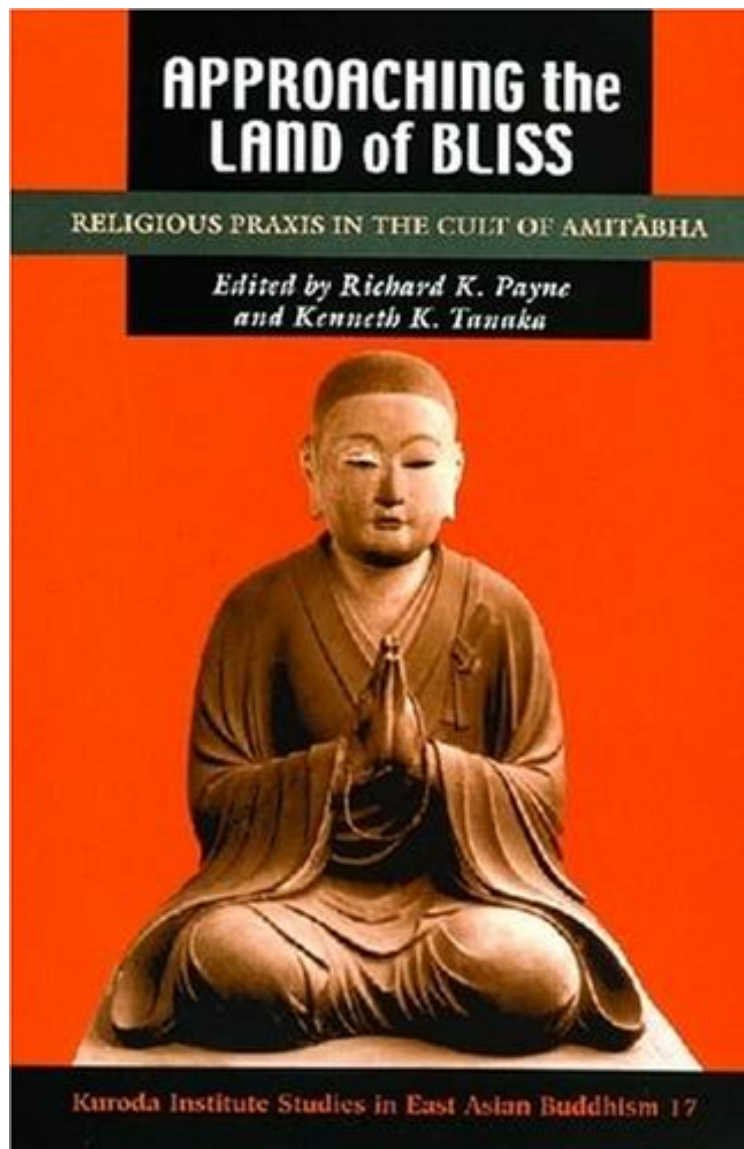


(Free) Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitabha (Studies in East Asian Buddhism)

## Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitabha (Studies in East Asian Buddhism)

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**From Brand: University of Hawaii Press : Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitabha (Studies in East Asian Buddhism)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitabha (Studies in East Asian Buddhism):

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. "This Amida is not the Amida of one school or one person." By Crazy Fox Usually when we think of Pure Land Buddhism, the exclusive sectarian movements in Japan pioneered by Honen and Shinran come to mind. And indeed these are prominent traditions, but "Approaching the Land of Bliss" amply demonstrates that they're not the whole story by a long shot. The focus of this book then is on other forms of religious belief and praxis focused on Amitabha/Amida Buddha and rebirth in his Pure Land, ones that may surprise us by not conforming to our usual images and characterizations of this aspect of Buddhism. The first surprise for me anyway was the very existence of Pure Land motifs in Tibet and Nepal, since usually such are presented as if particular only to East Asia (apparently the authors were initially taken by surprise as well). These motifs though tend to be non-sectarian, part and parcel of a larger encompassing program of Buddhist religiosity, which turns out to be mostly true also in Song Dynasty China and late 20th-century Taiwan--and, surprisingly, also in Japan itself once one gets beyond the Jodo and Jodo Shinshu Schools, which this book does in style. Despite the wide range of articles, the quality is remarkably even, combining a reliably high caliber of scholarly expertise with reasonable readability. Each also contributes fully to the overall theme without feeling shoehorned in, the venial sin of many such a collection. One may not agree with the approach of every single article, of course, and in my case one selection seemed rather too anachronistically and dogmatically Leftist (not to mention overly reliant on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin); still, there's not a one that's not thought-provoking and interesting, and not a one that doesn't challenge common assumptions in intriguing and compelling ways. Highly recommended. Articles included in this book: "Introduction" by Richard K. Payne<sup>1</sup>. "Pure Land Buddhism in Tibet? From Sukhavati to the Field of Great Bliss" by Matthew T. Kapstein<sup>2</sup>. Shengchang's Pure Conduct Society and the Chinese Pure Land Patriarchate" by Daniel Getz<sup>3</sup>. "By the Power of One's Last Nenbutsu: Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan" by Jacqueline I. Stone<sup>4</sup>. "Amida's Secret Life: Kakuban's 'Amida Hishaku'" by James H. Sanford<sup>5</sup>. "'Show Me the Place Where My Mother Is!': Chujohime, Preaching, and Relics in Late Medieval and Early Modern Japan" by Hank Glassman<sup>6</sup>. "'Just Behave as You Like: Prohibitions and Impurities Are Not a Problem': Radical Amida Cults and Popular Religiosity in Premodern Japan" by Fabio Rambelli<sup>7</sup>. "Ungo Kiyō's 'Ojoyōka' and Rinzaï Zen Orthodoxy" by Richard M. Jaffe<sup>8</sup>. "From Generalized Goal to Tantric Subordination: Sukhavati in the Indic Buddhist Traditions of Nepal" by Todd T. Lewis<sup>9</sup>. "Buddha One: A One-Day Buddha Recitation Retreat in Contemporary Taiwan" by Charles B. Jones

The discourse of Buddhist studies has traditionally been structured around texts and nations (the transmission of Buddhism from India to China to Japan). And yet, it is doubtful that these categories reflect in any significant way the organizing themes familiar to most Buddhists. It could be argued that cultic practices associated with particular buddhas and bodhisattvas are more representative of the way Buddhists conceive of their relation to tradition. This volume aims to explore this aspect of Buddhism by focusing on one of its most important cults, that of the Buddha Amitabha. *Approaching the Land of Bliss* is a rich collection of studies of texts and ritual practices devoted to Amitabha, ranging from Tibet to Japan and from early medieval times to the present.

About the Author Richard K. Payne is dean of the Institute of Buddhist Studies at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley. Kenneth K. Tanaka is professor of Buddhist studies at Musashino Women's University, Tokyo. Contributors: Daniel A. Getz, Jr.; Hank Glassman; Richard Jaffe; Charles B. Jones; Matthew T. Kapstein; Todd T. Lewis; Richard K. Payne; Fabio Rambelli; James H. Sanford; Jacqueline I. Stone.