

*Pure Land Buddhism: Historical Development and Contemporary Manifestation*. By Kenneth Tanaka. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004. 294 pages. Hardcover \$15, paper \$12.

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Although this book was published in 2004, it is still one of the most stimulating books when we think of contemporary Pure Land Buddhism, especially Shin Buddhism.

This book consists of two parts: the first is a well-balanced, concise introduction of the historical and geographical development of Pure Land Buddhism. The second part is a collection of the author's essays on contemporary issues of Shin Buddhism specifically in the United States of America.

At a glance the second part does not seem to follow the first part well, and therefore one may ask, "Why does he address Shin Buddhism only in the States in the second part?" I assume that the author's focus was on Shin Buddhism from the outset and he placed the summary of historical and geographical developments of Pure Land Buddhism at the beginning to demonstrate that it has been in the process of changing over time. It seems to me that the aim of the author is to prime a pump in order to begin a discussion about what Shin Buddhism might be in the future.

Part one describes the development of Pure Land Buddhism with the following four chapters:

- Chapter 1: India and Central Asia
- Chapter 2: China
- Chapter 3: East Asia: Korea, Japan, and Vietnam
- Chapter 4: South Asia: Tibet and Nepal

Currently serving as the president of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies (IASBS), the author, having a broad vision, is probably the ideal scholar to write this sort of summary. Its uniqueness lies in his inclusion of the historical and contemporary developments of Pure Land Buddhism in Taiwan, Vietnam, Tibet, and Nepal, which were hitherto unfamiliar to general audiences. Originally, this summary was prepared for a series of lectures on Pure Land Buddhism at Dharmaram College, a Catholic institution in Bangalore, India, and therefore this historical and geographical introduction of Pure Land Buddhism is very easy to understand even for beginners of Buddhism and could be an ideal introductory textbook of Pure Land Buddhism.

Part two, a collection of the author's papers on contemporary issues in Shin Buddhism, consists of the following chapters:

- Chapter 5: Ethics in American Shin Buddhism: Trans-Ethical Responsibility
- Chapter 6: Concern for Others in Pure Land Soteriological and Ethical Considerations: The Case of *Jōgyō daihi* (Constantly Practicing Great Compassion)
- Chapter 7: Engaged Shin Buddhism: Toward a Discourse of Engaged Living (*Seikatsu-ron*)
- Chapter 8: Where is the Pure Land? A Controversy in Chinese Buddhism
- Chapter 9: Symbolism of Amida and Pure Land in an American Context
- Chapter 10: A Scientific Explanation of Pure Land and Amida
- Chapter 11: Issues of Ethnicity in the Buddhist Churches of America
- Chapter 12: Perspectives of Asian American Buddhists on American Buddhism: With a Focus on Their Views on Non-Asian Buddhists
- Chapter 13: Community Building in Shin Buddhist Sanghas: An Examination of Two Temples in Japan and the United States
- Chapter 14: The Challenges Facing Shin Buddhist Propagation in America

As more than half of these titles directly indicate, these chapters focus on issues related to American Shin Buddhism. Nevertheless, all of them discuss universal problems of Shin Buddhism in any contemporary society. In particular, they address the question of how to understand and propagate the Shin Buddhist teaching now. Specifically, the author focuses on issues of ethics, engaged Buddhism, and the interpretation of the Pure Land.

A short depiction of the history of modern Shin Buddhist movements in the Meiji and Taishō eras in Japan would serve as an excellent bridge between parts one and two of this work. By looking back on these periods, we will be able to better realize and appreciate what the author intends to do, so I would like to introduce some of the changes in Shin Buddhism in Japan during these periods as a supplement to Tanaka's work. There were roughly four streams of modernization movements in Shin Buddhism in the Meiji and Taishō eras.

The first one was the movement by a group of institutional bureaucrats such as Shimaji Mokurai (1838–1911) of Nishi Honganji and Ishikawa Shundai (1842–1931) of Higashi Honganji. They struggled to make Shin Buddhism independent from governmental control in the early Meiji period and tried to modernize their institutions. Without their efforts, not only Shin Buddhism but also all other Buddhist schools might have disappeared from Japan due to the *haibutsu kishaku* policy of the Meiji government, which aimed at the destruction of Buddhism, or its complete subordination to the interests of the state.

The second stream of modernization was the Shin Bukkyō movement by a moderately united group of iconoclastic young Buddhist scholars such as Sakaino Kōyō (1871–1933) and Takashima Beihō (1875–1949), who later became presidents of Toyo University. Early members of this group also included young scholars such as Suzuki Daisetsu (1870–1966), Takakusu Junjirō (1866–1945), and Watanabe Kaikyoku (1872–1933), who eventually became world-renowned scholars. Heavily influenced by Western social evolution theory, philosophy, psychology, and religion, they tried to be free from traditional Japanese Buddhism and intended to establish a new universal religious faith suitable for the needs of their day. They also took a proactive role in Buddhist social welfare movements in Japan.

The third stream was the Seishinshugi movement led by Kiyozawa Manshi (1863–1903). Unsuccessful efforts to reform the Ōtani branch of Shin Buddhism, falling severely ill in his early thirties, as well as losing his wife and sons one after another in his last years all served to turn Kiyozawa's faith toward profound inward reflection. Unlike the former two movements, he and his students dealt with their own existential torments rather than society and state. If the Shin Bukkyō movement can be called "extroverted modernization," Kiyozawa's Seishinshugi movement could be called "introverted modernization" of Shin Buddhism. Ironically, however, his inward-looking faith greatly influenced the general public, and his works enjoyed great popularity in the years after his death. Further, many of his students who were faced with the changes in a rapidly Westernized society that led to an almost excessive degree of self-consciousness found a message in his teachings that answered to their concerns. These students entered illustrious positions in the Ōtani branch, affecting a great many reforms of that institution.

The fourth group consisted of scholars of traditional Shin sectarian studies, or *shūgaku*. Although rarely spotlighted now, they were the then mainstream scholars of Shin Buddhist studies. While they were relatively quiet in the general literary world, these traditional scholars instead compiled gigantic collections of research materials such as the *Shinshū zensho*

(published in seventy-five volumes between 1913 and 1916), the *Shinshū sōsho* (12 volumes, 1927–1930), and the *Shinshū daijiten* (3 volumes, 1935–1937). Many scholars of Shin Buddhism still use these works in their research activities and owe them a great deal. These traditional scholars can also be called modernizers in the sense that they systematized the Shin sectarian studies of earlier periods and provided the foundation for modern academic research into Shin Buddhism.

Modern Shin Buddhists in the Meiji and Taishō periods ultimately developed their understanding of the religion from the interactions among these four different groups, as well as the tensions between them. Kenneth Tanaka seems to be a legitimate heir of the second stream of Shin Buddhist modernization, the Shin Bukkyō movement. His essays in this book suggesting ethical responsibility, engaged Buddhism, and alternative interpretations of the Pure Land are in line with the propositions of the Shin Bukkyō movement in the Meiji and Taishō eras.

His adoption of this sort of position might be considered quite daring in light of the critical stance that that group took toward the established Buddhist denominations. Tanaka is currently a professor at Musashino University in Tokyo, a city where two short-lived Shin Buddhist colleges, Takanawa Bukkyō Daigaku (1902–1904) founded by Nishi Honganji and Shinshū Daigaku (1896–1911) by Higashi Honganji, were located in the Meiji era. These colleges were established to educate Shin Buddhist students in Tokyo, the center of new academic and cultural movements, but were soon removed from Tokyo to Kyoto due to institutional politics in the Honganji headquarters in Kyoto. Musashino University, founded by Takakusu Junjirō in 1924, is now the only surviving major academic institution in Tokyo related to the Shin Buddhist tradition, although it maintains some distance from the religious institutions in Kyoto. In this sense, Kenneth Tanaka of Musashino University is truly an heir to the Shin Bukkyō movement, because that institution was founded by one of the leading members of the movement, and his position there affords him a critical distance from denominational constraints.

A question arises here: Are all the propositions that the author makes in this work nothing more than the same as those from the Meiji and Taishō eras? Can we see any progress from those periods in the way he discusses these issues? The topics are the same but the author's attitude is quite different from that of the activists of the Shin Bukkyō movement. For example, while many intellectuals in the Shin Bukkyō movement bluntly denied the existence of the Pure Land after death, Tanaka avoids imposing his own

ideas on readers but instead introduces a variety of interpretations regarding the location of the Pure Land in fair detail, referring to sutras and various masters, as well as scholars of Zen and Pure Land Buddhism in chapters 8 and 9. He even introduces possible application of the Kaluza-Klein theory, a cutting-edge scientific theory on a five-dimensional spacetime in chapter 10. Tanaka seems to be laying the groundwork for revitalizing discussion on this old but vitally important issue.

One motto of the Shin Bukkyō movement was “free discussion” (*jīyū tōkyū*). As an heir of this tradition and through the work under review, Kenneth Tanaka seems to provide space to stimulate healthy and active discussions by contemporary Shin Buddhists on various important issues such as engaged Buddhism and the locus of the Pure Land.