

HEINZ BECHERT/RICHARD GOMBRICH (eds.): Die Welt des Buddhismus. München: Verlag C.H.Beck, 1984. 309 pages, 74 illustrations; 210 plates, 78 in colour; 6 maps. DM 148.-

I am absolutely certain that "The World of Buddhism" will be regarded as a milestone of the discipline for a long time to come. The editors have managed to bring together well-known specialists of the field (Jane Bunnag, Michael B. Carrithers, Robert K. Heinemann, Oskar von Hinüber, Lal Mani Joshi, Per Kvaerne, Etienne Lamotte, Siegfried Lienhard and Erik Zürcher), and together they have succeeded in publishing a book that concerns not only the academic community but speaks to the interested public as well in a not too academic language. Since it is impossible to do justice to its contents in our journal it may here suffice to give an overview of the contents: Etienne Lamotte, the grand old man of Buddhology who died on 5th May 1983, wrote - under the severe strain of his illness - Part I on the Buddha himself and on the Path that he laid open to the followers of his time. In Part II on "The Tradition of Indian Buddhism" we have three chapters, "Buddhism in Ancient and Medieval India", "Buddhist Culture in Central Asia and Afghanistan", and "Nepal" being the only country where Indian forms of Buddhism have survived until today. Part III then deals in three chapters with the Theravada tradition in the countries of Sri Lanka, Burma and South East Asia respectively. Part IV describes in two chapters the forms that Buddhism developed in the countries of East Asia and Part V analyzes in one chapter the rise and fall of Lamaistic traditions and related social organizations in Tibet. Of special interest to European readers is certainly the final (and unfortunately rather brief) Part IV in which Heinz Bechert gives a description of Buddhist Modernism in Asia and the West.

The 286 pages of the text are supplemented by a glossary and a selected (and briefly commented) bibliography. I need not mention the index and the list of illustrations (with sources).

"Look you Kalamas, do not be led by reports", was the well-meant advice that the Buddha gave to the citizens of Kesaputta. And he strongly encouraged them "to see for themselves". May I pass on this time-honoured Buddhist counsel to the readers and invite them to see whether my opening statement about the book published in England (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.) and Germany simultaneously is justified? I am sure that they will spend many an hour with the illustrations themselves which have been selected and commented in such a way that their study alone leads to a deeper understanding of the many facets of Buddhism the Buddha's teaching conditioned.

All those who have some knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the publishing business under modern conditions will certainly join me in congratulating the editors on the meritorious work that this remarkable volume constitutes.

Detlef Kantowsky