

Pure Land Sources in French

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THE PARISIAN scholar Eugène Burnouf (1801–1852) is universally recognized as the father of Buddhist studies in the West. To some extent it could be said that he is to Buddhology what Champolion (1790–1832) is to Egyptology in the sense that he was the first to recognize and link together the various Buddhist languages—Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, and Tibetan. After publishing the first study and decipherment of the Pali language in 1826 (with Christian Lassen), Burnouf produced his monumental *Introduction à l'histoire du buddhisme indien* in 1844, a work meaningful enough to be recently republished in English.¹ In it, Burnouf provided a detailed synopsis, three pages in length (pp. 88–90), of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyuhā-sūtra* (“la Constitution de Sukhavatī”), which is historically one of the very first contributions to Western knowledge of a “buddha-land” (*terre de Buddha*). The second major contribution is his translation from the Sanskrit of the *Lotus Sūtra* published four months after his death (*Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, 1852). In this scripture, three passages refer to the field Sukhāvātī and the Buddha Amitābha/Amitāyus.² In one case, however, Burnouf failed to recognize the name of the “*bhikṣu Dharmākara*” and translated it as “mine des devoirs du Religieux,”³ a mistake which was repeated by Hendrik Kern (1833–1917) in his English translation of 1884 as “mine of monastic virtues.”⁴ This should remind us how difficult the working conditions were for such a pioneer as Burnouf, who had to create everything from scratch: editions of the manuscripts, grammar and vocabulary, all without

I WOULD LIKE to extend my thanks to Grant Ikuta for checking my English.

¹ Burnouf 1844, 2010.

² See Fujita 1980, pp. 120–22.

³ Burnouf 1852, p. 267.

⁴ Kern 1884, p. 417.

any preexisting dictionary. The moderate esteem in which Burnouf held the *Sukhāvāṭīvyuhā-sūtra* appears in his comment: “I suppose that after reading this summary one would not criticize me for not reproducing the text in full.”⁵

One of Burnouf’s pupils was the scholar of German origin Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), who established himself in Britain. Müller stayed in Paris in 1845 where he also studied under the sinologist Stanislas Julien (1797–1873). He settled in Oxford in 1846, and he eventually produced the first complete translation of a Pure Land scripture in 1880, the *Smaller Sukhāvāṭīvyuhā-sūtra*.⁶ This English translation was in turn translated into French one year later by Léon de Milloué, the curator of the Guimet Museum in Lyon, and published together with the Sanskrit text in volume two of *Les Annales du Musée Guimet*.⁷ The same volume also includes another translation of the *Smaller Sukhāvāṭīvyuhā-sūtra* from the Chinese (*Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經; Jp. *Amidakyō*) by two young Japanese invited to France in 1877 by the orientalist Émile Guimet (1836–1918).⁸ One of these was Imaizumi Yūsaku 今泉雄作 (1850–1931), who had been a novice monk in Shingon and who stayed in France until 1883, and eventually became the director of the art department of the Imperial Museums (Teishitsu Hakubutsukan 帝室博物館) in Japan. The other was Yamada Tadazumi 山田忠澄 (1855–1917), who became the Japanese consul in Lyon and returned to his country in 1908 with his French wife and their daughter, the future *femme de lettres* Yamata Kiku 山田菊 (1897–1975; known in France as Kikou Yamata). As neither Imaizumi nor Yamada were experts in Buddhism, their French translation from the Chinese was actually inspired in part by the translations from the Sanskrit version.

Émile Guimet was an industrialist of the paternalist vein and concerned with the well-being of his employees. He was not much preoccupied by metaphysical questions, but he thought that all religions share the same moral values and that these could be shared by all people. In order to study Asian religions he visited Japan, China, Sri Lanka, and India from 1876 to 1877 in the company of the artist of Swiss origin Félix Régamey (1844–1907).⁹ The most successful part of the trip, however, was their journey in

⁵ Burnouf 1852, p. 88.

⁶ Müller 1880.

⁷ Müller 1881.

⁸ Imaizumi and Yamada 1881.

⁹ Ducor 2016.

Japan.¹⁰ Due to the anti-Buddhism campaign, Guimet was able to purchase literally hundreds of statues, paintings, and books for his museum of religions, which was to open in Lyon in 1879 before being moved to Paris in 1889. Still, the most interesting thing is that Guimet personally convened a survey of Japanese religions *in situ*, including both Shinto and Buddhism, which was then strictly defined by the government as consisting of seven schools only: Tendaishū, Shingonshū, Jōdoshū, Zenshū, Jōdo Shinshū, Nichirenshū, and Jishū. Guimet met the representatives of all of them, except those of the Jishū because their head temple was far from Kyoto in Fujisawa 藤沢. His method was to submit a written questionnaire to each institution before the meetings. He was planning to publish all the answers to his questions, but eventually only Shinshū was fully documented. The Shinshū meeting took place on October 26, 1876. In the morning he attended an ordination (*tokudo* 得度) of young boys at Higashi Honganji, a ceremony that deeply charmed Régamey, who chose it as the subject of one of the forty big oil paintings he produced for Guimet when back in France.¹¹ Then Guimet met the Shinshū representatives in the Hiunkaku 飛雲閣 (Hall of Flying Clouds) of Nishi Honganji 西本願寺. They were the famous Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911) and Akamatsu Renjō 赤松連城 (1841–1919), both from the Honganji-ha denomination, and Atsumi Kaien 渥美契縁 (1840–1906), the newly appointed chief administrator of the Ōtani-ha 大谷派. Both the answers to the written questionnaire and the report of the meeting—noted down by Higashi Kan'ichi 千河岸貫一 (1847–1930)—were published in Japanese by the Honganji-ha the next year.¹² Guimet eventually published the French translation in the first volume of his *Annales du Musée Guimet*.¹³ He seems to have been somewhat disappointed, though, and gave up on the idea of publishing all the reports of the other meetings. It is only quite recently that the manuscript answers of the other schools to his questionnaires, preserved at the Musée Guimet, have been edited, translated into French, and published.¹⁴

Guimet wanted his museum to be a living one, and whenever the opportunity appeared he organized religious ceremonies in its library.

¹⁰ Ducor 2014.

¹¹ Ducor 2017.

¹² Higashi 1877. The complete dialogue has been translated into English in this volume, pp. 111–35.

¹³ *Annales du Musée Guimet* 1880.

¹⁴ Girard 2012. Girard also authored the voluminous *Vocabulaire du bouddhisme japonais* (2008).

The first one was convened on February 21, 1891, by two Shinshū clerics: Koizumi Ryōtai 小泉了諦 (1851–1938) of the Jōshōji-ha 誠照寺派, and Yoshitsura Hōgen 善連法彦 (1864–1893) of the Bukkōji-ha 佛光寺派.¹⁵ Both were traveling from Sri Lanka where they had been studying Indian languages. In front of more than two hundred representatives of “Le Tout-Paris,” they convened the annual memorial service for Shinran (*hōonkō* 報恩講), and according to a schedule of their own devising, intended to represent the transmission of Buddhism from India to Japan via China. For this, four texts were chanted in various languages: the verses *Avoid all evil* (*Sabba pāpassa akaranan*) in Pali, the *Triple Invitation* (Ch. *Sanfengqing* 三奉請; Jp. *Sanbujō*) in Sino-Japanese, the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyuhā-sūtra* in Sanskrit, and two hymns (*wasan* 和讚) by Shinran in Japanese. After that, Koizumi and Yoshitsura read aloud the proclamations (*hyōbyaku* 表白) they had both spent long hours composing in Meiji-style Japanese, and whose general meaning was that they hoped the seed of Buddhism had now been planted in Paris.¹⁶ Both proclamations were also read in the French translation provided by Motoyoshi Saizō (or Seizō) 元吉清藏. In the previous year he had published his lecture “Le Bouddha et le Bouddhisme,” and a few months after the ceremony he also gave a lecture about “Sin-syu” (Shinshū).¹⁷ Motoyoshi was a young poet who tried to make his name in Paris but died of consumption four years later in complete poverty at the age of twenty-seven.¹⁸

This ceremony—one of the very first Buddhist events in Europe—was quite a success and happened at the peak of the so-called “Japonisme” period in France,¹⁹ so one might wonder why this interest did not last longer. The reason is largely due to the controversial Léon de Rosny (1837–1914) who dominated Japanese studies in France at the time. He was very interested in Buddhism, according to his own approach that he called “bouddhisme éclectique.” There is no need to explain this in detail, but it will suffice to quote the title of one of his numerous books: *Les Origines*

¹⁵ *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 1891, pp. 212–17. The author of the article is given only as “L. C.”

¹⁶ Chiba 2002.

¹⁷ Motoyoshi 1890, 1891.

¹⁸ Not much is known about Motoyoshi, who introduced himself as “rédacteur à la *Revue bouddhique du Japon*.” His death certificate states that he was born in Tokyo and passed away in Paris on June 22, 1895, at Lariboisière Hospital, his father’s name being “Imai” and his late mother’s “Ayami.” He was buried five days later at Pantin Cemetery.

¹⁹ Ducor 2015.

bouddhiques du christianisme (The Buddhist Origins of Christianity, 1894), and to observe that he explained that Japanese Buddhism is “woven through with the most extravagant idolatries.”²⁰

During their time in Paris, Koizumi and Yoshitsura made a short trip to Great Britain, where they met the Japanese students of Max Müller, Nanjō Bun'yū 南條文雄 (1849–1927), and Kasahara Kenju 笠原研壽 (1852–1883), both clerics of the Ōtani-ha. This was at the time when Western scholars were seeking “the Buddhism of the Buddha,” which was presumed to be only Indian, while the Buddhism of China and Japan was supposed to be too far away in time and place and therefore necessarily corrupted or degenerate. Their teacher Müller himself wrote: “Is it not high time that the millions who live in Japan and profess a faith in Buddha should be told that this doctrine of Amitābha and all the Mahāyāna doctrine is a secondary form of Buddhism, a corruption of the pure doctrine of the Royal Prince?” and that it evokes “the silly and mischievous stories of Amitābha and his Paradise.”²¹ Indian studies in France were actually more open-minded, thanks to Sylvain Lévi (1863–1935). In 1888 he welcomed two clerics from the Honganji-ha who had been living in Paris for six years: Fujieda Takutsū 藤枝澤通 (1861–1920), a cousin of the twenty-first Honganji-ha patriarch,²² and Fujishima Ryōon 藤島了穩 (1852–1918), a scholar who was to become one of the administrators of the Honganji-ha. Fujieda was expected to publish a translation of a Sanskrit text, but it seems not to have been completed. Fujishima was able to write a book in French to be published in 1889, just before leaving the country, namely *Le bouddhisme japonais*, with two chapters devoted to “Jō-do-shū, secte Terre-pure” and “Shin-shū, Véritable-secte.”²³ This is in fact largely an adaptation of the book published in English three years earlier by Nanjō Bun'yū in Japan entitled *A Short History of the Twelve Japanese Buddhist Sects*.²⁴ However, the book was too technical for a large audience, and Fujishima also added an introduction in a rather proselytising tone that could not but repel those in academic circles.²⁵

²⁰ “Un tissu des plus extravagantes idolâtries” (De Rosny 1883, p. 251).

²¹ Müller 1880, pp. 174, 175. French translation in Müller 1881, p. 29.

²² Ducor 2012, p. 378.

²³ Fujishima (1889) 1982, pp. 125–34, 135–45.

²⁴ Nanjō and Fujishima's books were the only introductions of their kind until the posthumous publication of *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945) in 1947.

²⁵ This introduction was published before the book itself. See Fujishima 1888, pp. 741–65.

Proselytisers in the other direction were the Christian missionaries in Japan. One of the most interesting of these was Aimé Villion (1843–1932), a priest of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris who reached Japan in 1868 and lived in Kyoto from 1879 to 1889. Upon his arrival in the old capital, he fixed onto the ceiling of his tiny room an image of the Archangel Michael slaying the dragon and wrote the *nenbutsu* formula “Namo Amida Butsu” on the dragon’s tail.²⁶ Nevertheless, Villion began to study Buddhism seriously at Chion’in 知恩院 under Kishigami Kairei 岸上恢嶺 (1839–1885), one of the main instructors of Jōdoshū. Using his lecture notes, he then wrote in French a full introduction to Japanese Buddhism amounting to some 2,988 pages which notably included a translation of the *Senchakushū* 選擇集 of Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212).²⁷ In the end, Villion was not permitted to publish his encyclopaedic study, but he was able to show his manuscript to Léon Wieger (1856–1933). This French Jesuit missionary and medical doctor was a sinologist who published various books, including a history of religions and philosophies in China in which he expressed his attraction to Pure Land Buddhism. He stated that the Pure Land is not a paradise, but a place of purification and enlightenment, oriented towards final salvation, and he wondered if “Amidism” was not the flower of Mahayanistic altruism.²⁸ Wieger’s own answer to this may be found in his monograph *Amidisme: Chinois et japonais*, where he concluded that Sino-Japanese “Amidism” is indeed the flower of Mahayana—its most elegant form.²⁹ This book is a substantial anthology translated from the scriptures in Chinese, covering the relevant sutras as well as commentaries by the various Indian, Chinese, and Japanese masters. As a missionary, Wieger eventually asks in this book if Pure Land Buddhism is “craving for God, or pantheist poetry,” a question he does not resolve.

Noël Péri (1865–1922), a colleague of Villion who was disappointed with the hierarchy of his order, eventually left the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris and started his own periodical in Tokyo, entitled *Mélanges Japonais* 雜集 (*Zasshū*), where he published large extracts translated from the *Bukkyō*

²⁶ Villion 1926, p. 480.

²⁷ Van Hecken 1959.

²⁸ Wieger (1917) 1927, pp. 369–70: “La terre pure n’est pas un paradis, mais un lieu de purification, d’illumination, d’orientation vers le salut définitif. . . . L’Amidisme dérive-t-il du Mithracisme, comme certains l’ont pensé? Ou est-il simplement la fleur de l’altruisme mahayaniste, éclose dans un cœur généreux, et qui plut aux nobles âmes?”

²⁹ Wieger 1928, p. 47: “L’Amidisme sino-japonais est bien la fleur du mahâyâna, sa forme la plus élégante. Sa genèse par simple évolution est plausible.”

seiten 佛教聖典 (Holy Scriptures of Buddhism) published in 1905 by Nanjō Bun'yū and Maeda Eun 前田慧雲 (1857–1930), including a chapter on “Terre pure” (Pure Land).³⁰ In the end, the study of Pure Land Buddhism by Christians was taken over by the German-and-English-speaking Anglo-Saxon missionaries of Protestantism.³¹ Still, the Belgian Jesuit Pierre Charles (1883–1951) wrote a rather well-informed article about Hōnen and *amidaïsme*,³² where he categorically denied the idea common at the time that the Pure Land faith could be compared to Luther’s doctrine of salvation by faith alone.³³

Around that time, Ōsumi Shungaku 大住舜岳 (Shōfū 嘯風; 1881–1923) gave a general presentation of Jōdo-Shinshū under the title “Principaux enseignements de la Vraie Secte de la Terre Pure.” Ōsumi, who was to pass away the next year, had been sent to Paris by the Ōtani-ha in 1918, and his article is not an original composition but the translation of a sectarian pamphlet.³⁴ A lovely book was then produced by Émile Steinilber-Oberlin entitled *Les sectes bouddhiques japonaises*, which was also translated into English.³⁵ Unlike Fujishima’s book, it is not a technical work but a survey of encounters with teachers from the various Buddhist denominations, including such eminent figures as Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨 (1869–1948) of Jōdoshū; or Kawasaki Kenryō 河崎顯了 (1871–1950) and Yamabe Shūgaku 山邊習學 (1882–1944)—both of the Shinshū Ōtani-ha.³⁶ Steinilber-Oberlin wrote in collaboration with “Kuni Matsuo,” which refers to the journalist and critic Matsuo Kuninosuke 松尾邦之助 (1899–1975), who also helped him to translate the bestseller *Shukke to sono deshi* 出家とその弟子

³⁰ Péri 1907.

³¹ For example, Arthur Lloyd (1852–1911), Harper Havelock Coates (1865–1934), Hans Haas (1868–1934), and August K. Reischauer (1879–1971).

³² The noun *amidaïsme* is attested to in the dictionary *Larousse du XX^e siècle* (1928), vol. 1, 190b.

³³ Charles 1928.

³⁴ Ōsumi 1922. Translated from the Japanese of Okusa Yejitsu [Ōkusa Ejitsu] 大草慧実 (1858–1912): *Shinshū yōshi* 真宗要旨. This had already been translated in 1910 by D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966) as *The Principal Teachings of the True Sect of the Pure Land*, and into German by Ōtani Eiryō 大谷瑩亮 (1880–1936) as *Die Hauptlehren von “Schinschu,” dem wahren Lehrsystem*. Under the name of “Shun Ōsumi,” he also wrote *Histoire des idées religieuses et philosophiques du Japon*, published in Kyoto after his death in 1929 by his friend Haneda Tōru 羽田亨 (1882–1955).

³⁵ Steinilber-Oberlin 1930, 1938.

³⁶ Concerning Mochizuki, see Steinilber-Oberlin 1930, pp. 197–212, and for Kawasaki and Yamabe, see pp. 213–59.

(1916) by Kurata Hyakuzō 倉田百三 (1891–1943). This drama about Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263), inspired by the *Tannishō* 歎異抄,³⁷ appeared in French under the title *Le prêtre et ses disciples* (1932) with a foreword by Romain Rolland, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1915.

However, let us go back to academic studies and Sylvain Lévi, who was a kind of second Burnouf. He perfected the method of studying Buddhist texts through cross-reading them in all the source languages possible (Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, and Tibetan). The great Indianist was introduced to reading Chinese characters by his pupils Fujieda and Fujishima, and he completed a full French translation of the *Dashen qixinlun* 大乘起信論 (Jp. *Daijō kishinron*; Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in the Great Vehicle), the final part of it being related to Pure Land Buddhism. Unfortunately, this translation was never published.³⁸ Among his main disciples were two Belgians of the upper bourgeois class, and one Swiss who was to become naturalized in France. The first Belgian, Louis de La Vallée Poussin (1869–1938), is famous for his translations of the *Abhidharmakośa* (1923–1926) and the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi-śāstra* (1928–1929). He also wrote many excellent articles on various topics. His judgment about the Sukhāvātī path is rather severe, as he considered it to be a “*bhakti* religion” and a “monotheism.” He argued that “the name of ‘Great Vehicle’ should be kept for mystical speculations of much greater interest.”³⁹ The Swiss disciple was the sinologist Paul Demiéville (1894–1979; naturalized in France, 1931), who published some major contributions on Pure Land Buddhism, such as the chapter “Sur la pensée unique,” an appendix to his “Les versions chinoises du Milindapañha.”⁴⁰ In this chapter, the young Demiéville verified most of the canonical Chinese and Japanese sources related to the famous term and concept of “one thought” (Ch. *yunian* 一念; Jp. *ichinen* / Ch. *yixin* 一心; Jp. *isshin*). He soon became the kingpin of the *Hōbōgirin* 法寶義林, the encyclopedic dictionary of Buddhism based on Chinese and Japanese sources, which—despite its title—is published in French. This high-level encyclopedia was started in 1929 under the direction of Sylvain Lévi and Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866–1945), a former pupil

³⁷ The *Tannishō* was translated for the first time into French by Sakurazawa Nyoichi (a.k.a. Georges Ohsawa), the founder of the macrobiotic diet. See Sakurazawa 1931, pp. 125–55.

³⁸ There are now two French translations of this treatise: Girard 2004 and Despeux 2005.

³⁹ “Le nom de Grand Véhicule devrait être réservé à des spéculations mystiques d’un intérêt beaucoup plus grand.” La Vallée Poussin 1930, pp. 70–71.

⁴⁰ Demiéville 1924.

of Max Müller, with the financial support of, notably, Ōtani Son'yu 大谷尊由 (1886–1939), the younger brother of the twenty-second Honganji-ha patriarch Ōtani Kōzui 大谷光瑞 (1876–1948). Demiéville was the editor in chief from inception, before turning director, and he is the author of the important entry on “Amida” in the first volume.⁴¹ Again, a great deal of firsthand information about Indian and Chinese Pure Land sources and tradition is provided by Demiéville in his study “La *Yogācārabhūmi* de Saṅgharaṣka.”⁴² Nevertheless, his interest eventually turned to Chan/Zen.

However, in the meantime, Demiéville had been teaching Chinese to Étienne Lamotte (1903–1983), a Catholic priest, Lévi's second Belgian pupil, who also studied under de La Vallée Poussin. His contributions to our knowledge of Pure Land arise through his translation and study of various related scriptures. The *Mahāyānasamgraha* of Asaṅga (ca. 320–390), for example, is important as it presents the position of the Yogācāra school, which considered the Buddha's discourses on birth in Sukhāvātī to have been preached with an “intention related to another or future time” (Skt. *kālāntara*; Ch. *bieshi* 別時; Jp. *betsuji*).⁴³ In addition, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sutra* furnishes the basis for an immanentist interpretation of the Pure Land within one's own mind, in so far as it says: “It is in accordance with the purity of one's mind that the buddha-land is pure” (Ch. *Sui qi xin jing, ji fotu jing* 隨其心淨即佛土淨; Jp. *Zui go shin jō, soku butsudo jō*).⁴⁴ Lamotte added an important appendix about buddha-fields (*buddhakṣetra*) to his translation (from Tibetan and Chinese) of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*.⁴⁵ In it, he adopts for himself the Mādhyamika interpretation and concludes that “the *buddhakṣetra* is but a simple mental construction built in the mind of beings to be converted.”⁴⁶ On the whole, however, Lamotte shows no real interest in Pure Land Buddhism, as can be seen from his translation and study of the *Śūramgama-samādhi-sutra*. This volume is provided with a detailed index which does not mention the proper nouns “Sukhāvātī” nor “*Sukhāvātīvyuhā-sutra*,” though its introduction does make the important

⁴¹ Demiéville 1929.

⁴² Demiéville 1954.

⁴³ Lamotte (1938) 1973, p. 130.

⁴⁴ T no. 475, 14: 538c. See, for example, Lamotte 1962, p. 119. Cf. Demiéville 1937, p. 201a. Francophone attention to this sutra has continued more recently in Carré 2000, 2004.)

⁴⁵ “Les buddhakṣetra” (Lamotte 1962, pp. 395–404).

⁴⁶ “Le buddhakṣetra n'est donc qu'une simple construction mentale élevée dans la pensée des êtres à convertir” (Lamotte 1962, p. 401).

point that this latter sutra is old enough to belong to those texts that represent a Mahayana in the process of formation (*Mahāyāna en formation*) to the same extent as the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi*, *Vimalakīrti*, *Śūraṅgama-samādhi*, or *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* sutras.⁴⁷

Then comes the monumental translation by Lamotte of the first third of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* (Ch. *Dazhidulun* 大智度論; Jp. *Daichidoron*).⁴⁸ This Mādhyamika treatise, attributed to Nāgārjuna, is seen in the Far East as *the* encyclopaedic presentation of Mahayana and so includes various topics related to Pure Land, for example, in relation to the *pratyutpanna-samādhi*.⁴⁹ However, most important here is a long exposition, which is nothing less than a little treatise about the present existence of various Buddhas situated within their own buddha-fields in all directions around our universe (Ch. *shifang xianzai fo* 十方現在佛; Jp. *jippō genzai butsu*).⁵⁰ Besides scriptural and logical demonstrations, one of its arguments anticipates Pascal's wager:

If the Buddhas in the ten directions exist and you pretend they do not exist, you get an incommensurable fault. If the Buddhas in the ten directions do not exist and I say nevertheless that they do exist, I am producing the perception of infinite Buddhas and get the merit of worshipping them.⁵¹

The point of concern is that such a fundamental affirmation of the existence of these Buddhas and their fields is, after all, one of the most characteristic dogmas of the "Great Vehicle," which distinguishes it from what it calls the "Small Vehicle" (Hinayana). This can be seen in the case of Theravada refuting the existence of present Buddhas in all directions (*Kathāvatthu*, 21: 6), as duly recorded by André Bareau (1921–1993), one of Demiéville's pupils, in his study *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*.⁵² In his valuable presentations of Indian Buddhism, Bareau seems not to have understood properly the difference between a paradise of gods (*svarga*) and a buddha-field (*buddhakṣetra*), as the following passages from his study "Le Bouddhisme indien" attest: "Amitābha's worship represents the intrusion of a completely different religion within Buddhism";

⁴⁷ Lamotte 1965, p. 49.

⁴⁸ Lamotte 1944–49.

⁴⁹ Lamotte 1970–80, pp. 2263–80.

⁵⁰ Lamotte 1944–49, pp. 300–308, 531–57.

⁵¹ T no. 1509, 25: 126b.

⁵² Bareau 1955, pp. 60–61, 238.

and “The Nirvāṇa . . . is replaced by an abode full of sensual delights, where only the basest pleasures are missing.”⁵³

At this point it should be asked why Indologists have been so critical towards this tradition. To understand this we have to go back to Müller and his translation of a particular passage in the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyuhā-sūtra*: “Nāvaramātrakeṇa Śāriputra kuśalamūlenāmitāyusaḥ tathāgatasya buddhakṣetre sattvā upapadyante.”⁵⁴ Müller rendered it as: “Beings are not born in that Buddha-country of the Tathāgata Amitāyus as a reward and result of good works performed in this present life,” and added in a note:

The intention of the writer seems to be to inculcate the doctrine of the Mahāyāna, that salvation can be obtained by mere repetitions of the name of Amitābha, in direct opposition to the original doctrine of Buddha, that as a man soweth, so he reapeth.⁵⁵

Correctly, the passage should be translated as: “Śāriputra, beings are not born in that buddha-field of the Tathāgata Amitāyus as the result of an inferior root of merit only.” That sentence stands thus for a litotes introducing the rest of the text: one needs a superior root of merit indeed to reach Sukhāvātī, that is hearing and keeping in mind the name of the Buddha (*nāmadheyaṃ śroṣyati śrutvā ca manasikariṣyati*). Thomas Watters (1840–1901) immediately corrected Müller’s interpretation in a brilliant (but not sufficiently known) study.⁵⁶ It should be noted that this kind of litotes is classical and can be traced back not only to the *Lotus Sūtra*,⁵⁷ but also to a scripture devoted to a buddha-field other than Sukhāvātī: the Abhirati of Buddha Akṣobhya, whose sūtra has been studied by another Belgian

⁵³ Bateau 1966, p. 176: “Le culte d’Amitābha représente donc l’intrusion dans le Bouddhisme d’une religion tout à fait différente. . . . Le Nirvāṇa . . . est remplacé par le séjour dans un lieu plein de délices sensuelles d’où ne sont éliminées que les jouissances les plus grossières.”

⁵⁴ Fujita 2011, p. 89: 2–4. This volume provides the definitive Sanskrit edition of the two *Sukhāvātīvyuhā-sūtra*.

⁵⁵ Müller 1880, p. 171 and note 21. Translated by Milloué in the *Annales du Musée Guimet*, t. 2, 1881, p. 20 and note 21, as: “Les êtres ne naissent pas dans ce Pays de Buddha du Tathāgata Amitāyus en récompense et par suite des bonnes actions accomplies dans cette vie actuelle”; and “L’auteur semble vouloir inculquer la doctrine du Mahāyāna, que le salut peut être obtenu par de simples répétitions du nom d’Amitābha, en contradiction avec la doctrine originale [i.e., originelle] du Buddha que l’homme récolte ce qu’il a semé.”

⁵⁶ Watters 1881–82.

⁵⁷ Burnouf 1852, p. 268.

scholar, Jean Dantine.⁵⁸ This *Sukhāvātīvyuhā-sūtra*'s litotes was also misinterpreted in the long article “La place des *Sukhāvātīvyuhā* dans le bouddhisme indien” by Gérard Fussman, one of Bareau's students. According to Fussman, the superior root of merit needed to reach Sukhāvātī is not hearing and keeping in mind the name of the Buddha, but *bodhicitta* and countless roots of merits.⁵⁹

In any case, Müller's mistake and his critical judgment had serious consequences for the appreciation of Pure Land Buddhism in the West for a full century. This can be seen, for example, by the absence of any related texts within the beautiful anthology published under the direction of the Indologist Lilian Silburn (1908–1993), *Le bouddhisme* (1977), reedited as *Aux sources du bouddhisme* (1997).

To come back to André Bareau, he also expressed his criticisms in his article “La mystique bouddhiste,” where he states that the Amitābha tradition is “completely foreign to Buddhism's spirit and undoubtedly comes from Hindu worship (*bhakti*).”⁶⁰ This article is in fact a chapter of an important collection of essays, *La mystique et les mystiques*. Published in 1965, this book opens with a beautiful preface by the French Jesuit, great theologian, and writer Henri de Lubac (1896–1991). He was a prolific author and, notably, published a very useful book about Western knowledge of Buddhism since its inception (*La rencontre du bouddhisme et de l'Occident*, 1952) and a unique monograph, simply entitled *Amida* (1955). As far as Buddhism is concerned, de Lubac was a self-taught researcher without knowledge of any Buddhist languages. He had been reading everything published on the topic in the West, and he eventually formulated his own conclusions about Amida's tradition in the following four points: (1) It does not break the law of karma; (2) Amida is not a god; (3) Sukhāvātī is not the ultimate deliverance itself, nor a *svarga* paradise; and (4) Amida is but a relative manifestation of the Absolute.⁶¹

Another Catholic priest attracted by the Pure Land was my own teacher Jean Éracle (1930–2005), a canon regular of St. Maurice of Agaunum. Throughout the years, his spiritual path went towards the East. He left the Catholic Church and became a Jōdo Shinshū cleric, founding a small tem-

⁵⁸ Dantine 1983, p. 101.

⁵⁹ “Les êtres qui veulent renaître en Sukhāvātī doivent d'abord avoir fait le vœu solennel d'atteindre la *bodhi* et avoir accumulé d'innombrables racines de bien.” Fussman 1999, pp. 567–68. See my critical review (Ducor 2004).

⁶⁰ Bareau 1965, p. 705.

⁶¹ See Ducor 2007a.

ple in Geneva (Shingyōji 信樂寺) in 1970, as he himself narrated in *De la Croix au Lotus* (1996).⁶² He entered the Ethnography Museum of Geneva as curator of its Asia Department, and he too was a self-taught researcher, learning to read Chinese and Tibetan by himself. He published French studies and translations of various scriptures, such as *Le Poème sur la foi véritable* (*Shōshinge* 正信偈, 1971), *Le Sûtra d'Amida* (1972), *La doctrine bouddhique de la Terre pure, introduction à trois Sûtra bouddhiques* (1973), *Trois Soutras et un Traité sur la Terre pure: Aux sources du bouddhisme mahâyâna* (1984) and of some works of Shinran in *Sur le Vrai bouddhisme de la Terre pure* (1994), in addition to translations of Nāgārjuna's *Chapter on Easy Practice* and Xuanzang's version of the *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyuhā-sūtra* (1981). He was very concerned with tracing back the original sources of *nenbutsu* practice as well as of the Pure Land. This is why he translated some texts from the *Āgama* under the title *Paroles du Bouddha* (Buddha's Words, 1991), and published a study including a comparison of the various versions of the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyuhā-sūtra* (1988). Generally speaking, the style of his publications does not aim at academic accuracy but rather seeks to be popular in order to reach the largest audience possible.

Also a Catholic priest, Léo K. S. Lee (Li Kye-san 李哲先, 1918–1979) published a substantial study under the direction of the French sinologist of Austrian origin Maxime Kaltenmark (1910–2002), about the Korean master Wōnhyo 元曉 (617–686) with translations from his *Yusim allak to* 遊心安樂道 (1986), as well as an article about birth in the Pure Land within a matrix (Ch. *taisheng* 胎生; Jp. *taishō*; 1980).

At the academic level, too, are the works of my friend Dennis Gira, a Catholic theologian much involved in interreligious dialogue, such as his thesis *Le sens de la conversion dans l'enseignement de Shinran* (1985), or his studies and translations of extracts of Genshin's *Essentials for Birth in the Pure Land* published as “Le caractère particulier du *nenbutsu* à l'article de la mort” (1979) and “La fascination de la Terre pure” (2000). He was the student of the Japonologist Bernard Frank (1927–1996). One of Frank's main disciples is Jean-Noël Robert, the current editor of the *Hōbōgirin*, who specializes in Tendai, and produced a translation of the sutras of the “Lotus Trilogy.”⁶³ He has also translated *Yokawa hōgo* 横川法語 by Genshin 源信 (942–1017). Frank was also the teacher of Ōtani Chōjun 大谷暢順 (1929–), a son of the twenty-fourth patriarch of the Ōtani-ha. Reverend

⁶² Japanese translation in Éracle 1992.

⁶³ See Robert 1997.

Ōtani first published a translation of the *Tannishō* in 1961, which was published again in a revised version by General Gaston Renondeau (1879–1967) in 1965. Ōtani then translated Shinran’s *Eloge de la vraie foi* (*Shōshinge*) together with some of his *Wasan: Psaumes des trois âges* (*Sanjisan* 三時讚) in 1969. He is also a specialist of the *Letters* (*Ofumi* 御文) written by the eighth patriarch of Honganji, Rennyō 蓮如 (1415–1499), and he published the French translation of some of them (1991). In addition, he is also a passionate admirer of Joan of Arc (1412–1431) and wrote a comparative biography of these two contemporary figures (2014). Another Japanese who published in French is Asuka (Motohashi) Ryōko, who authored an anthology including extracts from Genshin’s *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集 (Essentials for Birth in the Pure Land),⁶⁴ as well as a study and translation of Hōnen’s commentary on the *Contemplation Sutra* of Shandao 善導 (613–681).⁶⁵

In addition, one of the specialities of Bernard Frank was Buddhist iconography, which includes of course the Pure Land tradition. One of his contributions in this field is the catalogue of Émile Guimet’s collection of Buddhist sculptures, first published in 1991 and recently reedited with revised text and full colour coverage of the 222 statues that are analyzed (2017). Frank also gathered a large collection of Buddhist small printed images (*miei* 御影, *ofuda* お札), with a catalogue of 184 of them also being published after his untimely death.⁶⁶ As far as the art history of the Pure Land is concerned, the main study is undoubtedly “L’iconographie du *Guanjing*” by my colleague Helen Loveday, who uses all the most recent sources, including those in Chinese and Japanese.⁶⁷

On the whole, it can be said that the reappraisal of the Sukhāvātī and Pure Land tradition in academic circles started about forty years ago with the contributions of Gregory Schopen and Paul M. Harrison.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, a global survey is still missing. The present author has tried to fill in some chapters covering the Pure Land’s “Shandao tradition,” starting in India then passing from Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542) down to Shinran, through Shandao and Hōnen. A chapter on Indian scriptural and archaeological sources appeared in “Les sources de la Sukhāvātī” (2004), while the transmission to China is dealt with in *Le Sūtra d’Amida* (1998) and *Le Sūtra*

⁶⁴ Asuka 1993, pp. 83–167.

⁶⁵ Asuka 2003, pp. 103–68.

⁶⁶ Kyburz 2011.

⁶⁷ In Ducor and Loveday 2011, pp. 233–84.

⁶⁸ See Schopen 1977; Harrison 1978.

des contemplations.⁶⁹ The chapter covering the introduction of Shandao's Pure Land tradition to Japan is dealt with in the article "Shandao et Hōnen" (1999), as well as in a translation of Hōnen's *Senchakushū* (2005),⁷⁰ and in the volumes *Shinran* (2008) and *Le Tannishō* (2011), which treat the rediscovery of Tanluan by Shinran. A further study published under the title "*Terre pure, Zen et autorité*" (2007b) deals with the immanentism of the Pure Land, a topic foreign to the tradition of Shandao but nevertheless still a subject of debate within the Honganji during the Edo period.

A last word. French is no more the lingua franca of Buddhist studies as it was to a great extent in the past. Still, serious researchers cannot avoid referring to its sources. At Lausanne University, my greatly missed teacher Jacques May (1927–2018), who succeeded Demiéville as editor in chief of the *Hōbōgirin*, developed a full curriculum of Buddhist studies, including introductions to Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, and Tibetan writings. In presenting Buddhist studies, he added that Japanese is also more and more indispensable, and concluded that English and German are, *bien entendu* (of course), supposed to be known.⁷¹ Had he been addressing a different language audience, he would certainly have said "and French, *bien entendu*."

ABBREVIATION

- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 100 vols. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–35.

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⁶⁹ Ducor and Loveday 2011.

⁷⁰ This volume received the 2008 Konishi Foundation for International Exchange prize for the translation of Japanese literature into French.

⁷¹ May 1973, p. 11. See also Eltschinger 2019.

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