BOOK REVIEWS

Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture. By Elisabetta Porcu. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008. xii+264 pages. Hardcover € 119.00/$ 177.00.

NANCY STALKER

Elisabetta Porcu's *Pure Land Buddhism in Modern Japanese Culture* asks important and challenging questions about how the Japanese Pure Land tradition, especially Jōdo Shinshū (also called "Shin" below), has influenced modern Japanese culture. Her stated objective is to "balance the presentation of Japanese culture, which too often has been reduced outside Japan to the equation 'Japanese culture equals Zen culture'" (p. 4). In order to approach these questions, the author first examines why the "West" embraced this equation through analyzing the roles of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, Okakura Kakuzō (1863–1913), Suzuki Daisetsu (1870–1966) and others in this process. The subsequent chapters detail the influence of Pure Land, especially Shin, on modern Japanese literature, visual arts and the tea ceremony.

Overall, Porcu finds that, despite the demonstrable presence of Pure Land elements in artistic works, especially the notion of *tariki*, or other power, a fundamental concept in Pure Land faith that lays stress on the power of Amida Buddha to provide salvation, the tradition has been consistently marginalized in the conception of Japanese culture while a "decontextualized and idealized" Zen, divorced from a historical context and characterized by exoticism and mysticism, found "fertile ground" among Western countries (pp. 224–25). In short, Pure Land did not appeal to the Orientalist West, perhaps due to a desire for "religious elements which differed from those found in the European context or in Christian tradition." The Pure Land tradition was "less 'exotic' and thus less appealing" than the fantasy of Zen which was constructed for and presented to the West (p. 172).

In chapter 1, the author describes how key individuals shaped and promoted images of Japanese Buddhism and cultural identity embedded in

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Zen for Western audiences. The World's Parliament is rather well-worn territory and the author frequently cites the research of James Ketelaar, Judith Snodgrass, and Robert Sharf on this subject. Porcu seems less aware of the growing body of recent scholarship on Okakura, including recent monographs by Victoria Weston, Brij Tankha and Rustom Bharucha and recent Ph.D. theses by Noriko Murai, Toshiya Kaneko and others. Her analysis of Okakura as a nationalistic "apologist" of Japanese uniqueness and cultural superiority links his influential ideas about "Zennism" to D. T. Suzuki's even more influential representations of Japanese culture beginning in the 1950s. Here, Suzuki is credited with the largest role in "the export of a 'created,' ad-hoc Zen Buddhism to the 'West'" (p. 54). The section of this chapter on World War II brings to light the role of Giuseppe Tucci (1894–1984) in essentializing Japanese culture for Italian audiences in order to strengthen the bonds between imperial Japan and fascist Italy. In sum, this chapter provides an effective and persuasive overview of how Zen was privileged in Western constructions of the Orient.

The following chapter analyzes literary portrayals of the Pure Land by a wide range of writers, from the canonical Natsume Sōseki and Shimazaki Tōson to children's author Kaneko Misuzu and the little-known Australian poet Harold H. Stewart. In the introductory section of the chapter, Porcu provides statistics that demonstrate pervasive public interest in books about Shinshū and especially about the early leadership of Shinran (1173–1263) and Rennyo (1415–1499). The clearest examples of the popularity of Pure Land-related literature appear to be the work of best-selling author Itsuki Hiroyuki centering on Rennyo, although Porcu appears critical of Itsuki's simplification of the faith, and Niwa Fumio's *The Buddha Tree*, set in a Pure Land temple.

There are many insights in this chapter, including Porcu's perceptive identification of *tariki,* or other power, as "an inspirational force" for the writers, claiming that this Pure Land belief is "the source . . . of every aspect of reality" for some writers, who "go beyond any form of self-effort in order to be able to accept Amida Buddha's compassion . . . as a wellspring from which their works originate" (p. 141). Overall, however, the chapter is fairly long on block quotes from the literature and short on interpretation or an organized framework. It rapidly shifts between authors, periods, and genres without a sense of why these particular works were selected as exemplary. There is no real analysis of how these works help express, nurture or sustain a Pure Land worldview. In some cases, including Sōseki's *Kokoro*, the Pure

Land elements seem to be simply backdrop rather than integral to the larger plot or the writer's views.

The *tariki* theme is critical to chapter 3, Pure Land Buddhism and Creative Arts, focusing on the folk craft (*mingei*) collector Yanagi Muneyoshi (aka Yanagi Sōetsu) and woodblock artist Munakata Shikō. Porcu effectively argues that these two individuals share a Buddhist aesthetic philosophy infused with the *tariki* idea that artwork and inspiration are derived from a religious other power. Yanagi rejected individualism and ego in artistic production. Porcu delves into his works, from the well-known *The Unknown Craftsman*, in which he explicitly states that the beauty of *mingei* came "from dependence on the 'Other Power'" (p. 145) to his writings on aesthetic theory, that drew on themes from both Pure Land and Zen Buddhist traditions. She highlights how Munakata's work, often featuring explicitly Shin themes, embodied Pure Land beliefs.

The final chapter discusses the relationship between Pure Land Buddhism and the tea ceremony, often understood as the epitome of Zen aesthetics and belief, e.g., expressions such as *chazen ichimi*—the oneness of tea and Zen. Here, Porcu does not deny the Zen foundations of *chanoyu*, but points out ways in which Pure Land has also shaped tea, including Rikyū's use of a well-known Pure Land document as the model for his own *One-Page Testament* and the role of *hijiri* wandering monks in helping popularize the tea ceremony. She presents the connection between the small Yabunouchi School of Tea and the Nishi Hongwanji branch of Shin Buddhism, which is deeply committed to the traditional arts, but bemoans how Yabunouchi's Zen connections are amplified in its school literature and little credit is given to Nishi Hongwanji's support.

Given this broad purview, it is not surprising that Porcu does not master the secondary literature on her topics, as mentioned above with Okakura. Reference to William LaFleur's *The Karma of Words* (University of California Press, 1983) might have provide additional conceptual shape to the chapter on literature. Works by Morgan Pitelka and Etsuko Kato might have better informed the historical and ethnographic aspects of the tea ceremony chapter. In fairness, Kim Brandt's work on *mingei* was likely published while this text was in production, but it bears directly on Porcu's findings. Early on, Porcu mentions the work of Yamada Shōji on Eugen Herrigel's popular text, *Zen in the Art of Archery* (pp. 64–65). Yamada has recently published *Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen and the West* (University of Chicago, 2009). This text, which carefully traces the paths of two cultural icons that have,

misleadingly, become equated with the spirit of "Zen"—Herrigel's *Archery* and the Ryōanji stone garden in Kyoto—deeply complements Porcu's subject matter. Both are occupied with the same fundamental question—how and why "Zen" has achieved its iconic status in Japanese culture. Both highlight the role of Suzuki and suggest that the constructed Zen is a kind of mirror for an idealized, attractive Japanese "self." These two texts can be read in tandem very productively.

In summary, Porcu has assembled an impressive and engaging array of sources and resources that demonstrate the presence of Pure Land concepts in iconic examples of Japanese art and culture, despite an overwhelming tendency to associate these exclusively with Zen. She has produced a significant contribution to the literature on the relationship between Japanese art and religion.

The Record of Linji. Translation and Commentary by Ruth Fuller Sasaki, edited by Thomas Yūhō Kirchner. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. xxxii+485 pages. Hardcover $53.00.

JAMES BASKIND

It is well known among specialists how long (and at times fitful) the gestation of this monumental scholarly work was, although the academic community is more than amply recouped for the wait by the stunning meticulousness and rich, detailed information found throughout this volume. Well over fifty years since the project's inception, the combined efforts of Ruth Fuller Sasaki, her team of extraordinary scholars, and Thomas Yūhō Kirchner have resulted in this annotated translation of Linji Yixuan's (d. 866) recorded sayings, one of the most central—and beloved—texts of the Chan (Zen) tradition.

While the scholarly contributions of Sasaki and her team are needless to say, without the superlative efforts and scholarly tools of editor Thomas Yūhō Kirchner the translation would never have seen the light of day. Kirchner, who has lived in Japan over forty years as both a monk and layman, brings a unique perspective (through his Zen training), and commendable skill (through his years as copy editor at the Nanzan Institute of Religion and Culture), to this work. On one occasion while I was at Hanazono