Philosophers of Nothingness: An Essay on the Kyoto School* (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), translated into many languages, and the co-editor (with Thomas P. Kasulis and John C. Maraldo) of *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011).

The book under review focuses on the study of the philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe, as well as on the link that existed between them. It gathers together fourteen of Heisig’s essays (eight on Nishida and six on Tanabe), most of which have been published in journals, but some of which were initially written as lectures or presentations. However, the book does not feature a diversity of topics: as Heisig says, “Repeated explanations of a small number of key ideas—Nishida’s logic of *basho* and Tanabe’s logic of the specific chief among them—should offer some degree of continuity” (p. 1). Among other things, each key concept has been analyzed from different angles in respect to its place in the history of philosophical ideas. The key concept of this work is “nothingness” (*mu* 無), which explains why this character is printed on the front cover of the book.

In addition to some considerations concerning Nishida, the first essay of Heisig’s book presents many interesting ideas that give us a taste of what he considers Japanese philosophy to be.<sup>1</sup> It also presents the ideas that were at the “heart” of Japanese philosophy in the twentieth century. The first part of the title of this book, *Much Ado About Nothingness*, is also the first part of the title of the first essay: “Much Ado About Nothingness: Getting to the Heart of Japanese Philosophy.” Contrary to the Occident, what we used to call the “Kyoto school” was not a philosophical trend focused on the concept of “being,” but rather on “nothingness” as the basis of all things. Many concepts used by the philosophers of the Kyoto school are linked to the idea of nothingness, and this can mainly be explained by the differences between Eastern and Western ways of thinking. But Heisig’s views regarding the history of philosophical ideas around the world are not so basic. He explains:

<sup>1</sup> For us, the expression “Japanese philosophy” does not refer to something Japanese in essence but to a philosophical work written in the Japanese context.

I cannot believe that all philosophies around the world are basically the same, and certainly not that they are all equal. . . . What is far more interesting is the fact—at least in my experience, it is a fact—that all the great philosophies of the world contain the same things, only in different proportions and different configurations. It is rather like a kaleidoscope. (p. 8)

This is for us an essential assertion. The oriental ways of thinking, and obviously Japanese philosophies, are frequently presented as original and fundamentally different from the occidental ones. For example, many philosophers and intellectuals assert that the occidental classical philosophies were materialistic whereas the Indian ways of thinking were vacuist. But such representations only seem to be true if they are considered as general tendencies. In fact, the materialistic school was also active in classical India, like Lokāyata's doctrines in the sixth century.<sup>2</sup> The differences between materialism and vacuism are basically a matter of the proportions and configurations of ideas: any debate that involves one of these concepts requires the existence of the second one. It is meaningless to discuss the definition of good without considering evil. Thus, we can assume that the roots of these fundamental ideas are probably universal, but in the end tend to evolve differently worldwide. Heisig carries on, explaining:

I don't know a single idea in all of Japanese philosophy for which I cannot find a rough equivalent in Western philosophy for which I cannot find a rough equivalent in Western intellectual history (even if not always in philosophical form), but the placement of an idea, its role, its relation to other ideas gives it a uniqueness that can be familiar and foreign at the same time. And vice versa for Japanese counterparts to ideas of Western philosophy. (p. 8)

Heisig seems to consider that ideas form a web which can take different patterns; and these patterns can be unique and can express the profound meaning of each concept of this web.

This book contains many similar, and quite interesting, considerations about philosophy and the history of philosophy. A specialist in Japanese philosophy cannot investigate such matters; rather it falls within the competency

<sup>2</sup> The Lokāyata school is also known as the Cārvāka school. In France, among his other works, Paul Masson-Oursel, a specialist in comparative philosophy, introduced this school in 1923 in his *Esquisse d'une histoire de la philosophie indienne* (edited by Paul Geuthner, pp. 47–48).

of a thinker who aims at building a link between Japanese philosophy and Western philosophies. Through this kind of comparative philosophy, the author presents studies by Nishida and Tanabe of some Western philosophers such as Hegel and Kant. In other examples, he discusses the influence of Eckhart, Cusanus, and Boehme on the way that Nishida considers nothingness as the ground of all things (pp. 46–52). As Heisig says:

Nishida's strategy for constructing an *unus mundus* is a mixture of Eckhart and Cusanus. Like Eckhart, he sees God and the world as sharing a common "groundless ground" beyond being and becoming. And like Cusanus, he sees that contact with the infinite rubs off on the finite and transforms it into an infinitely open finiteness, a sphere without a circumference. (p. 68)

Of course, Heisig discusses what he seems to consider Nishida's most important concept—what he poetically calls the "crown jewel" (p. 193) of Nishida's philosophy—his "logic of *basho*" (*basho no ronri* 場所の論理). Nishida's *basho* has something to do with Plato's *chora* as an empty receptacle or a no man's land.<sup>3</sup> But for Nishida, *basho* was much more "a framework of enveloping universals" (p. 194). According to his students, Nishida "drew the *basho* on the blackboard as a series of concentric circles, the final of which was drawn as a dotted line to indicate an indefinite or infinite circumference" (p. 203). But such a definition seems to be highly theoretical and perhaps unsuitable to embrace human experience. As Heisig explains, Nishida's "concern" was more likely to locate "the most fundamental of experiences, analyzing their structure, and noting the internal contradictions that necessitated an ever-more-encompassing perspective" (pp. 210–11).

Tanabe's most famous idea discussed in this book is probably his "logic of species" (*shu no ronri* 種の論理). Heisig analyzes this concept from different angles. At first, he proposes his own translation for this term as "logic of the specific," arguing that "the latter made immediate sense in English and was free of the ambiguity and clumsiness of the former" (p. 261). He also writes: "More than that, it seemed to communicate better the proposition I set out to argue, namely that Tanabe's insight into the specific nature of all logical universals was timely for an age of runaway

<sup>3</sup> According to Heisig, "Plato imagined [*chora*] to hold the eternal and unchanging Ideas after which everything that comes into being is patterned." He adds: "Insofar as the *chora* is not itself a being, but a place for all of being, it would seem to fit in well with Nishida's project" (p. 156).

globalized thinking like our own” (p. 261). Those statements can be found in the introduction of the essay “Tanabe’s Logic of the Specific and the Critique of the Global Village.” To sum it up, according to Heisig, Tanabe criticizes through his “logic of the specific” what we now call “globalization” and what we see as its consequences. In his essay, Heisig offers a synthetic analysis of Tanabe’s “logic of the specific.” At first, he describes this logic as a “shift from the formal, syllogistic function of the specific to an ontological description of absolute mediation” (p. 268). Then, he adds that “the specificity is defined primarily as the socio-cultural substratum of historical people” (p. 271) and that “socio-cultural specificity is defined as a non-rationality that lies at the base of every human attempt to ground social existence rationally” (p. 275). Finally, he declares that “the ultimate foundation of specificity is not the being of historical relativity, but absolute nothingness” (p. 278). Nothingness is decidedly presented as the main thought of this book and represents a key to understand and interpret the philosophies of Tanabe as well as Nishida.

In conclusion, we should mention that this book also deals with other ideas and concepts such as “pure experience,” “self,” “no-self,” “god,” as well as many other authors such as Aristotle, Whitehead, Bergson, Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nishitani Keiji. Reflections upon the philosophy of religions—notably Christianity and Buddhism—are also present in this work. It represents a very interesting introduction to the philosophy of Nishida and Tanabe. Our only regret, if we should mention one, is that the philosophical terminology is rarely given in Japanese.

*Right Thoughts at the Last Moment: Buddhism and Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan.* By Jacqueline L. Stone. Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism 26. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2017. xviii + 597 pages. Hardcover: ISBN 978-0-8248-5643-4.

ROBERT F. RHODES

Jacqueline Stone, the author of *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), the groundbreaking study of Japanese Buddhist original enlightenment (*hongaku*) thought, has written another splendid book, this time on medieval Japanese Buddhist deathbed rites. Each page of this hefty six-hundred-page

study brims with fascinating anecdotes, intriguing details, and provocative insights. A wide-ranging book, it discusses in meticulous detail virtually all aspects of deathbed rites in medieval Japan. Since it is impossible to discuss all the interesting points made in this rich and engrossing book, I will simply point out some of the major themes addressed in it.

In the opening page of her study, Stone succinctly states the theme of her book as follows: “This volume investigates the emergence and development in Japan of the discourses and practices surrounding the ideal of exemplary death, focusing on the late tenth- through early fourteenth-centuries” (p. 1). Japanese Buddhists of this period “held that one’s last thought shapes the circumstances of one’s next rebirth” and “developed ritual procedures for encouraging right mindfulness” in those who were dying in the hope that they would be “born in the superior realm of a buddha or bodhisattva, where one’s eventual awakening would be assured” (p. 1). Although this discourse of dying in the right state of mind in order to gain birth in a superior realm came to be most closely associated with Pure Land Buddhism, Stone makes the important point that Maitreya’s Tuṣita Heaven, Kannon’s Potalaka (Fudaraku in Japanese), and the Eagle Peak, depicted as Śākyamuni Buddha’s Pure Land in the *Lotus Sutra*, were also popular postmortem destinations for a significant number of people. But whatever realm they aspired to, it was axiomatic that a rightly focused mind at the moment of death was considered indispensable to getting there. Hence, the ideal of dying in an exemplary manner cut across sectarian boundaries and was embraced by monks and nuns as well as lay men and women.

In chapter 1, “The Beginnings of Deathbed Practices in Japan,” Stone points out that, between 984 and 986, three pivotal events occurred which set the stage for the emergence of the Japanese deathbed rites: the composition of the *Nihon ōjō gokuraku ki* by the scholar Yoshishige no Yasutane (d. 1002), the completion of the *Ōjōyōshū* by the Tendai monk Genshin (942–1017), and the formation of the Twenty-Five Samādhi Society. The *Nihon ōjō gokuraku ki* was the first Japanese *ōjōden*—collections of biographies of people who met their end in an exemplary manner and demonstrated, through the signs accompanying their deaths, that they successfully gained entry into Amida’s Pure Land. The model of the ideal death that it promoted proved extremely influential. The *Ōjōyōshū* is a comprehensive outline of Pure Land practice and it exerted a pervasive influence on all subsequent deathbed manuals as well as the discourse on death in general. The Twenty-Five Samādhi Society was an association of Tendai monks, including Genshin, who pledged to help each other when one of the members fell mortally

ill, nursing the dying member and encouraging him to recite the *nenbutsu* correctly at the moment of death. Taken together, they marked the beginning of medieval deathbed discourse and practice.

In the same chapter, Stone makes several astute comments that make us reconsider some long-held preconceptions about the history of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. First, she points out that Pure Land Buddhism was not an independent movement or school in the pre-Kamakura period. Practices for gaining birth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha were essential elements of the religious life in the Hossō, Tendai, and Shingon schools. Moreover, she argues that there is a need to qualify the view that there was a direct link between *mappō* consciousness and the rise of Pure Land Buddhism. References to *mappō* in Genshin's works, for example, are not that numerous, appearing only in its famous preface. The *mappō* discourse only becomes all-pervasive in the exclusive *nenbutsu* movement of Hōnen and Shinran in the early Kamakura period. In addition, recent scholarship has emphasized that various Buddhist groups and institutions frequently invoked *mappō* to support their own goals and agendas. Finally, Stone states that "Pure Land aspirations were not born out of a failure of confidence in a moribund Buddhist establishment" (p. 37) as many scholars have maintained. In fact, it arose at a time of impressive religious creativity and institutional innovation within Buddhism. In other words, "The rise of Pure Land aspirations and the deathbed rite for achieving them appeared in a time, not of Buddhist institutional decline, but of growth and innovation" (p. 37). In addition, she shows that, for a long time, the *nenbutsu* was just one of several incantations used to transport the dying to the Pure Land; esoteric mantras, such as the Superlative Dhāraṇī of the Buddha's Crown and the Mantra of Light, to give just two examples, were employed for this purpose as well.

The next several chapters take up various aspects of medieval deathbed rites in topical fashion. The second chapter, "A Realm Apart," focuses on several issues concerning the postmortem world into which the dying sought to gain rebirth. Stone begins this chapter by making the following significant observation. According to received wisdom, an attitude of world rejection, encapsulated in the phrase "shunning this defiled world and aspiring to the Pure Land" (*onri edo gongu jōdo*) made famous by the *Ōjōyōshū*, is considered to be the defining characteristic of Pure Land Buddhism. However, recent scholarship has begun to question this view, arguing that such a world-denying ethos represents only the most ascetic strand within the Pure Land tradition; in fact, many Pure Land texts are devoid of any world-denying admonitions. Moreover, as the historian Taira Masayuki has

argued, during the Heian period, religion was understood by most people as a means to gain both “blessings and protection in this world and some assurance for their fate in the next” (*nise anraku shinkō*); consequently, “Peace and security in this life and birth in a good place in the next’ . . . were considered by no means antithetical but as lying on the same continuum” (p. 82). Yet, while admitting that the importance of “shunning the world” has been overstated in earlier scholarship, Stone also notes that, in view of the pervasiveness of this discourse in medieval texts, it was a significant element in the religious life of the people of this age.

The rest of the chapter deals with a number of interesting issues concerning the understanding of the Pure Land and birth in it. First, since the Pure Land was considered to be a distant realm, several different strategies were employed to bring them “closer to home.” On the one hand, these transcendent realms were identified with specific sacred sites. Tennōji in Naniwa (Osaka), for example, was reputed to be the “east gate” of Amida’s Pure Land, while Mt. Kōya became associated with the Pure Lands of both Amida and Maitreya. In both cases, this identification proved valuable in making these temples major pilgrimage sites. On the other hand, Tendai and Shingon works developed a rhetoric denying the duality of this world and the Pure Land, asserting that the Pure Land is immanent in this world. Another issue discussed in this chapter concerns the status of those born in the Pure Land. Although the sutras maintain the absolute equality of everyone in the Pure Land, asserting that each person there has golden skin and is identically adorned with the thirty-two marks, Stone shows that Heian period documents frequently assume that familial and social relationships, such as those between husband and wife, parents and children, and master and disciple, will be carried over into the Pure Land. “This perspective,” Stone writes, “radically relativizes the rupture of death; its sorrow is not final” (p. 101).

Another discrepancy between Buddhist doctrine and Buddhism practiced “on the ground” is found in the treatment of women’s birth in the Pure Land. Although Pure Land sutras assert that women cannot be born in the Pure Land qua women, both Heian men and women generally assumed that women will be born there as women. In this connection, James Dobbin’s comment, cited by Stone (p. 109), concerning the scene in the *Tale of Genji* where Genji expresses his hope to share the same lotus blossom in the Pure Land with the dying Murasaki, is quite apt: “It was a female Murasaki whom Genji had known in his life, and certainly it was a female Murasaki whom he longed to join in the Pure Land.” The chapter ends with a thoughtful discussion of *akunin ōjō*, or “the birth of evil people in the Pure Land,”

in which Stone argues convincingly that such narratives served to emphasize that the Pure Land is a realm apart, whose values are incommensurate with those of this world.

The third chapter, “Exemplary Death,” describes in great detail the image of an exemplary death found in Heian-period *ōjōden* and other texts. It first recounts how people prepared for their death, frequently by receiving the precepts and by moving to a special setting called “hall of impermanence” (*mujōin*) where they could be cared for, physically and spiritually, away from worldly distractions that could thwart them from dying in an exemplary style. In this connection, Stone makes the intriguing suggestion that, although the wish to shield the dying from objects of possible attachment is frequently cited in Pure Land texts as the reason for moving him or her to the hall of impermanence, fear of death pollution may have been a significant factor as well. Contact with death was considered to be a major source of pollution, necessitating a lengthy period of purification, typically lasting thirty days, during which one is prevented from taking part in kami-related activities or entering the Imperial Palace and government offices. Hence, there was good reason for removing the dying to a special room or building to ensure their death would not cause ritual pollution to the living.

The latter part of the chapter highlights the various rituals carried out for the dying. Here Stone provides a wealth of detail concerning the Buddhist images that were used in deathbed rites, the ideal bodily posture to be assumed at the moment of death, as well as the practice of holding, while on the deathbed, a five-colored cord attached to the Buddhist image in the hope that the dying would be pulled along to the Pure Land by the Buddha. The chapter concludes by noting that a number of deathbed practices were recommended for the dying in accord with the latter’s spiritual inclinations. Since most people aspired for birth in Amida’s Pure Land in the next life, the *nenbutsu*, sometimes taking the form of an unceasing *nenbutsu* (*fudan nenbutsu*) rite, was by far the most common deathbed practice. However, as Stone notes, this does not exhaust the range of sacred texts and deities invoked on the deathbed. Some conducted practices centered on the *Lotus Sutra*, such as the Lotus Repentance Rite (*Hokke senbō*), while others recited the name of Maitreya, various *dhāraṇīs*, and sutra passages (like those from the *Flower Ornament Sutra*) as well. As this shows, the *nenbutsu* recitation did not have a monopoly on deathbed invocations.

The following chapter, “Interpreting the Signs,” focuses on the various auspicious deathbed signs that were believed to signal a successful Pure Land birth. Birth in the Pure Land required dying in a state of right

mindfulness, but whether or not the deceased did achieve such a properly focused mental state is obviously unknowable to others. Hence, extraordinary signs observed by the living, such as the appearance of purple clouds, sweet fragrance, and music at the moment of death, and most notably, auspicious dreams about the deceased, became the criteria for judging whether Pure Land birth was actually achieved. As Stone astutely points out, “*Ōjō* has a profoundly social dimension” since “*ōjō* as a social fact was determined by consensus of the living” (p. 182).

Starting from such an observation, this chapter first examines auspicious dreams and the range of people privileged to see them. (Frequently they were fellow practitioners, relatives, or friends, but there are also cases when the dreamer has no preexisting ties with the deceased.) Another point highlighted here is that such auspicious dreams serve to verify a master’s spiritual achievements to his disciples and to legitimize the use of certain practices as a means to gain Pure Land birth within a particular religious organization. The interesting phenomena of people who visit practitioners believed to be destined to achieve Pure Land birth in order to create karmic ties with them, as well as tales of practitioners who publicize the hour of their death in advance in order to perform “ascetic suicides,” are also recounted in this chapter.

Chapter 5, entitled “Anxieties,” is perhaps the most absorbing chapter in this volume. This chapter investigates what Stone aptly calls the “‘dark side’ of the ideal of exemplary death” (p. 221). Paradoxically, with the spread of the notion that one can attain birth in the Pure Land by maintaining a proper state of mind at the moment of death, many people began to harbor anxieties that they might be unable to achieve this ideal on the deathbed and, consequently, that they would fall into evil realms of existence in the next lifetime. Such anxiety appeared among the elites in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and spread to society at large in the thirteenth century. This chapter examines the various obstacles to achieving an exemplary death described in texts related to deathbed rites, such as distractions (including those induced by idle chatter among the attending nurses), attachments, and demonic interference arising at the moment of death. Another topic treated in this chapter concerns the various strategies employed to ensure one would die in an exemplary manner. In this context, Stone suggests that the urge to amass as much merit as possible by, for example, reciting the *nenbutsu*, *dhāraṇīs*, and sutras hundreds or thousands of times, reflects the widespread anxiety that one’s own death might fall short of the ideal required for an auspicious afterlife.

The sixth chapter, “Deathbed Attendants,” breaks new ground with an original analysis of the *zenchishiki*, or the deathbed attendants. Originally, *zenchishiki* simply meant “good spiritual friends” who help and encourage others in following the Buddhist path. However, in order to cope with the uncertainty surrounding the final moment, a new class of ritual specialists charged with caring for the dying and ensuring they would achieve an auspicious end, came into existence. *Zenchishiki* was the name given to these ritual specialists. To help them in carrying out their duties, a number of deathbed manuals were composed. (Brief summaries of eighteen of these deathbed manuals are included in the appendix to this volume [pp. 383–92].) Relying primarily on these texts, Stone outlines in rich detail the duties of these attendants, including the preparation of the “halls of impermanence,” nursing the dying, encouraging the dying spiritually by exhorting them to maintain a state of right mental concentration, dispelling inauspicious visions and demonic interference, as well as performing post-mortem rituals once their charge had died.

The final chapter, “The Longue Durée of Deathbed Rites,” deals with the development of deathbed rites from the Kamakura period until they ceased to exist in the late nineteenth century. During the Kamakura period, the warriors became prominent protagonists in the discourse concerning *ōjō* and a new discourse concerning the proper way to die was created in both the Pure Land schools of Hōnen and his followers, as well as in the Zen schools. All of these developments, as well as late medieval and early modern elaborations, are given extensive treatment in this chapter.

The brief overview given above cannot do justice to the extraordinary richness of this book. Not only has Stone gathered together an impressive amount of information concerning medieval Japanese deathbed rituals, she has also offered a number of innovative insights for rethinking several major issues in the study of Japanese Buddhism. Moreover, since it is well organized, written in a clear style, and uses numerous unforgettable anecdotes as supporting evidence, this book is a pleasure to read. *Right Thoughts at the Last Moment* will surely become the standard work on medieval Japanese deathbed practices and required reading for anyone interested in Japanese religion and culture.

*An Early Text on the History of Rwa sgreng Monastery: The rGyal ba'i dben gnas rwa sgreng gi bshad pa nyi ma'i 'od zer of 'Brom shes rab me lce.* By Maho Iuchi. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017. 210 pages. Hardcover: ISBN: 978-0-6749-7556-9.

ALEXANDER K. SMITH

Maho Iuchi's *An Early Text on the History of Rwa sgreng Monastery* offers a highly specialized contribution to the study of the bKa' gdams school of Tibetan Buddhism. Iuchi's remarks focus on a late thirteenth-century text entitled *rGya ba'i dben gnas rwa sgreng gi bshad pa nyi ma'i 'od zer* (Rays of the Sun: A Statement Concerning Rwa sgreng Monastery, the Hermitage of the Victor), which was recently compiled by the dPal brtsegs Institute and republished by the mTsho sngon mi rigs Publishing House in 2010. The manuscript is primarily concerned with the establishment and patronage of Rwa sgreng Monastery, ranging from its foundation by 'Brom ston pa rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1004–1064) in 1057 to the year of the manuscript's composition circa 1299. Despite the monastery's later political importance under the government of the dGa' ldan pho brang, very little is known about Rwa sgreng's existence during the height of the bKa' gdams period (from the eleventh to the thirteenth century). As a consequence, Iuchi's work provides researchers with a unique window onto the historical complexities of Rwa sgreng's early development.

The book itself is divided into two sections. In part one, Iuchi provides a historical overview of Rwa sgreng, drawing heavily from translations which, for unstated reasons, the author has chosen to exclude from her book. Additionally, Iuchi offers a brief codicological discussion of the manuscript's most salient features, as well as extensive tables outlining the contents of the monastery's reliquary and lineage of abbatial succession. What is remarkable about Iuchi's commentary, however, are the details that emerge regarding the early patronage of Rwa sgreng. The author focuses, in particular, on the prominent roles played by both the Ber family (*ber rgyud*) and the kingdom of Mi nyag in financing the construction and expansion of Rwa sgreng during the bKa' gdams period. This places Iuchi's work in a larger historical context, making it of potential value to social historians and researchers focusing on the subject of monastic patronage during the so-called later spread of Buddhism in Tibet (*bstan pa phyi dar*).

In part two, the author provides two reproductions of the *rGya ba'i dben gnas rwa sgreng gi bshad pa nyi ma'i 'od zer*: (1) a photographic facsimile

of the original *dbu-med* manuscript, which appears in the book's appendix; and (2) an annotated version of the manuscript transcribed into *dbu-chen* script (pp. 59–142). The Tibetan manuscript itself is divided into two chapters. As Iuchi writes: "Chapter one is a description of the construction of Rwa sgreng monastery that consists of three sections: (1-1) prophecies; (1-2) [the] history of Atiśa and 'Brom ston pa; and (1-3) [the] construction of ... Rwa sgreng monastery" (p. 17). The second chapter, which is significantly shorter, provides a discussion of the *rten*, or "sacred objects," that were housed at the monastery at the end of the thirteenth century. It is important to note that the author's *dbu-chen* facsimile is followed by a detailed index of the persons, places, texts, and regional terminology that appear in the manuscript. As these are coupled with folio and line references, Iuchi's annotated version is particularly accessible to specialists interested in expanding upon her work.

In conclusion, Maho Iuchi's *An Early Text on the History of Rwa sgreng Monastery* offers a brief but compelling look into the development of Rwa sgreng Monastery during the bKa' gdams period. While the publication suffers slightly from periodic errors in the author's Wylie transliterations, I would highly recommend the book to specialists interested in compiling social historical data on monastic patronage or, more specifically, on the history of the bKa' gdams school.

*Entwicklungen des Buddhismus im Zwanzigsten Jahrhundert in Indonesien: Strömungen, Verwerfungen und Aushandlungen der „Agama Buddha (di) Indonesia.“* By Julia Linder. Religionswissenschaft 21. Frankfurt am Main: Peterlang, 2017. 322 pages. Paperback: ISBN 978-3-6317-2642-6.

MICHAEL PYE

In this substantial work by Julia Linder we find a historical presentation of the vicissitudes of Buddhism in Indonesia in the twentieth century, combined with a presentation of the diverse threads of tradition and considerable detail about leading personalities who have been involved in steering Buddhist followers through successive political situations. It is based on historical research and well-planned investigations in the field. Since it derives from postgraduate work, there is a substantial account of the (commendable) methodology employed. Should there ever be a chance of an

English edition, this part could conceivably be taken for granted, and reduced, and the pages taken up instead by an index. The latter would be valuable because numerous elements in the overall story recur, for perfectly good reasons, at different points in the overall presentation. Indeed, apart from its other merits, the work in effect functions as a basic reference guide to Indonesian Buddhism. The multilingual documentation is also very welcome and includes substantial quotations in Bahasa Indonesia.

The dominance of Islam in Indonesia may create for some people the impression that other religions are of little importance or hardly exist at all. Indeed, the political and legal circumstances in the country mean that the administrative status and social arrangements of religion (*agama*) are fragile. These public circumstances have also been subject to change from time to time. In the case of Buddhism (known in Indonesian as “Agama Buddha”), there is the added complexity that there are various strands in the tradition which have often, but not always, fitted together. There are both Theravada and Mahayana components. The latter have been carried forward, not exclusively, but to a significant degree, within the Chinese community of Indonesia, which has experienced persecution and other severe difficulties as an ethnic group. Moreover, among the various cross-currents there has been the political need, as for any religious group in the country which seeks legal recognition, to subscribe somehow to the more or less theistic principle of “one supreme Lordship” (*Ketuhanan yang maha esa*) required by government.

Even though the phrase “*Ketuhanan yang maha esa*” does not specify a Muslim view of God (the name of Allah is notably not used), it does represent a challenge for non-Muslim religions. For non-theist Buddhism the phrase is not merely a conceptual challenge in itself, but one which is complicated by attempts to align it with the Chinese idea of the “three teachings” (*sanjiao*). The other two, Confucianism and Daoism, also do not self-evidently propose recognition of a supreme Lord above all things, and certainly not along the lines which are typical of Islam. But there have been various waves of Buddhist mission in Indonesia, including both Mahayana and Theravada elements. Linder explains how these were somehow pulled together under the label of “Agama Buddha di Indonesia,” and how this *agama* came to be presented as revering one “Lord,” namely Ādi-Buddha, the underlying principle of Buddhahood in focused form. This subtle, conceptually acrobatic process was enabled in part by adducing the Old Javanese Buddhist text *Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan* and was worked out by Dhammaviriya in various writings in the 1960s (see p. 129). He was able to

identify “*Ketuhanan yang maha esa*” with Sanghyang Ādi-Buddha, and this Buddha-name thereupon came to be displayed in temples as a sign that the Buddhist religion was consistent with the five unifying principles (*pancasila*) of the secular state. It was easy enough to identify a group of “scriptures” to include together the Theravada canon, leading sutras in Sanskrit, and the abovementioned Old Javanese classic. Gautama and the bodhisattvas were pressed into service as “prophets” (*nabi*, from the Arabic). It may be added that Confucius, without any reference to Buddhism, is also occasionally so designated in Chinese temples (*kelenteng*).

The above is just one particularly well known and arresting moment in the whole complex story of Indonesian Buddhism, here most excellently related, which is marked both by a succession of personalities such as the revered Ashin Jinarakkhita (detailed portrait on pp. 97 ff.) and by many organizational groupings and regroupings. The latter led to an impressive array of acronyms such as PERBUDI, standing for “Perhimpunan Buddhis Indonesia” (Community of Buddhists in Indonesia; see p. 108), or MAGABUDHI, standing for “Majelis Agama Buddha Theravāda Indonesia” (Indonesian Association of Theravada Buddhism). Fortunately Linder provides a checklist of more than fifty of these acronyms. In spite of practical attempts at cooperation between the various institutions, an exclusive Theravada sangha was founded in 1976. It is notable that this group put forward an alternative to Ādi-Buddha as the unifying principle of “Lordship” (*ketuhanan*), namely, nothing less than nirvana, focused religiously through the three jewels (*sang triratna*).

While Linder weaves her way confidently through all the modern political and religious developments, she is fully cognizant of the wide range of religious reference points within the overall field of Indonesian Buddhism: its location in Chinese temples, its connection with Javanese mystical traditions, later Theosophical strands, Sai Baba-ism, and last but not least the Borobudur heritage of the “Buddha time” (*jaman buda*), which still towers almost irreducibly in the background.