

Esoteric Pure Lands Quotes from Andrew Holecek

"Although we are accustomed to separate nature and human perception into two realms, they are, in fact indivisible . . . landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock."

-Simon Schama:

"A celestial realm on earth. An immanent [not transcendent] paradise veiled more by habits of perception than by features of the landscape."

-Ian Baker (On Beyuls)

"The Beyul that Padmasambhava established in Tibet are not literal arcadias, but paradises for Buddhist practice, with multiple dimensions corresponding to increasingly subtle levels of perception. Beyond Yolmo's visible terrain of mountains, streams, and forests lies an inner level, corresponding to the flow of intangible energies in the physical body. Deeper still, the subtle elements animating the environment merge with the elements present within the practitioner – the secret level. Finally, at the beyul's innermost level – yangsang – lies a paradisaical, or unitary dimension revealed through an auspicious conjunction of person, place, and time. Yangsang is not merely a metaphor for the enlightened state, but an ever present, if hidden, reality."

-Chatrul Rinpoche

"A Buddha-land refers to the environment of a Buddha, signifying that the evolutionary transmutation of the finite individual into an infinite body of awareness takes the environment with it, so that self and other are indistinguishable. . . . As beings are relational nexi [interconnections] of relative self and environment, the enlightened transformation of one implies the transformation of the other."

-Robert Thurman

You talk when you cease to be at peace with your thoughts;
And when you can no longer dwell in the solitude of your heart you live in your lips, and sound is a diversion and a pastime.
And in much of your talking, thinking is half murdered.
For thought is a bird of space, that in a cage of words may indeed unfold its wings but cannot fly.
There are those among you who seek the talkative through fear of being alone.
The silence of aloneness reveals to their eyes their naked selves and they would escape.
And there are those who talk, and without knowledge or forethought reveal a truth which they themselves do not understand.
And there are those who have the truth within them, but they tell it not in words.
In the bosom of such as these the spirit dwells in rhythmic silence.

-Kahil Gabran

"Silence is the language of God, all else is poor translation." -Rumi

"Recognize what is before your eyes, and what is hidden will be revealed to you." -Jesus in Gnostic Gospels

"Approach all that you find repulsive!
Anything you are attracted to, Let go of it!
Visit cemeteries and other frightening places!
Find the Buddha within yourself!"

-Padampa Sangey

"Progress can be achieved more rapidly during a single month amid terrifying conditions in rough terrain and in the proximity of harmful forces than by meditating for three years in towns and monasteries." -Khamtrul Rinpoche

"In tantra, hell is paradise." -Hamid

"Adverse conditions are a practitioners true wealth." -Guru Rinpoche

"Freedom begins when the nostalgia for a perfect place ends and one embraces the present moment." -Kant

"The real journey of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." -Marcel Proust

The Kingdom of heaven is spread out across the earth and men do not see it." -Gnostic gospel of St Thomas

"If we have not found heaven within, it is a certainty we will not find it without." -Henry Miller

"In the beginning, the realization of E purifies, then great bliss arises from emptiness. Such bliss can purify every habitual pattern. Of bliss and emptiness, emptiness is the initial purifier and great bliss the principle factor in the process of purification." -Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye

"In the Nyingma corpus of the Great Perfection, the "innermost secret reality" of Shukhavati became synonymous with the perfect realization of nondual intrinsic awareness (rigpa)." -Gerogios Halkias

"During the practice of Mahamudra, "the body of great bliss" (mahasukhakaya, inseparable from tantric Sukhavati) results from the indivisibility of the body of reality, the body of the deity, and the body of emanation."- Halkias

"The phenomena of the wheel of life and of transcendence of suffering arise from the creative display of awareness. If one realizes this, phenomena are pure lands; without such realization, they are ordinary reality." -Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye

"Everything is naturally perfect just as it is, completely pure and undefiled. . . With no effort or practice whatsoever liberation, enlightenment, and Buddhahood are already fully developed and perfected. . . Since the underdeveloped state does not exist, there is no need to behave in any special way or to try to attain or practice anything. . . One should never think of oneself as "sinful" or worthless, but as naturally pure and perfect, lacking nothing." The everyday practice is simply to develop a complete acceptance and openness to all situations and emotions and to all people, experiencing everything without mental reservations and blockages, so that one never withdraws or centralizes onto oneself."

-CTR and Rigdzin Shikpo

"The relative reality thus becomes the basis, the ground, [that the less daring contemplator of voidness felt was needed;] the basis of both samsara and nirvana. It serves from the outset to reassure the yogin in quest of the absolute reality that the ultimate reality [the Pure Land] is not dualistic, not in some far-off abstract realm of voidness, but right before her, nondualistically in the actual, relative world, somehow overlaid by mental constructions that prevent her from seeing it effortlessly.

"But what, then, is this relative reality, this ground of all? How can it be overlaid and so utterly distorted by mere mental constructions? The answer is that it can be thus radically affected by the mind if its very substance is also mind, indeed only mind."

-Robert Thurman

"The only obstacle is to regard something as other than mind." -Khenpo Karthar

"To be a 'seeker' [for purity] presumes the absence of that which you seek [the purity within]. So ironically, to go searching for the truth, [for purity] you must deny that it is here. And for most people, that denial [of our natural great perfection] is what makes the spiritual path take a long time. . . . The one you are looking for is the one who is looking." -Chris Wallis:

Four Yogic Contemplations Four Yogic Practices / Four Steps of Realization

Outer objects are observed to be nothing but mind
Thus outer objects are not observed as such.
With outer objects being unobservable,
a mind cognizing them is not observed either.
Not observing both, nonduality is observed.

Looking at objects, there are no objects: they are seen to be mind.
Looking at mind, there is no mind: it is empty of existence.
Looking at both liberates dualistic clinging in its own ground.
May we realize luminosity, the true nature of mind.

-Karmapa Ranjung Dorje

"Mind equals object: there are no objects beyond mind.
Objects equal mind: there is no mind beyond objects.
Since objects are wholly mind, why must we cling to mind and dismiss objects?
Those who dismiss objects when they talk of mind have not comprehended mind."

-Pure Land, Pure Mind: Chinese Zen Masters

"Realism is a corruption of reality." Wallace Stevens

"How difficult it seems to make such a vow to liberate all beings, [and to turn the entire universe into a buddhaverse] if one is thinking that the universe is an infinite, substantial, external, dense and heavy bunch of objects! How overwhelming the prospect of transforming it all [into a buddhaverse!] But, if the nature of all beings and things is mental, mind-constituted, and mind-created, then a radical transformation of the inner mind, in intersubjective interconnection with other minds, could very well be able to effect a total transformation of everything that exists [with much greater ease.]" -Robert Thurman

"If the Saha [endurance] world is mind only, then the western pure land is also mind only, and nothing can be found outside the Mind. Thus, to recite Amitabha's Buddha Name is to recite [AND INCITE] the Buddha in our own nature and Mind; to be reborn is to return to the realm of our own mind, not to an outside realm." -Pure Land, Pure Mind: Chinese Zen Masters

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"The violent agitation and destruction of the elements is produced by violent thoughts, such as thoughts like "kill them, bust them up, do them in" stuff like that. When people have thoughts, lots of thoughts like "Let's get them" that kind of stuff, then you get lots of earthquakes and hurricanes and things like that." -Thrangu Rinpoche

"Vital locations are geographical acupuncture points, which if controlled by the needles of buildings and monuments, allowed the country's energy to circulate for the common good. Negative forces, both human and natural, such as earthquakes, could be neutralized by such construction." "Like our bodies changing state of health, the state of the land's energy needs regular checkups and occasional major tune-ups." -Ngawang Zangpo

"In Pemako every action establishes a relationship with the env. Estrangement from nature is not an option. Even one's subtlest thoughts and intentions – whether positive or negative – are held to elicit a response from the animating forces

within the landscape. Ill thoughts and selfish concerns can cause rockfalls and hail. Well-directed prayers, on the other hand, can literally stop the rain. A constant interchange occurs, giving rise to what Tibetans call tukje, Great Compassion, or empathy will all things.” -Ian Baker

“Utopia is a place where everything is good; dystopia is a place where everything is bad; heterotopia is where things are different — [that is, a collection whose members have few or no intelligible connections with one another.]” -Walter Russell Mead

“Centuries ago, texts were discovered in Tibet describing beyul, hidden-lands where the essence of the Buddhist tantras is said to be preserved for future generations. These revered scriptures are attributed to Guru Rinpoche. They describe valleys reminiscent of paradise that can only be reached by enormous hardship. Pilgrims who travel to these wild and distant places often recount extraordinary experiences similar to those encountered by spiritual practitioners on the Buddhist path to liberation.

From a Buddhist perspective, sacred environments such as Pemako are not places to escape the world, but to enter it more deeply. The qualities inherent in such places reveal the interconnectedness of all life and deepen awareness of hidden regions of the mind and spirit. Visiting such places with a good motivation and appropriate merit, the pilgrim can learn to see the world differently from the way it commonly appears, developing and enhancing the Buddhist virtues of wisdom and compassion.

Whether this mysterious sanctuary hidden amid Pemako’s mist-shrouded mountains can ever be located geographically is of secondary importance to the journey itself. In the Buddhist tradition, the goal of pilgrimage is not so much to reach a particular destination as to awaken within oneself the qualities and energies of the sacred site, which ultimately lie within our own minds. [Hidden lands] inspire others not only to venture into unknown lands on a geographical level, but also to discover the inner realms within which our own deepest nature lies hidden.”

-Dalai Lama

More definitions of Beyul, or terrestrial Pure Lands

“A celestial realm on earth. An immanent [not transcendent] paradise veiled more by habits of perception than by features of the landscape.” -Ian Baker

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“Change the way you think about the world, and you will change the way you SEE the world.” -Guru Rinpoche

“We don’t see with our eyes, we see with our brains.” -Oliver Sacks

“We do not perceive empirical objects in a completely realistic, pre-given fashion; but rather structures of the knowing subject impart various characteristics to the known object that then appear to belong to the object—but really don’t; they are, rather, co-creations of the knowing subject. . . . Reality is not a perception, but a conception; at least in part. Ontology per se just does not exist.”

“Different phenomenological worlds—real worlds—come into being with each new level of consciousness development. . . . There isn’t the world of ‘naïve empiricism’ just lying around out there waiting to be seen. . . . Different worlds are brought forth by the structures of consciousness doing the perceiving and co-creating. All real objects are first and foremost perspectives. NOT ‘are seen from perspectives,’ but ‘ARE perspectives.’ . . . Assuming there is something pre-existing in an ahistorical world and waiting to be seen is just metaphysics (and the myth of the given). That is to say, “pure physical objects” do not exist; “the ‘physical world’ is not a perception but an interpretation.

We don't live in a pre-given, 'real' world that awaits perception—we merely live as part of 'mutually disclosing perspectives awaiting enactment.' The myth of the given, chaining minds to illusions, lives on in these endeavors, whose own self-image claims liberation, and yet the myth of the given creates the children of the lie."

--Ken Wilber

"Whoever practices meditation here can accomplish in one night what in other places can be attained only after a year. Here you will easily attain siddhis."

"Seven days spent there equal months or years elsewhere; even a visit made without correct practice is a ticket to celestial realms after death." -Terma: at Rinchenpung [pilgrimage site]

"Purpose of neyig is to convert wilderness into a sacred realm and to chart the interface between mindscape and landscape."
-From the neyigs (Guides to Sacred Places)

"There is a secret place known as Pemako. [It is shaped like a womb.] All the trees are perfumed like sandalwood, and jasmine. Saffron grows like grass. Wheat, barley and rice grow wild and honey is found in abundance. The animals of Pemako provide endless milk. The rivers flow with amrita the color of milk. When you drink it, you will never feel thirsty. All fruit and water is medicinal. Everyone will become joyful and prosperous. Old men will become youthful. With perfume in the air, a rain of flowers falls and rainbows spread out everywhere. Food, drink, clothing – all needs are magically satisfied, whatever one wishes for . . . the happiness and enjoyments here are equal to a god-realm. Even without meditating, anyone who reaches here can attain the state of a Buddha."

Growing here are the five supreme magical plants . . . which confer immortality . . . and the experience of bliss and emptiness. This innermost heart of the sublime holy land is identical to a terrestrial pure land of lotus light. In this place, all obscurations of mind and emotions can be released . . . and the 3 bodies of the buddha [trikaya] spontaneously realized."

-Khamtrul Rinpoche

"Yangsang's [innermost part of Pemako, the hidden land within the hidden land] coordinates lie neither outside nor inside the seeker, but in their conjunction. The portal opens when one realizes that one no longer needs to seek it and must simply open to that which is already fully present. In that vastness in which nothing is hidden and nothing needs to be revealed, all is transparent, clear, and free of obscurations, the adept opens to all that presents itself, without reference to the ego. And the doors, in response, open everywhere." -Ian Baker

"Yangsang is a mysterious interworld between the mind and physical reality. The cave, lakes etc all offered fulcrums where perception could turn to revelation and open gates to some previously inaccessible space, whether within the outer landscape or the mind." -Lelung Shepe Dorje

[contrast with neyig description above]

"in the borderlands between Tibet and India, in the lands of savages, lies Pemako, the supreme of all hidden-lands. This lotus like realm is described as the body of Dorje Pagmo [vajrayogini] with five chakras . . . the cloud and ocean like gathering places of dakas and dakinis. There is a constant menace here from poisonous snakes, leeches, flies, clawed and long-snouted animals with fangs, dangerous wildmen, and vicious savages. One can easily succumb to fever and gout, while blisters, abscesses, ulcers, and sores add to the physical obstacles. The land is full of mischievous spirits that . . . constantly display magic and miracles. Those without courage; or those with lingering doubts, too many mental conceptions, or who are strongly attached to the appearances of this life or who . . . out of ignorance, fall into accepting and rejecting . . . such people will have difficulty reaching this land and getting through unscathed. When observed in their essential nature, all the mountains, rocks, trees and rivers here appear as magical realms or deities . . . Those obstructed by spiritual transgressions can never enter this great mandala." -Lelung Shepe Dorje:

"Don't think of Pemako [terrestrial pure land] as a literal paradise as described in the scrolls. Pemako is a paradise for Buddhist practice [pure hell, charnel ground where need to meet and embrace all the unwanted hidden places of your mind, the ticks, leeches, rain, gnats, heat] where all things can be encountered and brought to the path." -Chatrul Rinpoche

“When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same . . . then you will enter [the kingdom].”

“The Kingdom is inside of you, and outside of you. When you have come to know yourselves, then you will be known . . . Recognize what is before your eyes, and what is hidden will be revealed to you.”

-Jesus via Gnostic Gospels

“Advanced beings leave imprints on the physical environment. The fact that many holy beings stay and practice in a certain place changes the atmosphere of that place.”

“When other beings with less experience or spiritual development practice at such a place they can obtain certain special kinds of experience.”

-Dalai Lama

Quotes Provided by Dr. Andrew Holecek