

theory is concerned: the Indian princes do not qualify to demonstrate the dialectics of tradition and modernity.

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**Heinz Bechert:** *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus. Band 1: Grundlagen. Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1966. ( Veröffentlichungen des Seminars für Indologie und Buddhismuskunde der Universität Göttingen, Bd. 5). Göttingen 1988. XXI, 404 pages.*

From reports about riots and communal clashes in Buddhist countries like Burma and Sri Lanka, it has become clear to even a casual observer that quite frequently Buddhist monks are not only asked their opinion on political matters but even take an active part in politics. In Sri Lanka especially, there is an obvious relationship between nationalism and religion, with Singhalese Buddhism on the one hand and Tamil Hinduism on the other. A flood of publications on various aspects of Buddhism has come out in recent years. Only in very rare instances, however, does one find even so much as an attempt to explain the connexion of Buddhism with political agitation.

The reprint of Heinz Bechert's book on "Buddhism, State, and Society in the Countries of Theravāda Buddhism", published originally in 1966, is therefore greatly to be welcomed. While vols. 2 and 3 are still available, vol. 1 has for a long time been out of print. The first part of the book is devoted to a study of Buddhism, Buddhist modernism, and its functions in the context of modern politico-social doctrines in general. The second part consists of a detailed documentation of the developments in Sri Lanka, including quotations from a great number of sources written in European languages and translated from Singhalese. Particularly helpful for a critical examination of the present situation in Sri Lanka is Bechert's evaluation of the doctrinal and historical background to modern political and social developments, and his account of the role played by political Buddhism in Sri Lanka from the time of independence to 1965. The reprint is furnished with a preface by the author, with references to recent publications, an index, and a sheet of corrigenda. Even 20 years after its first publication this important book must be warmly recommended to anyone interested in the political and social life of South and South East Asia.

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