

The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism, edited by Mario Poceski, Wiley Blackwell (Wiley Blackwell companions to religion), 2014. xv + 552pp. Hb. £120, ISBN-13: 9781118610336. Also available as an e-book.

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Keywords

China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Tiantai and Huayen, Chan, Pure Land, women, monasticism, worship, Daoism, Canon, pilgrimage, funerary rites, poetry, arts, tantric practice, medicine

This compendium — analogous to others in its series — brings together articles by twenty-five scholars concerned with what Poceski's introduction recognizes as a multitude of fields. The editor affirms that those working under the umbrella of Buddhist studies are of course engaged in a range of investigations — historical, philosophical, sociological and so on — and that this volume wishes to express the diversity of their subject matter, and of their approaches, when considering Buddhist traditions across East and Central Asia. This review keeps in mind the intention of the Wiley Blackwell series: to provide original contributions to the field that are accessible also to an undergraduate readership; and to present for those established in these fields, and others, lucid reflections on the current state of scholarship. As elsewhere in this series, expansive bibliographies provided by each author (bringing together up-to-date Western and Eastern scholarship on each topic) are a rich resource for the interested reader.

From the outset it is established that this volume is a companion piece to another that is forthcoming, edited by Michael Zimmermann, concerned with South and Southeast Asian Buddhism. As such the Indian Buddhist tradition that was the precursor and a foundation for those of other Asian cultures is not considered in much detail here, but authors of chapters wherein knowledge of the Indian tradition would be useful give due attention to what will no doubt be more discussed in the next volume. The twenty-five articles of this compendium are divided into five sections: concerned with the history of Buddhism in relevant regions (five chapters); doctrinal overviews (four chapters); popular practices (five chapters); institutional and inter-religious concerns (three chapters); literature and art (four chapters); and modern developments (four chapters). For the purposes of this review, and keeping in mind the editor's recognition that its audience may well have a dominant interest in one tradition under consideration or another, I will consider the volume from the perspectives of readers approaching the collection as such.

The greater number of chapters concern the Chinese Buddhist tradition, the history of which is well detailed in a chapter contributed by the editor. In the

section concerning doctrine, we find two chapters on the uniquely East Asian permutations of Buddhism that are the Tiantai and Huayen schools (by Haiyen Shen and Imre Hamar respectively), which are fine introductions to the foundations of their teachings, and discussion also of competing orthodoxies in the history of Chan (and later Zen) tradition (by Albert Welter). Under the sub-heading of 'popular practices', the Pure Land tradition of China is explored by Jimmy Yu in a manner that questions its coherence as a discrete school of Buddhism, as it has sometimes been considered through comparison with the Jōdoshū and Jōdo Shinshū of Japan. A chapter on monasticism in East Asia (Huaiyu Chen) focuses on the reception and transformation of monastic tradition in China, while another concerning women in East Asian Buddhism (Lori Meeks) is a welcome evaluation of the place of women in Buddhist history across China, Korea and Japan. Also focused on China is a chapter on the worship and representation of key bodhisattvas, by Natasha Heller. Two highlights are a chapter on the interplay of motifs and themes between the Buddhist and Daoist traditions of medieval China (Livia Kohn), and another on the development of the Chinese Buddhist canon (Jiang Wu), which not only maps out well the complicated history of such an entity, but addresses also its function and treatment throughout Chinese history.

Comparable chapters discuss the history of Buddhism in Korea (Sem Vermeersch) and in Japan (Heather Blair). The latter references reassessments of Japanese historical narratives that foreshadow issues raised in a later chapter (Melissa Anne-Marie Curley), concerning the continuing discussion of the identity and role of Buddhism in modern Japan. Other chapters deal with the turbulent history of Buddhism in Korea up to the present day (Pori Park), and, retaining an anthropological eye, the study of funerary rites and the continuing practice of pilgrimage in Japanese history (Nam-lin Hur and Hendrik van der Veere respectively). There are chapters also on the interplay between poetry and Buddhism (Beata Grant), and between it and the plastic arts and architecture across East Asia (Michelle C.Wang).

Comparatively fewer pages are devoted to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition (an account analogous to that mentioned above, of Tibet's own rich artistic tradition, perhaps being a conspicuous omission), though what is provided should in particular benefit students of Buddhism taking their first steps into the complex history and practices of this tradition. As well as a thorough account of the history of Buddhism in Tibet (James B. Apple), another chapter (David B. Gray) maps the shape of tantric Buddhist practice therein: admirable as an overview of the many directions in which the Indian tradition developed beyond the Himalayas. A further contribution, on Tibetan healing (Geoffrey Samuel), covers the history and current state of the Tibetan medical tradition and its relationship to other types of healing: a worthwhile addition for demonstrating that the study of Buddhist influence extends in many directions.

A chapter by Phillip Stanley on the composition and development of the Tibetan canon achieves comparable aims to that concerned with the Chinese canon, and again does more than trace the history and structure of these entities, addressing also their role in the religious life of Buddhist communities. Both of these chapters go some way to question the categories of canonicity, and indeed of scripture, in just the manner that has become necessary to understand more accurately the role and value of texts and genre in the development of Buddhism

across Asia. Such reflections are central to research on the acceptance and adaptation of Buddhism by these cultures, and are presented here in such a manner that invites the less initiated reader to question categories inherited from religious studies in general.

Other chapters outside of the traditions mentioned above require special mention. That concerning Central Asian Buddhism, by Mariko Namba Walter, presents an excellent introduction and overview of literary and archaeological evidence concerning Buddhism among the Kuṣāns and other lost cultures in the first half of the first millennium: a rich source of current and future research. At the other end of history, the final chapters of the volume deal with the European Buddhist tradition (by Inken Prohl; that of the Americas to be dealt with in the other, forthcoming volume) and the presence of Buddhism online (Morten Schlütter): both in terms of practice, and the resources that have transformed research on Buddhist literature in the twenty-first century. A critical account of these, as much as any bibliography, is no doubt a valuable tool for students beginning to find their way through the wealth of digital resources — reliable or otherwise — that are available to today's scholar.

The volume is intended to express the diversity of Buddhist expressions across much of Asia, and as far as it aims at accessibility for students making their first encounters with these forms of the tradition it is to be praised. At their best, some of these chapters question how Buddhism and its interactions with political structures, other religious traditions, and communities across diverse cultures should be considered, and reflect on the complexities and subtleties of discussing Buddhism as a cultural force in different contexts and periods. As a reference tool for the established student of these traditions, this volume provides neat accounts of the trajectories of modern scholarship in one area of Buddhist studies or another, with plenty of references to recent works across these fields. I am more impressed, however, with the benefit some of these chapters may have for students in the earliest stages of navigating the vast and divergent histories of Buddhism across the regions under discussion, and the eloquence with which the subtleties of investigating how these traditions developed are set in relief. In anticipation of its forthcoming companion volume (which is to include further reflection on methodological issues surrounding the study of Buddhism, pertinent to many chapters here), this compendium more than achieves its central aims and provides articles valuable for students engaging with a range of topics.