

Recent Religion - December 2019

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Buddhism after Mao: Negotiations, Continuities, and Reinventions / Ji Zhe, Gareth Fisher & Andre Laliberte (Eds)

University of Hawaii Press, USA 2019

viii, 356p. ; 7 b&w illustrations

Includes Index ; Bibliography references

9780824877347

\$ 72.00 / HB

650 gm.

1. Buddhism - China - History - 1949-

With well over 100 million adherents, Buddhism emerged from near-annihilation during the Cultural Revolution to become the largest religion in China today. Despite this, Buddhism's rise has received relatively little scholarly attention. The present volume, with contributions by leading scholars in sociology, anthropology, political science, and religious studies, explores the evolution of Chinese Buddhism in the post-Mao period with a depth not seen before in a single study. Chapters critically analyze the effects of state policies on the evolution of Buddhist institutions; the challenge of rebuilding temples under the watchful eye of the state; efforts to rebuild monastic lineages and schools left broken in the aftermath of Mao's rule; and the development of new lay Buddhist spaces, both at temple sites and online.

Through its multidisciplinary perspectives, the book provides both an extensive overview of the social and political conditions under which Buddhism has grown as well as discussions of the individual projects of both monastic and lay entrepreneurs who dynamically and creatively carve out spaces for Buddhist growth in contemporary Chinese society. As a wide-ranging study that illuminates many facets of China's Buddhist revival, Buddhism after Mao will be required reading for scholars of Chinese Buddhism and of Buddhism and modernity more broadly. Its detailed case studies examining the intersections among religion, state, and contemporary Chinese society will be welcomed by sociologists and anthropologists of China, political scientists focusing on the role of religion in state formation in Asian societies, and all those interested in the relationship between religion and social change.

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Chinese Pure Land Buddhism: Understanding a Tradition of Practice / Charles B. Jones

University of Hawaii Press, USA 2019

xvi, 206p. ; 7 b&w illustrations

Includes Index ; Bibliography

9780824879716

\$ 68.00 / HB

500 gm.

## 1. Pure Land Buddhism – China.

Chinese Pure Land Buddhism: Understanding a Tradition of Practice is the first book in any western language to provide a comprehensive overview of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. Even though Pure Land Buddhism was born in China and currently constitutes the dominant form of Buddhist practice there, it has previously received very little attention from western scholars. In this book, Charles B. Jones examines the reasons for the lack of scholarly attention and why the few past treatments of the topic missed many of its distinctive features. He argues that the Chinese Pure Land tradition, with its characteristic promise of rebirth in the Pure Land to even non-elite or undeserving practitioners, should not be viewed from the perspective of the Japanese Pure Land tradition, which differs greatly. More accurately contextualizing Chinese Pure Land Buddhism within the landscape of Chinese Buddhism and the broader global Buddhist tradition, this work celebrates Chinese Pure Land, not as a school or sect, but as a unique and inherently valuable "tradition of practice."

This volume is organized thematically, clearly presenting topics such as the nature of the Pure Land, the relationship between "self-power" and "other-power," the practice of nianfo (buddha-recollection), and the formation of the line of "patriarchs" that keep the tradition grounded. It guides us in understanding the vigorous debates that Chinese Pure Land Buddhism evoked and delves into the rich apologetic literature that it produced in its own defense. Drawing upon a wealth of previously unexamined primary source materials, as well as modern texts by contemporary Chinese Pure Land masters, the author provides lucid translations of resources previously unavailable in English. He also shares his lifetime of experience in this field, enlivening the narrative with personal anecdotes of his visits to sites of Pure Land practice in China and Taiwan. The straightforward and nontechnical prose makes this book a standby resource for anyone interested in pursuing research in this lively, sophisticated, and still-evolving religious tradition. Scholars—including undergraduates—specializing in East Asian Buddhism, as well as those interested in Buddhism or Chinese religion and history in general, will find this book invaluable.

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Morality and Monastic Revival in Post-Mao Tibet / Jane E. Caple

University of Hawaii Press, USA 2019

xii, 220p. ; 9 b&w illustrations

Includes Index ; Bibliography

9780824869847

\$ 65.00 / HB

1.Dge-lugs-pa (Sect) – China – Tibet Autonomous Region – Customs and practices.

2.Monastic and religious life (Buddhism) – China – Tibet – Autonomous Region.

3.Buddhist monasteries – China – Tibet Autonomous Region

The speed and extent of the Tibetan Buddhist monastic revival make it one of the most extraordinary stories of religious resurgence in post-Mao China. At the end of the 1970s, there were no working monasteries; within a decade, thousands had been reconstructed and repopulated. Most studies have focused on the political challenges facing Tibetan monasteries, emphasizing their relationship to the Chinese state. Yet, in their efforts to revive and develop their institutions, monks have also had to negotiate a rapidly changing society, playing a delicate balancing act fraught with moral dilemma as well as political danger. Drawing on the recent “moral turn” in anthropology, this volume, the first full-length ethnographic study of the subject, explores the social and moral dimensions of monastic revival and reform across a range of Geluk monasteries in northeast Tibet (Amdo/Qinghai Province) from the 1980s on.

Author Jane Caple’s analysis shows that ideas and debates about how best to maintain the mundane bases of monastic Buddhism—economy and population—are intermeshed with those concerning the proper role and conduct of monks and the ethics of monastic-lay relations. Facing a shrinking monastic population, monks are grappling with the impacts of secular education, demographic transition, rising living standards, urbanization, and marketization, all of which have driven debates within Buddhism elsewhere and fueled perceptions of monastic decline. Some Tibetans—including monks—are even questioning the “good” of the mass form of monasticism that has been a distinctive feature of Tibetan society for hundreds of years. Given monastic Buddhism’s integral position in Tibetan community life and association with Tibetan identity, Caple argues that its precarity in relation to Tibetan society raises questions about its future that go well beyond the issue of religious freedom.

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Shinra Myojin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian “Mediterranean” / Sujung Kim

University of Hawaii Press, USA 2020

xii, 182p. ; 10 b&w illustrations, 2 maps.

Includes Index ; Bibliography

9780824877996

\$ 68.00 / HB

450 gm.

1. Shinra Myōjin (Buddhist deity).
2. Buddhism – Japan – History – 1185-1600.
3. Buddhism – Korea – History.

This ambitious work offers a transnational account of the deity Shinra Myōjin, the “god of Silla” worshipped in medieval Japanese Buddhism from the eleventh to sixteenth centuries. Sujung Kim challenges the long-held understanding of Shinra Myōjin as a protective deity of the Tendai Jimon school, showing how its worship emerged and developed in the complex networks of the East Asian “Mediterranean”—a “quality” rather than a physical space defined by Kim as the primary conduit for cross-cultural influence in a region that includes the Yellow Sea, the Sea of Japan (East Sea), the East China Sea, and neighboring coastal areas. While focusing on the transcultural worship of the deity, Kim engages the different maritime arrangements in which Shinra Myōjin circulated: first, the network of Korean immigrants, Chinese merchants, and Japanese Buddhist monks in China’s Shandong peninsula and Japan’s Omi Province; and second, that of gods found in the East Asian Mediterranean. Both of these networks became nodal points of exchange of both goods and gods. Kim’s examination of temple chronicles, literary writings, and iconography reveals Shinra Myōjin’s evolution from a seafaring god to a multifaceted one whose roles included the god of pestilence and of poetry, the insurer of painless childbirth, and the protector of performing arts.

Shinra Myōjin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian “Mediterranean” is not only the first monograph in any language on the Tendai Jimon school in Japanese Buddhism, but also the first book-length study in English to examine Korean connections in medieval Japanese religion. Unlike other recent studies on individual Buddhist deities, it foregrounds the need to approach them within a broader East Asian context. By shifting the paradigm from a land-centered vision to a sea-centered one, the work underlines the importance of a transcultural and interdisciplinary approach to the study of Buddhist deities.

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Guardians of the Buddha's Home : Domestic Religion in Contemporary Jodo Shinshu / Jessica Starling (Series Ed)

University of Hawaii Press, USA 2019

xi, 316p. ; 7 b&w illustrations

Includes Index

9781137537515 ?

\$ 62.00 / HB

600 gm.

1. Shin (Sect) – Japan – Customs and practices – Case studies.
2. Women in Buddhism – Japan – Case studies.
3. Buddhist women – Religious life – Japan – Case studies.

In *Guardians of the Buddha’s Home*, Jessica Starling draws on nearly three years of ethnographic research to provide a comprehensive view of Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land) temple life with temple wives (known as bōmori, or temple guardians) at its center. Throughout, she focuses on “domestic religion,” a mode of doing religion centering on more informal religious expression that has received scant attention in the scholarly literature.

The Buddhist temple wife’s movement back and forth between the main hall and the “back stage” of the kitchen and family residence highlights the way religious meaning cannot be confined to canonical texts or to the area of the temple prescribed for formal worship. Starling argues that attaining Buddhist faith (shinjin) is just as likely to occur in response to a simple act of hospitality, a sense of community experienced at an informal temple gathering, or an aesthetic affinity with the temple space that has been carefully maintained by the bōmori as it is from hearing the words of a Pure Land sutra intoned by a professional priest. For temple wives, the spiritual practice of button hōsha (repayment of the debt owed to the Buddha for one’s salvation) finds expression through the conscientious stewardship of temple donations, caring for the Buddha’s home and opening it to lay followers, raising the temple’s children, and propagating the teachings in the domestic sphere. Engaging with what religious scholars have called the “turn to affect,” Starling’s work investigates in personal detail how religious dispositions are formed in individual practitioners. The answer, not surprisingly, has as much to do with intimate relationships and quotidian practices as with formal liturgies or scripted sermons.

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