H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Richard Payne, ed. *Shin Buddhism: Historical, Textual, and Interpretive Studies.* Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007. xii + 397 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-886439-40-5.

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Published on H-Buddhism (June, 2010)
Commissioned by Gereon Kopf

Essays on Shin Buddhism

Shin Buddhism: Textual, Historical and Interpretive Studies, edited by Richard Payne, is a collection of articles from *Pacific World*, the journal of The Institute of Buddhist Studies, brought together under the unifying theme, Shin Buddhism. The work contains seventeen articles that cover a broad range of topics, from the forerunners of Pure Land thought in the formative years of the Mahāyāna in India to the state of the Shin Buddhist mission in North America at the close of the twentieth century, highlighting some subjects that have received little attention in other works on Shin Buddhism along the way. Through the nine articles in the first section, "Historical Studies," the reader is taken on a trek that follows the path of the development of Pure Land Buddhism from first-century India through to thirteenth-century Japan, touching at length on two of the less recognized Shin patriarchs, Daochuo and Genshin. The second section presents three textual studies that show that the popularity of devotion to Amitābha in China and Japan extended well beyond the confines of the lineage pointed out by Shinran. The five articles in the last section are classified as interpretive studies, but they cover a wide range of issues related in that they are focused on a consideration of the dynamics, both socio-historical and spiritual, of Shin Buddhism as a vital faith. The work as a whole provides a valuable contribution to the study of Shin Buddhism in the West by not only highlighting the breadth of Pure Land devotion in Chinese and Japanese history, but also in throwing light on aspects of the development of Pure Land thought hitherto unexplored.

After Richard Payne's brief introduction which describes each of the articles in the collection in relation to the theme of Shin Buddhism, the section of historical studies begins with two articles on the origins of Pure Land Buddhism in India. First, John P. Keenan's article, "Pure Land Systematics in India: The *Buddhabhūmi-sūtra* and the *Trikāya* Doctrine," discusses the position of the **Buddhabhūmi-sūtra* in the development of Yogācāra doctrine. Showing that the sutra is a Pure Land text of comparatively early origin which is primarily concerned with interpreting Pure Land devotion in the broader context of Mahāyāna thought, he intimates that it became attractive as a source text to later Yogācāra thinkers because it addressed the same problem that they were facing, that is, the reconciliation of Pure Land devotion and Mahāyāna thought.

Whelan Lai also provides an innovative interpretation of the roots of Pure Land thought in the Indian Buddhist tradition in his article, "*Avadāna-vāda* and the Pure Land Faith." Lai emphasizes the importance of interpreting the beginnings of the Mahāyāna positing "a multi-centered genesis," which allows one to interpret early Mahāyāna doctrine as encompassing a far wider scope than the teachings presented in the *Prajñā Pāramitā Sūtras*. From this perspective, he argues that while these sutras represent one important line of Mahāyāna development, which he terms "dharmacentric," one can find another, equally valuable line of development in the *avadāna* literature that discusses the past incarnations of not only Śākyamuni, but other Buddhas as well. He states that this "buddhacentric" strand, while developing alongside the *Prajñā Pāramitā* literature, only later came to identify itself as "Mahāyāna," and is therefore often considered a later Mahāyāna development, in spite of the fact that in their earliest versions, they may well predate the *Prajñā Pāramitā* texts. Lai's piece serves as a challenge not only to reconsider our assumptions regarding the origins of the Mahāyāna, but also to take a fresh look at a wide range of Buddhist literature that was long undervalued. However, in the years since this article was originally published, a great number of scholars have taken up this challenge, leaving us with a far richer

view of genesis of the Mahāyāna than the one that he criticizes.

T. Griffith Foulk, in his contribution, "The Chan *Zong* in Medieval China: School, Lineage, or What?" discusses the development of the Chan school as a distinct, self-conscious entity in the religious landscape of China. After a discussion of the need to distinguish carefully the multiple meanings of the term *zong*, particularly between "lineage" and "school," he argues that the conflation of these two meanings by both sectarian and Western scholars has led to them to mistakenly date the formation of the Chan school as an institution as early as the seventh century. He then discusses in detail the formulation, appropriation, and expansion of lineage myths by a variety of late seventh- and eighth-century Chan practitioners. By tracing the development of these varied, and often conflicting, lineage myths, Foulk shows that not only were there a wide variety of Chan lineages with disparate teachings throughout China during the eighth and ninth centuries, there was no institutional entity "with an identifiable social structure, ideology, and body of sacred texts" (p. 36) that could be called the Chan school until at least the mid-tenth century. In the last portion of the article, Foulk discusses the transformation of the *chan zong* as "Chan lineage," the vast collection of lineage myths developed through the Tang and Five Dynasties period, into the "Chan school" through the canonization of these myths and other support for the organization of the monastic community by the Song court.

In one of the longest articles in the collection, "The Transformation of the Pure Land in the Development of Lay Buddhist Practice in China," Katherine K. Velasco considers the work of Daochuo, one of the less studied Shin patriarchs. She introduces some of the most important aspects of his thought as presented in his *Anleji*, which she argues represents an early and effective attempt at the Sinicization of Indian ideas about the Pure Land. After placing Daochuo's thought in the context of the development and transmission of Buddhism, particularly Pure Land Buddhism, she moves on to a varied discussion of some of the central themes in the *Anleji*. In particular, she discusses Daochuo's interpretation of the Pure Land at length, arguing that he presents the Pure Land as a concrete place in order to align this teaching with the concreteness of the Chinese worldview. In the final section of the article, she discusses some of the possible Daoist influences that can be seen in the *Anleji*. Although Velasco presents some of the crucial elements of Daochuo's thought, some of her interpretations of the significance of various portions of the *Anleji* need to be read with a cautious and critical eye.

In the second article on Chinese Pure Land Buddhism in the collection, "Where is the Pure Land?: Controversy in Chinese Buddhism on the Nature of the Pure Land," Kenneth K. Tanaka discusses the unique and delicate responses by Pure Land adherents to the assertions of proponents of other doctrines regarding the nature of Amitābha's Pure Land. Tanaka first presents two poles of understanding of the Pure Land, which he terms a "subjective" interpretation, which takes the Pure Land to be a reflection of the mind of the practitioner, and an "objective" interpretation, which holds it to be an actual place. Tanaka shows that a variety of Pure Land thinkers, especially Tanluan, Daochuo and Shandao, opposed both of these stances, taking a position that integrated the two extremes by employing a logic of two truths, the conventional and the ultimate, to describe the Pure Land as an expression of the ultimate in terms comprehensible to ordinary, limited beings. Tanaka closes his discussion with an appraisal of the significance of Shinran's view of the Pure Land, which drew heavily on the thought of these Chinese patriarchs, to Buddhist seekers in the present, arguing that his interpretation is well suited to the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional needs of the present generation of Buddhists.

The section of historical studies moves on to Japan with Bruno Lewin's "Activity of the Aya and Hata in the Domain of the Sacred," a detailed article that considers the role of two immigrant clans in the earliest stages of the introduction of Buddhism to Japan. A translation from the German of a chapter of Lewin's work on these two groups, this article discusses the many members of the Aya and Hata clans who not only founded some of the oldest temples in Japan, but also served in high-ranking positions in several of the most powerful temples during the Nara and Heian periods.

Allan A. Andrews analyzes Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū* from a variety of perspectives in his contribution, "Genshin's *Essentials of Pure Land Rebirth* and the Transmission of Pure Land Buddhism to Japan." Andrews' article places Genshin's work in the broad context of the introduction of Pure Land thought to Japan, arguing that it represents both the completion of the transmission from China and the first step in the development of an original Japanese Pure Land teaching. In part 1, Andrews traces what he terms the first two phases of transmission of the Pure Land teaching from the introduction of Pure Land scriptures to Japan in the seventh and eighth centuries through to the earliest works on Pure Land themes by Japanese Tendai writers. Then, in parts 2 and

3, through quantitative and qualitative analysis of Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū*, he shows that it represents the beginning of a new phase of development of Pure Land thought in Japan, one that moved Pure Land devotion outside the pale of Tendai doctrine and laid the foundations for the unique innovations of Hōnen and Shinran by systematically introducing the thought of what Andrews calls "populist" Pure Land masters such as Daochuo and Shandao.

Hartmut O. Rotermund's "The Conception of the Japanese *Kami* in the Kamakura Era: Notes on the First Chapter of the *Shasekishū*" considers the relationship between *kami* and the teachings of Buddhism in the Kamakura period as it appears in the *Shasekishū*. The article is a translation of a work in French published in 1972. In it, Rotermund discusses the instances in that work of *kami* encouraging devotees to embrace Buddhism, engage in Buddhist practices, and aspire for rebirth in Pure Lands. He places these instances of *kami* encouraging Buddhist faith and practice in the context of the *honji-suijaku* thought that was prevalent at the time. Through his considerations of this text, Rotermund reaches the conclusion that the Kamakura period saw a change in the interpretation of *kami*, stating that "the *kami* lose their distinctive character, are deprived of their particularity in comparison with buddhas, to reappear, henceforth stronger, as the *gongen* of the buddhas" (pp. 195-96). Although such an appropriation of Shintō deities into a Buddhist doctrinal framework may have become particularly widespread in the Kamakura period, one should note that the text that Rotermund uses as the basis for this claim was written by a Buddhist monk for the express purpose of leading his readers to the realization of the ultimate truth of Buddhism. In that sense, it is only quite natural that the *kami* in the stories that this monk selects preach Buddhist doctrines, which in turn calls into question the extent to which one can generalize about the Buddhist character of *kami* in this period based on this text alone.

Ruben L. F. Habito closes the section of historical studies with an article that introduces arguments by Japanese scholars of Buddhist history regarding the impact of the Tendai doctrine of innate enlightenment on the thought of Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren, former Tendai clerics and the founders of new religious movements in the Kamakura period. Habito focuses on the work of Tamura Yoshirō, who analyzed the thought of these four religious innovators in terms of its relationship to this Tendai doctrine. While praising Tamura's insight into the significance of Tendai thought for these innovators, Habito also cautions that Tamura's criterion for appraisal may be too narrowly defined, which he argues leads to an oversimplification of the issues involved that obscures rather than elucidates the nature of the influence that Tendai doctrine had on them. By providing a succinct synopsis and a measured analysis of Tamura's work, Habito's contribution, along with Roturmond's, helps us to see Shin Buddhism within the wider context of the religious environment of Kamakura Japan.

The section of textual studies contains three articles, one on Chinese Pure Land Buddhism and two on Japanese Pure Land, that emphasize that Pure Land devotion in both countries went far beyond the bounds of the sectarian divisions that are prevalent today and that also tend to inform our understanding of the history of its development. First, Kenneth K. Tanaka, in his second contribution to this collection, considers the initial use of a few terms that have become part of the sectarian lexicon of Japanese Pure Land and Shin Buddhism by Jingying Huiyuan, an exegete long regarded as being in opposition to these schools. Tanaka argues that Huiyuan's use of these terms in his commentaries on Pure Land scriptures, and the fact that he wrote commentaries on these scriptures, indicates that Pure Land devotion was far more widespread among Chinese clerics than is allowed for by the sharp, exclusivist distinctions that serve as the foundation of the Japanese Pure Land schools. In this way, Tanaka calls for a reevaluation of Huiyuan, and the scholastic lineage that he represents, as Pure Land devotees in a broad sense of the term, and encourages the development of a more accurate picture of the contours of the religious landscape of Sui and Tang China.

"Shinzei's *Discourse on Practicing the Samādhi of Meditating on the Buddha*" is Richard K. Payne's contribution of a translation of a short text written by a Tendai monk in the middle of the Muromachi period. In his brief introduction to this text, Payne discusses the practice of visualization and its import to Shinzei, whom he characterizes as a member of the established Buddhist schools attempting to respond to the developments of the religious arena in the Kamakura and Muromachi periods by offering a *nenbutsu* practice within the Tendai doctrinal framework. The text itself is short, a mere twelve lines in the Taishō canon, and can be broken into two parts. The first is a discussion of the benefits received through the practice of meditating on the Buddha, many of which are similar to the benefits of faith and vocal *nenbutsu* described by Hōnen, Shinran, and their followers. The second part is Shinzei's vow to lead all sentient beings

to enlightenment and assist in their meditative practices, which seems to echo the vows taken by Amida in the *Wuliangshoujing*. In this article, we see that, in Japan as well, devotion to Amida was not exclusively confined to the new Pure Land schools that developed in the Kamakura period, but had a far wider influence, even within the established schools.

In "Rennyo's Legacy: *The Letters* as Scripture," Minor L. Rogers and Ann T. Rogers discuss the process by which the letters of the "restorer of Shin Buddhism," Rennyo, were elevated to the status of scripture in the Shin tradition and consider some of the consequences of that canonization. They first discuss the status both Shinran and Rennyo accorded to the words of the sutras, treatises, and commentaries as scripture and the manner in which these texts were employed in their teaching activities. Then, they briefly describe of the activities of Rennyo's successors that led to the collection and publication of eighty of Rennyo's letters in five fascicles, which they argue eventually became not only a centerpiece of the Shin liturgy, but also a font of interpretive authority in doctrinal matters. The article then introduces two examples of the pervasiveness of the influence of Rennyo's letters after his death: a confessional statement and a letter of adjudication written by the Nishi Honganji Abbot to end a doctrinal conflict, both of which drew heavily on the language and the thought of Rennyo's letters. Through these examples, they show the way in which Rennyo's straightforward explications of Shinran's teachings became the center of Shin doctrine at all levels of the Shin community.

The final section, "Interpretive Studies," consists of five articles on disparate subjects, connected by a common concern to see the significance of Pure Land Buddhist teachings in the light of present-day concerns. The first article, "The Brilliance of Emptiness: Tanluan as a Mystic of Light" by Roger J. Corless, is a short piece that hints at the possibility of considering Tanluan's thought as the source of a Buddhist ecology. Corless first delineates two types of mysticism in the Buddhist tradition which interact with the fact of an ineffable, ultimate truth in completely opposite ways. One, which he terms "apohic," from the Sanskrit "to take away," brings the seeker to realization of this truth through the denial, or taking away, of philosophical positions that obstruct that realization. He argues that the other, which he terms "alamkaric," from the Sanskrit "ornament," is represented in Tanluan's explications of the subtle nature of the ornaments of the Pure Land as an expression of ultimate truth in form. He describes this way of interacting with truth as reflecting a mysticism of light, and suggests that it may serve as a basis for the creation of a Buddhist ecology, but unfortunately describes only his hunch and does not discuss his vision.

Jōryū Chiba discusses the significance of the use of the characters of the name of Amida as the central object of devotion in his article, "*Honzon*: Object of Worship in Shin Buddhism." After briefly introducing the history of the use of images to represent the Buddha in India, he discusses Shinran's understanding of the role of Amida, and of all the images thereof, showing that Shinran encouraged the use of the characters of Amida's name as the object of worship in order to discourage the tendency to interpret Amida as an actually existent savior figure. Chiba then describes how Rennyo, too, emphasized the use of the characters of Amida's name as the most appropriate image to serve as the central object of worship, while discouraging the use of depictions of Amida in human form, because such depictions led to a misapprehension of the nature of Amida. Chiba's consideration of the history and significance of the Shin *honzon* ends with Rennyo, although one should note that the vast majority of Shin temples today have a statue of Amida Buddha in the center of the main temple building, instead of a character scroll as Rennyo suggests. While a consideration of this change in the Shin *honzon* over the five hundred years since Rennyo's time might make the article more compelling, apparently Chiba's primary concern was with asserting that now, as then, the Shin *honzon* is no more than a representation enshrined for the purpose of guiding us to the truth of suchness.

In "Shin Buddhist Studies and Secularization," Mitsuya Dake takes up the question of what Shin Buddhist studies has to offer in response to the conditions of the current world, particularly in terms of the issue of secularization. Drawing on the theologian Rudolph Bultmann's interpretation of secularization as an opportunity for the reaffirmation of religious truths through the demythologization of the Bible, Dake attempts to see the conditions of secularization as an opportunity for Shin Buddhist studies to reevaluate its role in society and within the Shin community. He suggests Shinran's declaration that "I am now neither a monk nor one in worldly life" could serve as the doctrinal standpoint from which to perform this reevaluation, and continues with a careful consideration of the context in which Shinran uses this expression in the postscript to his *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Dake concludes that the mission of Shin Buddhist studies in the future is to clarify the meaning of Shinran's declaration under the conditions of secularization today and that the

tension between poles, religious and secular, will provide the motive force for the further development of Shin doctrinal studies.

Gilbert L. Johnston's article, "The Theme of Subjectivity in Kiyozawa Manshi's *Seishinshugi*," analyzes the subjective nature of the faith that Kiyozawa championed late in his short life and suggests that, while over one hundred years old, it may offer us a solid foundation for life today. He first briefly situates the development of Kiyozawa's position on subjectivity within the context of his life and his thought, and discusses the relatively positive evaluation of things "subjective" in both Western and Buddhist thought at the end of the nineteenth century. Johnston then considers Kiyozawa's understanding of subjectivity by introducing nine different selections on the topic written during the last two years of his life. These selections show that Kiyozawa took issue with the attempt to value objectivity more than subjectivity prevalent in modernist thought and also held that religious truth lay in the intuition of the subjective fact of the salvific power of the Buddha. Johnston shows that in this subjective stance, Kiyozawa does not posit the objective existence of a Buddha to be believed in, but instead holds that the Buddha comes to exist for him precisely because he has faith in it. Through his discussion, Johnston calls for a reconsideration of the significance of Kiyozawa's thought as perhaps offering an alternative to modernist emphasis on the priority of objective truth that has been called into question again in the past few decades.

The final article in the collection, "The Buddhist Churches of America: Challenges for Change in the Twenty-first Century" by Tetsuden Kashima, provides a balanced look at the challenges and possibilities facing Nishi Honganji's mission in the continental United States in the last decade of the twentieth century. In particular, Kashima points out five internal challenges that need to be addressed in order for the mission to survive, if not grow, in the future: 1) slowly declining membership, 2) the ethnic character of the churches, 3) economic issues facing the organization, 4) effective methods for the propagation of Shin teachings, and 5) training and support of the ministry. Written in 1991, this article provides a clear picture of the state of the BCA some twenty years ago, but that picture is quite different today. The past twenty years have seen changes in the demographics of temple membership, the financial situation of the BCA, the availability of translations and interpretive works on Shin doctrine, as well as the institution by the BCA of a program for training ministerial assistants from among the membership. While this article provides valuable information about the background of these recent changes, it does not accurately reflect the state of the Nishi Honganji mission today.

Indeed, perhaps the only criticism that needs be leveled at this collection as a whole is the dated nature of some of the articles. Lewin's article was originally published in German in 1962, nearly fifty years ago, while the most recent of the articles was published in 1996, over a decade ago. Many of the articles reflect more the concerns of Buddhist scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as Buddhist ecology, innate enlightenment thought, and a multicentered genesis of the Mahāyāna, than the theme taken up as the title of the work, *Shin Buddhism*. While many of these articles were certainly valuable contributions offering fresh insights to the field of Buddhist studies when originally published, one must question the value of their republication under the sometimes unfitting label of Shin Buddhism. That said, by presenting articles that display the breadth of the Pure Land tradition in India, China, and Japan, as well as devoting over a quarter of the total pages of the text to two of the lesser studied Shin patriarchs, Daochuo and Genshin, this collection clarifies aspects of Pure Land Buddhism, in general, and Shin Buddhism, in particular, that tend to fall by the wayside in more traditional sectarian studies, while at the same time attempting to address the issue of what Shin Buddhism and Shin Buddhist studies can say to religious seekers of the present. In that sense, the collection is an appropriate reflection of the nature and concerns of its publisher, The Institute of Buddhist Studies, which is not just a center for the academic pursuit of Buddhist studies, but also serves as a training center for the ministry of Nishi Honganji's mission in the States and therefore conducts both descriptive and normative studies of Buddhism under one roof. As such, this collection clearly has much to offer to both the academic-minded seeker and the religiously oriented academic with an interest in Shin Buddhism.

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Citation: Michael Conway. Review of Payne, Richard, ed., *Shin Buddhism: Historical, Textual, and Interpretive Studies*. H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews. June, 2010.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=26309

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