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za pomyslný horizont dosavadního bádání, rozděleného zpravidla na témata „katolická“ a „nekatolická“, a dokumentuje tak společné prvky lidové kultury obou konfesijních stran.

Komplexní (ovšem detailně-analytické) zkoumání, založené na obecněji vymezených otázkách, by mohlo přispět k poznání transformace náboženství 18. a 19. století, respektive pomoci odpovědět na řadu otázek, například: Jak lidé vnímali fenomén staré a nové kultury (společnosti, náboženství)? Jak reagovali na změny uspořádání komunit, na změněné podmínky sociálních vztahů, na nové pracovní možnosti, na „oficiální“ proměnu vztahu společnosti a náboženství? (Skvělou příležitostí ke kombinaci sociologického a kulturně-historického přístupu nabízejí výsledky, ke kterým v poslední době dospělo historickodemografické bádání. Příkladně Alice Velková, *Krutá vrchnost, ubozí poddaní? Proměny venkovské rodiny a společnosti v 18. a první polovině 19. století na příkladu západočeského panství Štáhlavy*, Praha: Historický ústav 2009.) Otázka obecného charakteru lidové kultury jako badatelského problému se ostatně vyskytuje též v závěrečném příspěvku J. Horského, jenž sice zaujímá spíše rezervovanější postoj vůči podobným snahám (respektive upozorňuje na značnou diferenciaci subkultur), nicméně v několika momentech zdůrazňuje potřebu zkoumání vybraných fenoménů bez ohledu na konfesi. Je však otázkou, zda se podaří skloubit konfesijní disparitnost pramenů a také vymezení konkrétních badatelských otázek s nastíněnou teoretickou rovinou. Podnětný recenzovaný sborník je důležitým, byť stále počátečním krokem na této cestě.

TOMÁŠ MALÝ

## Ugo Dessì, Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism,

Berlin et al.: LIT Verlag 2007,  
265 p.  
ISBN 978-3-8258-0815-0.

The quintessence of Japanese Buddhism is frequently held to be found in Zen, a Buddhist tradition that has been made astoundingly well known in the West. In fact, it is not Zen but the Pure Land tradition (*jōdokyō*, occasionally called “Amidism”) that draws upon the majority of Buddhist adherents in contemporary Japan. Both Zen and the Pure Land tradition originated in China, the latter going back to the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> century and the teachings of the monk Tánluán (476-542). Entering Japan about 100 years later, it was not until Hōnen (1133-1212) and his disciple Shinran (1173-1262) that the *jōdokyō* gained momentum, having its first heyday during the Kamakura period (1185-1333). Hōnen laid the foundation of the Pure Land School (*jōdoshū*), whilst Shinran seeing himself as the sole arbiter of his master’s thought, founded the True Pure Land School (*jōdo shinshū* or “Shin Buddhism”) which was to become the largest sect in Japan through the popularizing efforts of its 8<sup>th</sup> head priest Rennyo (1415-1499).

The idea of the Primal Vow (*hongan*) of the bodhisattva Dharmakāra (*Hōzō*), who would later turn into Buddha Amitābha (*Amida*), occupies the center stage in Pure Land Buddhism. Determined to save all sentient beings, he took the oath that all who confide in his utmost compassion calling his name (*nenbutsu*) will be reborn in his Pure Land and subsequently attain enlightenment. While doctrinal and practical implications of the *hongan* differ in the various branches of the *jōdokyō*, it clearly indicates a common ethical rationale resting on the notion of *tariki* (“other-power”). *Tariki* traditionally refers to an external salvific force

directing a believer to *Amida's* realm. Hence, the concept of *tariki* as opposed to *jiriki* (“self-power”), opens up a novel ethical discourse, raising several fundamental axiological questions. The study at hand seeks to respond to the issue by critically elucidating the theoretical and practical dimension of *tariki* ethics in the light of contemporary Shin Buddhist debates and activities as seen through an in-depth investigation of the two major branches *jōdo shinshū honganji-ha* and *shinshū ōtani-ha*.

Ugo Dessì is researcher at the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Leipzig. Having spent a large part of his professional career at Ōtani University in Japan, he is a well known specialist in Shin Buddhist thought. The present work was originally submitted as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Marburg in 2006.

The volume consists of four main chapters, an introduction (p. 9-19), auxiliary appendices (p. 209-227) containing a collection of texts, posters and photos, a comprehensive bibliography (p. 229-254), and a very helpful index (p. 255-265).

Chapter 1 (p. 21-77) introductorily discusses some key features of the Pure Land tradition by tersely highlighting the contribution of major Chinese (Tānlúan, Dàochuò and Shāndǎo) and Japanese exponents (Genshin, Hōnen, Shinran, Rennyo, Kennyo et al.). Dessì proceeds to delineate the ethical context of early Shin Buddhist thought, amplifying some basic tenets while putting a focus on the two most influential thinkers: Shinran and Rennyo. The last section outlines the views of other eminent monks and scholars, who in the past centuries, despite relying wholeheartedly on the authoritative texts of Shinran, attempted to offer new and innovative approaches.

Chapter 2 (p. 79-140) comprises a copious disquisition on the most recent controversies, dealing with selected basic doctrinal aspects (*ōjō*, *shinjin*) and themes (equality, social criticism) of Shin Buddhist social ethics. Dessì covers a wide array of ideas and different authors, providing a judicious overview of the current and at times largely abstract Japanese discourse. He concludes the discussion by pointing to the emergence

of a veritable ideological dialectic in recent Shin Buddhist debates that nativistically denounce vaguely defined Western-made “humanism” as a “negative other” (p. 140), evidently employing a nationalistic and/or occidentalist mindset.

Chapter 3 (p. 141-190) endeavors to review selected examples of social practice, expounding Shin Buddhist peace promotion and social welfare activism as well as the general attitude towards the *burakumin* and leprosy issue. In the end, Dessì summarizes that the tradition’s social activism obviously lacks a widely elaborated and encompassing doctrinal framework.

The final chapter (p. 191-208) tries to embed Shin Buddhist social practice in the context of a globalizing society. On the basis of the theories of the Canadian sociologist of religion, Peter Beyer, Dessì eventually reasons that the Shin Buddhist approach oscillates between a conservative and a liberal strategy in order to meet the formidable challenges of globalization. Any future development is thus impossible to predict.

Romanization – Hepburn for Japanese and Hànyǔ Pīnyīn for Chinese – is flawless. The addition of kanji and quotes in Japanese and Chinese is a great convenience. To put it in a nutshell, in terms of formality, the study at hand lives up to the demands of high-quality research.

*Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism* displays outstanding and intriguing scholarship and will doubtlessly become the standard reference work for scholars in this field. The author surveys a scholarly discourse that is hardly accessible and rarely known discussing – on an introductory level – a vast spectrum of ideas and thinkers. In spite of the preliminary approach it must be said that the present work, owing to the complexity of the *tariki* issue, is basically designed for an advanced readership. Therefore, I highly recommend this book to anybody who brings along sound interest in Buddhist ethics and Japanese Buddhism in general.

LUKAS POKORNY