Luminous Bliss: a religious history of Pure Land literature in Tibet

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LUMINOUS BLISS: A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF PURE LAND LITERATURE IN TIBET

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ABOUT THE BOOK

With an annotated English translation and critical analysis of the Orgyan-gling gold manuscript of the short Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra, Luminous Bliss shows that Tibetan Pure Land literature exemplifies a synthesis of Mahāyāna sutra-based conceptions with a Vajrayana world-view that fits progressive and sudden approaches to the realization of Pure Land teachings. Part I covers the origins and development of Pure Land in India and the historical circumstances of its adaptation in Tibet and Central Asia. Part II offers an English translation of the short Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra (imported from India during the Tibetan Empire) and contains a survey of original Tibetan Pure Land scriptures and meditative techniques from the dGe-lugs-pa, bKa'-brgyud, rNying-ma, and Sa-skya schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Part III introduces some of the most innovative and popular mortuary cycles and practices related to the Tantric cult of Buddha Amitābha and his Pure Land from the Treasure traditions in the bKa'-brgyud and rNying-ma schools.

Luminous Bliss locates Pure Land Buddhism at the core of Tibet's religious heritage and demonstrates how this tradition constitutes an integral part of both Tibetan and East Asian Buddhism.
While offering a general history of Buddhism in Tibet, the author pays special attention to the transmission of ideas within the Pure Land orbit (i.e., Kamalāśīla’s ideas about buddha-fields). This chapter ends with a lengthy survey of Pure Land literature in Tibet, beginning with the Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtras, but moving on to other scriptures, such as the Ārya-aparimitāyur-mahāyāna-sūtra, for which the author provides a translation, and an aspirational prayer from Dunhuang 敦煌. Citation: Charles B. Jones. Review of Halkias, Georgios T., Luminous Bliss: A Religious History of Pure Land Literature in Tibet. H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews. February, 2014.

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