

*Der Buddhismus des Reinen Landes*. By Christoph Kleine. Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2015. 586 pages. Hardcover: ISBN 978-3-4587-0053-1.

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Translating primary sources of Japanese religions into Western languages is one of the important tasks of Japanologists and religious studies scholars who specialize in Japanese religion. These translations make the works of important Japanese religious thinkers available to undergraduate students and scholars from other fields, as well as to the general reader interested in Japanese religions.

Although Pure Land Buddhism is one of the main Buddhist traditions in East Asia and the largest strand of Buddhism in Japan, many of the major Pure Land Buddhist works have yet to be translated into a Western language. In this substantial book, Christoph Kleine offers a selection of translations of important Pure Land works into German, some of which appear in this language for the first time. Although English is the lingua franca of the academic world, translations of primary sources into other languages are still highly valuable, especially for non-native English speakers.

The translations in this book are organized not by chronology but by type of text, namely: Sutras; Commentaries; Treatises; Letters and Vows; Hagiographies, Legends, and Testimonies of Experience (*Erfahrungsberichte*); and, Manuals. Kleine's selection of Pure Land works reflects a common focus on the founding figures of the two main denominations of contemporary Japanese Pure Land Buddhism—Hōnen Shōnin (1133–1212) and his disciple Shinran Shōnin (1173–1262), traditionally considered as the founders, respectively, of Jōdoshū and Jōdo Shinshū—as most of the texts presented in this book are attributed to these great thinkers. The first chapter encompasses four sutras: the *Foshuo wuliangshou jing*, the *Amituo jing*, the *Guan wuliangshoufo jing*, and the *Foshuo banzhou sanmei jing*. The first three are the central sutras of East Asian Pure Land Buddhism and are particularly important for the Pure Land schools that originated in Hōnen's *nenbutsu* movement, where they are often referred to as the “Three Pure Land Sutras” (Jp. *Jōdo sanbu kyō*). The *Foshuo banzhou sanmei jing* is different from the other three sutras in that it emphasizes a direct encounter with the buddhas through visualization and focuses less on birth in Amida Buddha's Pure Land. In the next chapter we find a translation of the *Sanbukyō tai'i* ascribed to Hōnen, which is a commentary on the three main Pure Land sutras.

The third chapter comprises two treatises by Shinran and one by Hōnen. The translation of Hōnen's *Jōdoshū ryakuryōmon* is the first into a European language. This work was written in the year 1204, after his thought came to full maturity. In it, Hōnen collects important sections of the three sutras and the treatises of Chinese masters; the treatise therefore provides a good overview of his Pure Land thought. The two treatises by Shinran given here are the *Nyorai nishu ekō mon* and the *Jōdo sangyō ōjō monrui*. In the former, Shinran uniquely interprets the two kinds of merit transfer as the sole working of Amida Buddha. In the latter, of which a longer version also exists, Shinran explains the different kinds of birth in the Pure Land in accordance with Amida's eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth vows.

The fourth chapter consists of Hōnen's famous *Ichimai kishōmon* and a collection of Shinran's letters entitled *Mattōshō*. There are already several published translations of the former, which contains a vow dictated by Hōnen to one of his disciples on his deathbed. In this short text, Hōnen vows that he does not withhold any deeper knowledge beyond the simple recitation of the *nenbutsu* with right faith. The latter is a collection of twenty-two letters written by Shinran in which he tries to resolve some questions posed by his disciples in the Kantō region.

The two texts in the fifth chapter of this volume are also translated into a European language for the first time. The *Sanmai hottoku ki* is a description of Hōnen's experience of *nenbutsu sanmai*. Being able to reach this meditative state gave Hōnen's teachings a special legitimation. Some scholars argue that the report of this experience was actually written by his disciples after his death to legitimate Hōnen's teachings against the established Buddhist schools of the time. The authorship of the *Tenjiku ōjō kenki*, which gives several accounts of people who were born into the Pure Land after death, is even more obscure. The text itself names the famous Indian philosopher Vasubandhu as its author and Kumārajīva as its translator, though it is much more likely that the text was written in Japan between the tenth and thirteenth centuries.

The final chapter is a translation of the *Guannian amitufofo xianghai sanmei gongde famen*, a manual by Shandao that explains the correct practice for adepts of Pure Land Buddhism. Shandao presents a sophisticated system of meditative and liturgical practices set out in several passages from different sutras, unlike Hōnen and Shinran, who propagated the exclusive verbal *nenbutsu* in Japan centuries after his lifetime.

In the second part of the book, Kleine writes at length about the historical development of Pure Land Buddhism, from the philosophical context of

its Indian roots, to its institutionalization in China, Korea, and Japan, ending with the tradition's transmission to Western countries. Following this insightful historical outline, the author gives detailed information on the texts translated in the first part. In addition to a short description of each text, he provides the reader with a selection of their editions, a list of existing translations into Western languages, and literature for further reading.

With this book, Kleine manages to bring together translations of some of the representative texts of the Japanese Pure Land tradition. His outline of the development of Pure Land Buddhism over the centuries through different countries does not give new insights to the informed reader, but is nonetheless an excellent introduction for those not yet familiar with the topic.

It could be asked why the author overwhelmingly focuses on texts that were either written by Hōnen or Shinran, or important for their line of Pure Land Buddhism. It certainly would have been interesting for the reader to get a broader picture of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, as would have been possible if the author also translated texts from the Tendai or Shingon Pure Land traditions. Of course, it is not possible to represent the plethora of Pure Land Buddhism with just a few texts, even if one concentrates solely on Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. It is therefore not really appropriate to criticize the author for this. Kleine has done an admirable job of presenting different genres of Pure Land literature.

*Theravada-buddhismen: Introduktion og tekster.* By Ole Holten Pind and Esben Andreasen. Forlaget Univers: Højbjerg, 2015. 257 pages. Hardcover: ISBN 978-8-7916-6849-4.

MICHAEL PYE

This book, intended for the general reader, schools, and colleges, offers a clear and accessible introduction to Theravada Buddhism. Its appearance is the result of a fine cooperation between one of Denmark's few Pali specialists, Ole Holten Pind, and Esben Andreasen, a well-known Danish writer in the field of religious education. To Pind must be credited the translations from Pali into Danish, which make up about four-fifths of the book, and to Andreasen the skilful introduction and overall editing.

Why Theravada Buddhism? The reasons given (p. 45) are twofold. This tradition is one of the oldest forms of Buddhism, though only one, while