

BOOK REVIEWS

The Monastery Rules: Buddhist Monastic Organization in Pre-Modern Tibet. By Berthe Jansen. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018. 298 pages. Paperback: ISBN 978-0-520-29700-5.

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Berthe Jansen's *The Monastery Rules: Buddhist Monastic Organization in Pre-Modern Tibet* is a recent entry in the University of California's "South Asia Across the Disciplines" series. In many respects, this publication marks a watershed in the academic study of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism and is a significant contribution that speaks from the disciplinary core of Tibetan studies. Despite the title, however, *The Monastery Rules* does not offer an exploration of the organization of monastic institutions as such. Rather, the author's primary focus is on *chayik* (*bca' yig*), which are textual guidelines written for the monk populations of specific monasteries. In Jansen's work, these textual materials are supplemented by interviews, published ethnographies, and the accounts of travelers in premodern Tibet, which are well synthesized with textual critiques in the author's expository style.

As articulated in Jansen's introduction, one of the book's primary goals is to "explore the ways in which social differences and relationships existed within a Buddhist society in practice and, subsequently, to examine whether . . . these differences were seen to be justified by aspects of Buddhist thinking" (p. 2), as represented by authoritative figures and texts within monastic communities. In this respect, the author's approach to her material is characteristic of social historical research, focusing, as the author writes, on "realities on the ground" (p. 2) rather than the finer points of Buddhist doctrine. As the "lived" realities of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism are notoriously underrepresented in Tibetological literature, Jansen's work is a welcome addition to a largely unstudied but vitally important field. Nevertheless, for those interested expressly in social historical theory, aspects of the author's treatment of data and general methodology may seem to be lacking. I will return to this point below.

Structurally, the book is divided into eight short chapters and an introduction, each averaging around twenty pages. In a somewhat atypical structure for an academic monograph, each chapter is divided into a large number of subsections (seventy-nine spread over one hundred and eighty pages). As these subsections are not included in the author's table of contents, the overall effect of this stylistic choice is one of excessive signposting, giving *The Monastery Rules* a thesis-like structure that more than demonstrates Jansen's erudition, but fragments her argument to such an extent that the reader loses track of the discursive threads that build each chapter and subsection into a cohesive whole. As a consequence, the author's general argumentation remains opaque in some chapters, while other chapters shine. In particular, the fourth and fifth chapters, which explore the value of *chayik* as sources for understanding monastic institutionalization and economic policies respectively, are outstanding entries that I would highly recommend. This raises a broader question, however, regarding the book's intended audience.

In the introduction to the fifth chapter of *The Monastery Rules*, Jansen argues that a study of a monastery's relationship to broader Tibetan society should be "less interested with the mere factual data of . . . different administrative systems of Tibetan monasteries" and more focused on how monastic guidelines, administrative systems, and institutions were "conceived of by Tibetan monastic authors" (p. 85). Jansen's focus on the emic perception of monastic guidelines, eschewing the broader historical background of Tibetan monasticism for a more qualitative approach to her subject, is one of the major tent-poles around which she organizes her discourse. This makes *The Monastery Rules* an invaluable specialist study of particular aspects of monastic life. Yet, as a broader commercial publication that also attempts to investigate "the role and position of . . . Buddhist monasteries in Tibetan societies" (p. 1), this approach proves to be problematic. This is my only major criticism of *The Monastery Rules* and, in many respects, it stems from the author's presentation of textual materials.

Jansen goes to great lengths to demonstrate the heterogeneity of *chayik* in both their content and practical usage. In doing so, Jansen surveys an astounding number of texts and chooses to focus on broad aspects of genera and emic usage, which are explicated with brief, selected examples from various *chayik*; however, Jansen does not subject any of these texts to a critical analysis that is visible in the monograph. Throughout the book, primary sources appear like blips on a radar screen, brief examples that flesh out the author's argumentation and then vanish without being contextualized or discussed. With regard to a general audience, this paints *The Monastery Rules*

into a methodological corner. On the one hand, the author expertly explores a complex and largely unstudied form of monastic literature. On the other hand, however, the reader hovers so far above the provenance and general hermeneutic situation of the author's primary sources that it is often difficult to profit from Jansen's indisputable erudition. In this sense, the book would benefit enormously from a case study or short series of case studies, which would give the reader an understanding of the general aspects of a *chayik's* style, structure, and content, as well as place these texts in a more holistic context relative to the author's use of oral history.

In conclusion, Berthe Jansen's *The Monastery Rules* offers an excellent specialist study of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism, which emphasizes indigenous voices and emic perceptions of monastic guidelines over the broader historical and cultural context in which monastic institutions thrived. While this approach is exemplary and often rewarding to read, aspects of the author's treatment of primary data and certain atypical authorial choices detract from the publication's heuristic value. Nevertheless, *The Monastery Rules* constitutes a monumental achievement that breaks new ground on an understudied but vitally important topic.

Japanese Philosophy in the Making 1: Crossing Paths with Nishida. By John C. Maraldo. Nagoya: Chisokudō Publications, 2017. 488 pages. Paperback: ISBN 978-1-9739-2956-7.

TANAKA JUN'ICHI

A RECONSIDERATION OF JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

It is a great honor for me to write a review of John Maraldo's *Japanese Philosophy in the Making 1: Crossing Paths with Nishida*. Maraldo is well known both as a scholar of Japanese philosophy, especially of the thought of Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945), and as a distinguished philosopher in his own right. It is indeed significant that a non-Japanese philosopher has published such a fine work on Japanese philosophy as for a long time Nishida's philosophy has been primarily studied by Japanese philosophers. The study of philosophy, though, should not be so geographically restricted