

One might highlight the skew towards modern history (the last four chapters deal with events post-dating 1900), and I find the cover illustration a rather poor choice: something more classically East Asian would be more appealing (the catalogue of the recent China exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which ended on January 14, 2014, would provide a host of samples). One reviewer has highlighted the book's superficiality and lack of depth. I would not readily concur here: for a Western audience, at least, there is everything to be learned here. Perhaps the reviewer is confusing superficiality with the strictures imposed by writing about four millennia within 350 pages.

While the author grounds a lot of his research and guides students towards further reading in relation to a corpus of solid American university texts on East Asia, more could be made of what East Asians themselves write on their history. I was surprised too that top UK historians like Frances Wood, Head of Chinese Collections at the British Library, were omitted from the Bibliography.

A new edition is in the pipeline on the basis that a lot has happened in East Asia since this one of 2010/11: the Chinese Olympics, the nuclear devastation in Japan, the new regime in North Korea following the death of Kim Jong-il in December 2011, and its recent victims etc. There are certain things I would add: a map with the names of the current Chinese provinces; a different cover, as already mentioned; one or two turns of phrase – for example, I am not sure what “sincere morality” is (p. 56), does Holcombe mean a less prescriptive morality? Terms like Japan's “Inland Sea” (内海) might be elucidated for readers. Finally, one of the largest developments in the literature over the last fifteen years has been in Pacific Rim history (journals, conferences, an entire Ashgate book series). I was surprised that this term does not even figure in the Index: those historians who champion that history would include Japan and even China as Pacific Rim, though I have complained previously that swathes of Chinese history are marked by a turning-away from sea-borne enterprise rather than an engagement with it (see my review “The Pacific World, 1500–1900”, in the official journal of the FEEGI forum *Itinerario* 30:1 (March 2006), pp. 83–86)!

All things considered, I would, strongly recommend this book. It has more focus, depth and illustrations than Colin Mason's *A Short History of Asia*, Palgrave Macmillan 2014, and I will use it in class to replace worthwhile but older text books like Marius B. Jansen's *Japan and Its World: Two Centuries of Change*, 1980.

Luminous Bliss: A Religious History of Pure Land Literature in Tibet. By Georgios T. Halkias.

Pure Land Buddhist Studies Series, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013. Pp. 335. ISBN 10: 0824835905; ISBN 13: 978-0824835903.

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Georgios Halkias' *Luminous Bliss* represents an admirable and critical piece of scholarship, which has brought a long-awaited attention to the textual and ritual traditions of Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet. It is an essential read not only for those specializing in Pure Land Buddhism or Tibetan Buddhism, but also for those interested in the broader themes of Mahāyāna and tantric traditions of South, Central, and Inner Asia. In his preliminary remarks in “Buddhisms and Other Conventions,” Halkias articulates his hesitation in employing the term “Pure Land Buddhism” with reference to Tibet due to the term's common association with the East Asian Mahāyāna development of a devotion to Amitābha and his Sukhāvātī. Nevertheless, he settles on the term “Tibetan Pure Land Buddhism” as a generic term for reasons of comparison with Pure Land developments in South and East Asia and to differentiate Amitābha-centered trends from those associated with other deities. Halkias does not want the reader to assume that this term and his analysis of the given material

suggest that there was a self-conscious and doctrinally independent movement of Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet. With the term “Pure Land Literature,” he refers to the body of the relevant Tibetan texts, such as prayers for rebirth in Sukhāvātī, commentaries on the Pure Land doctrine, and devotional texts to tantric deities, which express the ideas of faith and liberation in Amitābha’s *buddha*-field. Although Amitābha’s *buddha*-field receives primary attention in the book, Halkias, following Nattier’s argument of 2003, demonstrates his awareness that the term “Sukhāvātī” may stand for any of the countless *buddha*-fields in different world-systems. The book challenges us to think of Pure Land Buddhism as a broader category that permeates diverse strands of Buddhism in diverse geographical and cultural regions.

Outlining the history of Pure Land literature in Tibet, Halkias seeks to achieve two objectives. One is to clarify and problematize certain aspects of the Pure Land tradition in Tibet and its theoretical foundations; and the other is to remedy the misconceptions of the Pure Land soteriology as merely devotional or as antithetical to the early Buddhist ideas of self-reliance and to Mahāyāna’s call to a Bodhisattva’s continued perseverance in *samsāra*. Halkias’ textual analysis of a spectrum of selected, influential works related to Sukhāvātī found in all major schools of Tibetan Buddhism involves their contents, historical situatedness, and, when appropriate, their practical applications. Texts are selected from the canonical and paracanonical sources, collected works of individual authors, and from ritual cycles of teachings. The reader is also introduced here to the important Tibetan authors of the relevant sources.

The organization of the book follows a historical and a traditional Tibetan line of classification. The book is structured into six chapters grouped into three main parts, each containing two chapters. Part 1, titled “Early Pure Land Traditions in India, Tibet, and Central Asia,” gives a general overview of the historical milieu in which the expressions of a devotion to Amitābha and his Pure Land emerged. Part 2, “Pure Land Texts in Tibetan Contexts,” is devoted to the analysis and English translation of the short *Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra* from Tibetan and to the descriptions of Pure Land commentarial literature in Tibet. In Part 3, titled “Pure Lands and Pure Visions,” Halkias concerns himself with tantric appropriations of Sukhāvātī. The material is chronologically divided. The book begins with Indian antecedents, particularly with the formulation of various Indian Mahāyāna views of Pure Lands and with a brief analysis of archeological and textual sources that suggest diverse origins of Amitābha and his association with solar deities and solar-cult rites in India. Chapter 2 addresses the first diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet, laying out a historical background to cultural and religious exchanges and intrareligious contacts in Central and Inner Asia, where some of the finest expressions of Pure Land Buddhism came to light. This is followed by a discussion of the second diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet, and the developments of Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet are discussed in Chapters 3–6, where the material is divided into *sūtra* (Chapters 3–4) and *tantra* (Chapters 5–6). Halkias dedicates a considerable portion of the book to historical narratives that have shaped and reinforced Tibetan beliefs about Pure Lands and Pure Land doctrines and practices.

Halkias’ analysis of the earliest records of Tibetan translations of the long and short *Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtras* from Sanskrit, listed with different titles and sizes in the imperial *Denkarma* and *Phangthangma Catalogues*, shows that two different Sanskrit texts were consulted for the translation of the long *Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra* into Tibetan. The exact origins of the two different Sanskrit versions and what happened to them remains unknown, since texts from Central Tibet dating to the imperial period have not survived. His analysis of different editions also suggests that available Tibetan translations were most likely prepared in the ninth century. In the case of each, the long and short *Sukhāvātīvyūha Sūtra*, colophons in different editions of the Tibetan canon show discrepancies concerning their Tibetan translators, about whom they tell us very little. Thus, uncertainties regarding the translators in question and the more precise dates of translations remain unsolved.

Chapter 3 is dedicated exclusively to the short *Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra*. Halkias gives here an overview of the various editions of the short *Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra* from the eight different collections of the bKa' 'gyur and the analysis of the contents and structure of the Tibetan version of the text, followed by his translation of the *sūtra* based on the Derge edition. Annotations to the text are provided in the endnote section of the volume. In the following chapter, we are introduced to nine well-known Tibetan authors who wrote on Pure Land doctrine and practice in their commentaries, based on the short and long *Sukhāvativyūha Sūtras*. The chapter also introduces the reader to selected aspirational prayers for rebirth in Sukhāvātī and practical guides on Amitābha meditations. The authors, whose dates vary, ranging from the fourteenth to the early twentieth century, are among the most prominent representatives of the four main traditions of the Tibetan Buddhism. Halkias' selection of authors is also inspired by the two-volume *Anthology of Aspirational Prayers (bDe smon phyogs bsgrigs)*, published in China in 1994. The first mentioned among them is Tsong kha pa, whose *Prayer for Birth in Sukhāvātī: Opening the Door of Sublime Field*, composed in 1395, significantly influenced the *bde smon* genre and inspired commentaries from Tibetan scholars of traditions other than dGe lugs. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the texts composed by three Sa skya masters, namely, Sakya Paṇḍita's *Meditation on Amitābha*, Go rams bsod nams seng ge's *Pure Land Eulogy*, and 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen rtse's *Abridged Sleep-Meditation on Amitābha*. Summaries of the Pure Land texts of the authors from other traditions are also provided in this chapter.

Halkias' examination of the tantric material associated with Aparamitāyus lineages, Amitābha, and his Pure Land in Chapters 5 and 6 is especially noteworthy. In Chapter 6, he brings to the reader's attention an array of material associated with tantric practices in which Sukhāvātī plays a part. These are *dhāraṇīs* connected to mortuary rites, life-extending rituals, fire rituals, tantric *sādhanas*, and texts on *pho ba* practices, "treasure" literature (*gter ma*) that recounts celestial encounters with Amitābha, and tantric ritual texts for reaching Sukhāvātī and invoking its protectors. In the epilogue, Halkias recognizes that it is tempting to read signs of millennialism or collective social distress in the emergence of devotion to Amitābha in Tibet, especially when looking at the intersections of Pure Land cosmography, Mahāyāna soteriology, and religious and political strategies of state building. But he correctly notes that spatial metaphors that describe both physical and semantic space are as diachronically appealing as they may be synchronically relevant.

The book also contains three appendices and copious and informative footnotes. In conclusion, the *Luminous Bliss* creates a milestone for research on Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet. It is written in an accessible manner and should be on syllabi of graduate courses in Tibetan Buddhism.

The Sugar Plantation in India and Indonesia: Industrial Production, 1770–2010. By Ulbe Bosma.

Studies in Comparative World History, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xii + 323. ISBN 10: 110703969X; ISBN 13: 978-1107039698.

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According to the UN's FAO Statistical Data (retrieved on 7 August 2014), India was the second largest producer of sugar cane in the world in 2010 after Brazil, producing 20,637 thousand tons of sugar (raw centrifugal). Meanwhile Indonesia was merely the tenth largest producer of sugar cane in the world, producing 1,770 thousand tons of sugar (ranking the sixth largest in Asia and Oceania after India, China, Thailand, Australia and Pakistan). However, in terms of net export (export minus import) in the same year, India imported 469 thousand tons and Indonesia also imported 1,380 thousand tons of sugar. The most significant exporters of sugar in Asia and Oceania were Australia and