

ULRICH SCHNEIDER: Einführung in den Buddhismus. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980. 221 pages, 6 illustr., DM 72.-

This new "Einführung in den Buddhismus" treats a well-known subject and one might expect it merely to continue a series of introductions to Buddhism. Far from it! The author indicates the intention of his book in the first few sentences of the preface: he doesn't want to join a "communis opinio" (p. XI); furthermore he cannot help the reader of his book attain any certain knowledge of the subject (p. XII).

And in fact, behind the classical and - one might say - seemingly innocuous arrangement of the chapters lurks a whole range of problems, ideas and views which one would hardly expect. A general characterisation of the book might thus be that it is an introduction to the problems of writing an introduction to Buddhism!

After a general survey of religion, culture and politics before and during Buddha's time, the sources of the subject and the state of the art, Ulrich Schneider sets out in the first chapter to treat the question of the historical Buddha. He discerns three kinds of sources: the Sūtras, the Mahāpariṇirvānasūtra (abb. MP) and the Legends of Buddha's life. Whereas in the Sūtras (esp. that of Dīgha- and Majjhima-Nikāya) the "buddhavācāna" (the authentic speech of Buddha) is obscure (p. 26), the MP gives some historical background to Buddha: the route of his last journey (p. 32), his death-place near Kusinagara (p. 34) and his legacy (p. 37). But one can detect the tendency to make the Buddha a prodigy (p. 41) and to connect him with a cult (p. 42). And a third tendency one can find: "Starke Persönlichkeiten treten hervor und führen das Erbe des Buddha in ihrem Sinne weiter. Dadurch kommt es, gegen den ausdrücklichen Willen des Buddha, zum allmählichen Aufbau einer Hierarchie und eines "Corpus der Ordenszucht"." (p. 45). This is the key to the author's understanding of the subsequent history of Buddhism.

In the Legends of Buddha's life we find the prototype of a Bodhisattva-idea with what is in the author's eyes an inadmissible identification of bodhi and salvation (p. 55). Here we confront the tendency which later became common to represent the Buddha as a supernatural person, the first indications of the quarrels within the community and the development towards a Bodhisattva who out of love involves himself in worldly matters.

But if this is a false representation and only a perversion of the original doctrine, then what is the original doctrine? The original doctrine is found by the author in the Agañña-Suttanta, where the Buddha preached that all men are equal and that the non-collecting of karman would lead to extinction (nirvāṇa). Compared to the legacy of Buddha at the end of his life, the recommendation to resort to the Doctrine (dharma) and the idea of oneself as an island means that this doctrine of the Buddha clearly shows a "egozentrische Asketen-

ethik". The development of the Community (samgha) as it is shown in chapter 3 could only be a decline. The reason for this thesis is very simple: a community needs a leader and rules and regulations, both of which the Buddha rejected. Therefore the history of the samgha is nothing more than a quarrel about leadership and diverse regulations as regards the masses. But there is another aspect too. The laymen are excluded from salvation but they are necessary for the monks, the beggars "ex professo" (p. 180). And after the propagation of the Dharma under Aśoka (chapter 4) as an ethic for the laymen, they "rebelled" against the hierarchy of the monks. Now the same fruit of salvation in this existence could be gained by monks and laymen in different ways.

In the last chapter Ulrich Schneider outlines in a broad summary (surveying nearly 1000 years) the decline of a religious movement called Buddhism, which in competition with a growing strong Hinduism has to offer cheap possibilities of attaining salvation. Now the goal is paradise (sukhavati) which one can obtain by bhakti (p. 188). Tantrism finally makes Buddhism an esoteric doctrine and so the difference between Buddhism and Hinduism is blurred. In consequence the last of the Buddhist monasteries in India was given its death blow.

Ulrich Schneider wishes to prove that Buddhism met its death through inner difficulties, because the masses diluted the strict doctrine and Buddhism had always to react to an envious group of Hindus who were losing their followers to the movement of Buddhism. Therefore, the author concludes: "Ohne die Gemeinde und ihren Einfluß hätte sich zwar vielleicht eine buddhistische Philosophie entwickeln können, niemals aber eine religiöse Massenbewegung..." (p. 113).

The book, which contains Ulrich Schneider's summary of investigation into historical problems of Buddhism in India, is a historical interpretation of a movement which begins with one person and ends with masses in the womb of Hinduism. In addition to this interpretation, to which I cannot subscribe, the book provides a wealth of problems and hints which a scholar of this subject has to come to terms with.

One must criticize the straight line of decline. According to the author the history of Buddhism in India shows the fate of a lonely, original philosopher, whose doctrine became a religion for the masses. The mistake the author makes, in my opinion, lies in his interpretation of the pure doctrine of the Buddha as the end of a quasi philosophical development (p. 187). It was also a beginning which challenged philosophers as well as the simple minded people. And therefore the picture of the Samgha as drawn by the author is too black. At all times we must reckon with good and bad elements in the Samgha; and it was not only Tantrism which gave Buddhism the death blow, but also the extinction of the great libraries of the Buddhists and their intelligentsia during the Islamic invasion. However, this argument doesn't count for the author,

to whom the philosophy of Buddhism also proves the decay of the pure doctrine (5.4.1). Nevertheless the book remains a challenge which future research cannot neglect.

Dieter Back

HANS-GEORG BOHLE: *Bewässerung und Gesellschaft im Cauvery-Delta (Süd-indien)*. (Erdkundliches Wissen, Heft 57). Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981. 266 pp., 8 multicoloured maps, DM 68.-

Bohle shows in his excellent study that a wide ranging, inter-disciplinary approach, combining knowledge of India's political and agricultural history, social geography, irrigation technology, and applied statistics with a profound understanding of development theories of the recent past is necessary to gain elaborate knowledge about irrigation and its social implications in one of India's most prosperous agricultural areas.

The study is about the delta area of the Cauvery river situated 200 km south of Madras in Tanjore District (Tamil Nadu). The author gives an account of the history of this area emphasizing the difference that development and modernization had made during the last 350 years where the improvement of agricultural yields and the social welfare of the people is concerned. Bohle does not add theories to the many already existing about societies whose agriculture is predominantly based on irrigation, but gives four detailed case studies to show where he gets his theories from. This twofold approach, giving empirical data and being pretentious on a theoretical level is an advantage of this study.

The history of irrigation technologies and social stratification in this area show that inequality in the latter is closely connected with the conditions of the first. Through hundreds of years until the times of British Rule in India, life in the Cauvery delta was based on the inequality of the traditional caste system. There was poverty among the lower castes within the traditional security of inter-caste service relationship and traditional dependencies. The improvements in the hydraulic structure of the Cauvery delta area during British colonialism had a severe disintegrating effect on the medium peasantry and the great amount of smallholders in this area. The increasing agricultural yields gained by intensive modernization of agriculture (use of chemical manure, high-yielding varieties of crop, double cropping, governmental credit programs etc.) in British and post-colonial times mainly favoured the traditional rich landowning Brahmin castes, while small-holders were more and more pauperized and in many cases became landless labourers.