

Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

Volume 22 • Number 1 • 1999

JINHUA CHEN

One Name, Three Monks:
Two Northern Chan Masters Emerge
from the Shadow of Their Contemporary,
the Tiantai Master Zhanran 湛然 (711-782) 1

JÉRÔME DUCOR

Shandao et Hōnen, à propos du livre
de Julian F. Pas: *Visions of Sukhāvātī* 93

ULRICH PAGEL

Three *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* Fragments from Tabo:
Observations on a West Tibetan Manuscript Tradition 165

Introduction to Alexander von Staël-Holstein's Article
"On a Peking Edition of the Tibetan Kanjur
Which Seems to be Unknown in the West"

Edited for publication by JONATHAN A. SILK 211

JÉRÔME DUCOR

Shandao and Hōnen. Apropos of
Julian F. Pas's book *Visions of Sukhāvātī*
(English summary) 251

Shandao and Hōnen. Apropos of Julian F. Pas's book
*Visions of Sukhāvati**

Julian PAS's *Visions of Sukhāvati* is to be welcomed as an important contribution to our knowledge of Shandao's life and main work. His use of original Chinese sources fills a major gap in Western studies of Chinese Buddhism. However, the book advocates an unprecedented thesis: that Shandao's interpretation of *nembutsu* as the oral pronunciation of Amida Buddha's name is a misunderstanding on the part of Japanese Jōdo-Shinshū scholars going back to Shinran himself. Nevertheless, this interpretation was first advanced not by Shinran but by his teacher Hōnen, who himself considered his founding of the Pure Land school (Jōdo-shū) to be the mere continuation in Japan of Shandao's original doctrine. The real question then is: was Hōnen's interpretation legitimate? The core of his reasoning is the definition by Shandao of the *nembutsu* as the right determining action "because it is in keeping with [Amida] Buddha's vow". But the main point discovered by Hōnen is that Shandao does not refer to the vow as it appears in the *Larger Sūtra*, where Amida's name is not even mentioned. Shandao's originality lies in his own rewording of the vow as "If ... beings pronounce my name (shō ga myōgō 稱我名號)"¹.

The weakness of PAS's argumentation is partly due to his failure to refer to the original Japanese sources, even to those written in Chinese, such as Hōnen's *Senchaku-shū*. In his rare use of Western-language sources PAS is also misled: one wonders how it is possible to mistake YAMAMOTO Kōshō's English translation of Hōnen's *Sansen-mon* with Shandao's definition of practices (PAS, p. 271). Still the main flaw lies in PAS's systematic misreading of Shandao's real intention: that the *Contemplations' Sūtra* is to be read in the light of the *Larger Sūtra*. It is noteworthy that in this fashion Shandao removed the *Contemplations' Sūtra* from the group of the so-called "meditation sūtras" – like the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* – to include it in the group of the "birth-in-the-

* English Summary, see article on p. 93.

1. T. 37, 1753, k. 1, p. 250b14-17; cf. T. 47, 1959, p. 27a16-19; id. 1980, p. 447c 23-25.

Pure-Land sūtras,” together with the *Larger Sūtra* and the *Amida Sūtra*. PAS’s misreading of Shandao’s intention also explains why he (p. 242) cannot understand Shandao’s interpretation of “deep mind” (*jinshin*) as “faith” (*shinjin*). Nor does he see that Shandao interprets the meditative parts of the *Contemplations’ Sūtra* as mere “skilfull means” (*hōben*), provided by Śākyamuni only at the request of Vaidehī. On the contrary, Hōnen found a clear confirmation of his interpretation in the treatment by Shandao of the concluding part of the *Contemplations’ Sūtra* where Amida’s name is entrusted to Ānanda² – one of the parts of Shandao’s *Commentary* used by Hōnen but ignored by PAS. Also neglected by PAS are some original views of Shandao clearly emphasized by Hōnen, i.e., that the vocal *nembutsu* is both easy and quick and still excellent, thus allowing rebirth in the Pure Land for all ordinary beings, even the worst criminals on the verge of death.

While PAS’s translations from Shandao are generally correct, some need amendments, such as the passages related to Vaidehī (p. 290-291) or to the length of practice (p. 295-296). When quoting from the sūtra passage concerning the lower rank of the lower beings to be born in the Pure Land, PAS (p. 264) refers to the Taishō edition of the *Contemplations’ Sūtra* instead of its vulgate used by Shandao – this is not without consequences for PAS’s interpretation.

2. T. 37, 1753, k. 4, p. 278a23-26.