

## [New Book> Meditations of the Pali Tradition by L.S. Cousins](#)

Discussion published by Nikko Odiseos on Monday, September 26, 2022

I am pleased to share a new release that I hope will be of keen interest to those on this list.

1. *Meditations of the Pali Tradition: Illuminating Buddhist Doctrine, History, and Practice*  
by L.S. Cousins, edited by Sarah Shaw  
<http://shmb.la/pali>

As most of you know, Lance Cousins was an extraordinary scholar, and while we are lucky to have his innumerable papers and a wonderful volume dedicated to him (edited by Naomi Appleton and Peter Harvey), this is the only book-length work by him, and I cannot recommend it more strongly.

Description:

Drawing on a lifetime of research, scholar L. S. Cousins untangles the complex history of the traditions and meditation practices of the various traditions of Buddhism found in Southeast Asia. With authoritative explication of a range of Buddhist texts preserved primarily in the Pali language—canonical discourses, commentarial treatises, and rare meditation manuals—Cousins explores a multiplicity of meditation practices that have developed over the past two and a half millennia, from the *jhāna* (absorption) and *vipassanā* (insight) methods that constitute the core of modern Theravāda practice to lesser-known, esoteric practice lineages of Central and Southeast Asia that were nearly lost to history.

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I typically leave out the praise in these announcements, but this book is of such particular interest, and the endorsements help convey the substance, so I have included them here.

"Thanks to the tireless efforts of editor Sarah Shaw, a whole new generation of readers can delve

deep into the late Lance Cousins's meticulous research on the history of meditation in Southern Buddhism. In this brilliant new book that Shaw has carefully edited after Cousins's passing in 2015, readers learn about the history of jhāna, samatha, and vipassanā meditation methods in both Pali literature and in modern practice. This will be a fundamental book for any student of Buddhist history and literature, as well as for practitioners in need of a detailed and comprehensive overview. It is truly a great gift from a scholar we lost too soon."

—Justin Thomas McDaniel

"Cousins's wide interests inspired him to delve deeply into the core questions of Buddhism, mysticism, and religious studies. His writings are the fruit of a keen and sensitive wisdom tempered by personal experience and an unparalleled knowledge of the original texts in the original languages. They offer fresh and timely insights into Buddhist thought, practice, and history."

—Peter Skilling

"Meditations of the Pali Tradition shines an incisive light on the multifaceted jewel of the meditation practices of Southern Buddhism across the ages, drawing in sidelights from related material in other early Buddhist schools and their transmissions to China. Cousins writes with deep knowledge of and informed interest in a network of meditative practices as interpreted and developed from the Pali Canon, abhidhamma, and commentaries. He explores the nature and role of the jhānas and formless attainments, their effects on feeling and perception, and how these practices concerning calm (samatha) relate to those of insight (vipassanā). He addresses not only the roots and developments of modern vipassanā meditation, but also the more esoteric visualization practices of the Porāna meditative traditions that were sidelined by modern vipassanā but are now being increasingly uncovered and explored. In an impartial and discerning way, he leads us through some of the rich intricacies of these different systems and their emphases. This illuminating work, which broadens and deepens our picture of meditation in the Southern, 'Theravāda' tradition, will be of great interest both to scholars and to practitioners of these and other meditations."

—Peter Harvey

"An unprecedented exploration of meditation experience as described in the Pali canon, commentaries, and abhidhamma—as well as lesser-known sources—this study reflects Cousins's nuanced sensitivity as a lifelong practitioner and his wealth of textual expertise."

—Kate Crosby, author of *Esoteric Theravada*

"This is a carefully and comprehensively written work. Cousins's treatment and defense of traditional calm (jhāna) meditation catches my eye most, as insight (vipassanā) meditations are so much more popular now around the world. This book, by showing the whole historical picture, makes an important addition to the scholarship on meditation."

—Sayadaw Dr. Khammai Dhammasami, president of the International Association of Buddhist Universities

"Meditations of the Pali Tradition is both calming and insightful. As a forest monk, it can be painful to read the overly convoluted and contentious diatribes which are found too often in academic discourse. Cousins's book is a welcome relief from such thickets. In addition to his skill in arranging, elucidating, and reconciling disparate texts in multiple languages and from various traditions, two other qualities shine through in this work: his respect for 'forest specialists' and his interest in the

practical application of his erudition. This book provides fresh perspectives into both much-loved discourses and arcane treatises, all the while presenting them with concern, humility, and the estimable sincerity of someone who was trying to translate the Dharma into their own heart's vernacular."

—Ajahn Kovilo, senior incumbent, Clear Mountain Monastery

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<http://shmb.la/pali>

There are many more recent releases on our website, <http://shmb.la/buddhist-books>, as well.

Desk and Exam copies can be requested from our worldwide distributor, Penguin Random House, at <http://shmb.la/desk-exam>.

Best Wishes,

Nikko Odiseos, Shambhala Publications