

## Reviews

MARTIN BAUMANN, *Deutsche Buddhisten – Geschichte und Gemeinschaften*. 2. erweiterte Aufl., Marburg: Diagonal Verlag, 1995. 441 pages, DM 58.—. ISBN 3-927165-32-8

How did the swans come to western lakes, i.e. how did Buddhism begin to spread in Germany? I believe that Martin Baumann's dissertation on *German Buddhists – History and Communities* is the most detailed and well-surveyed account that we have (so far) about a unique East-West exchange-process which is gathering ever more momentum.

Starting from an analytical frame-work of comparative religions with "patterns of change and adaptation" as its main focus, the author begins (ch. 2) with an historic account of Buddhism in Germany (p. 43ff). This introductory overview of the development of the Buddhist movement in Germany from its early beginnings during the first decade of this century is followed (ch. 3) by four exemplary portraits of practising Buddhists (p. 113ff) and a description (ch. 4) of two Buddhist communities ("Arya Maitreya Mandala" and "Friends of the Western Buddhist Order") with special emphasis on their various conceptual strategies meant to fit into a "new western land" and at the same time trying to do justice to the eternal laws of Dhamma (p. 145ff). These two case-studies are followed (ch. 5) by an overview of Buddhist Groups throughout the country, a description of meditation centres and their programmes and an account of institution-building strategies on national and international levels as well (p. 183ff).

This wealth of material collected by the author with great care and energy is then analyzed (ch. 6) from a sociological point of view: Which structural features can be generalized, what is the typical context of German society today into which "Buddhism" spreads, which particular gaps in the *Weltanschauung* of the present generation does Buddhism seem to overcome (p. 209ff)? This analysis then leads (ch. 7, p. 269ff) to a four-point typology of patterns of interpretation and concern among German Buddhists, i.e. (1.) their early attempts to "rationalize" Asian Buddhism so as to present it as the only rational ethical system of the scientific age; (2.) attempts to define its basic teachings in such a way that "development work" and social engagement can be seen as a "necessary consequence" of true Buddhist practice; (3.) feminist interpretations of the Dhamma and its

spiritual practice so as to counterbalance centuries of male interpretations and (4.) integrative tendencies within the Buddhist movement as a whole which faces for the first time in its history the challenge of "all traditions and practices in a single country" (not only in Germany of course). The final chapter (8) then relates the various findings of the previous chapters back to the theoretical framework of comparative religions: What are the typical patterns of change, when a "foreign religion" is adopted in a society such as the German during the latter half of the 20th century (pp. 313-370)?

It remains to be seen how the "scientific community" will react to this path-breaking attempt at scientific description and analytical interpretation. The "field" itself has already taken notice, i.e. in almost all Buddhist journals reviews have appeared which congratulated the author (not an "insider" himself) on his work. And we may here add that he deserves this praise not only from Buddhist but from scholarly communities as well!

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HELLMUTH HECKER (Hrsg.), *Der erste deutsche Bhikku. Das bewegte Leben des Ehrwürdigen Nyānatiloka (1878-1957) und seine Schüler.* (Forschungsprojekt „Buddhistischer Modernismus“, Forschungsberichte 10). Konstanz: Universität Konstanz 1995. XIV, 363 Seiten, DM 25,—, ISBN 3-930959-06-2

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Es ist sicherlich der Ausdauer und dem Spürsinn Hellmuth Heckers zu verdanken, daß wir mit diesem Buch einen näheren Einblick in das Leben und Wirken Nyānatilokas erhalten. Mit beeindruckender Akribie hat der Herausgeber nichts unversucht gelassen, aus den vielen Einzelnformationen, schwer lesbaren Originalskripten, Briefen, Fotos, Zeitungsausschnitten und mündlichen Mitteilungen ein eindruckliches Gesamtbild zu entwerfen, das die verschlungenen Pfade des Lebenswegs Nyānatilokas und seiner Schüler ordnet und im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes lebendig werden läßt. Die Lektüre des Buches gerät so nicht nur zu einem informativen, sondern auch spannenden Unterfangen.

Das Buch gliedert sich in drei Hauptteile. Der erste Teil enthält die Autobiographie Nyānatilokas, die er 1948 zu Papier gebracht hat. Sie be-