



Luminous Bliss: A Religious History of Pure Land Literature in Tibet (Pure Land Buddhist Studies)

Georgios T. Halkias

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Pure Land Buddhism as a whole has received comparatively little attention in Western studies on Buddhism despite the importance of "buddha-fields" (pure lands) for the growth and expression of Mahayana Buddhism. In this first religious history of Tibetan Pure Land literature, Georgios Halkias delves into a rich collection of literary, historical, and archaeological sources to highlight important aspects of this neglected pan-Asian Buddhist tradition. He clarifies many of the misconceptions concerning the interpretation of "other-world" soteriology in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and provides translations of original Tibetan sources from the ninth century to the present that represent exoteric and esoteric doctrines that continue to be cherished by Tibetan Buddhists for their joyful descriptions of the Buddhist path. The book is informed by interviews with Tibetan scholars and Buddhist practitioners and by Halkias' own participant-observation in Tibetan Pure Land rituals and teachings conducted in Europe and the Indian subcontinent. Divided into three sections, *Luminous Bliss* shows that Tibetan Pure Land literature exemplifies a synthesis of Mahayana sutra-based conceptions with a Vajrayana world-view that fits progressive and sudden approaches to the realisation 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 Sukhvatyha-stra (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 Amitbha 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.

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