

BOOK REVIEWS

Xuedou (initiator of the *Blue Cliff Record*) becomes “Xuedon,” and, most grotesquely, Shitou, the great progenitor of what would become the Ts’ao-tung lineage, is “Shiton.” In addition, the book jacket erroneously identifies the Serenity Temple, for which the work is named, as the residence of Tian-tong (Hung-chih). In fact, this temple was the hermitage where the later master, Wan-sung, completed this work. Thankfully, this negligence does not seem to have effected the translation of the text itself, which was completed and edited some years ago. Despite the above errata, it is fortunate that this work is finally available. Serious students of Zen will undoubtedly find the *Book of Serenity* to be endlessly invaluable and illuminating.

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MEISTER BANKEI, DIE ZEN-LEHRE VOM UNGEBORENEN: Leben und Lehre des grossen japanischen Zen-Meisters Bankei Eitaku (1622–1693), aus den japanischen Quellen herausgegeben (Master Bankei, The Zen Teaching of the Unborn: Life and Teaching of the Great Japanese Zen Master Bankei Eitaku. Edited and translated from the Japanese sources by Norman Waddell. Bern, Munich, Vienna: Scherz Verlag, O.W. Barth Verlag, 1988, 205pp.

As the translator states in the preface to the present work, it is mainly due to Daisetz Suzuki that for the first time, in the early 1940’s, the true meaning of Bankei’s Zen was brought out; after two and a half centuries of neglect D. T. Suzuki—still Bankei’s unsurpassed interpreter—had accorded him his rightful place in Zen history. According to Suzuki, Bankei’s Zen of the Unborn (Fushō Zen) “espoused a fresh departure for the first time since the Zen patriarch Bodhidharma.” He wrote moreover that there is little Zen exposition since Bankei that can bear comparison with the exuberant creativeness of his Fushō Zen. Suzuki considers Bankei one of the greatest Buddhist masters Japan has produced. This opinion is certainly borne out by the view taken of Bankei’s life and activities by the historian Sodo Mori in the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* (vol. II, fas. 4, p. 543f.; Colombo, 1968). According to Mori, Bankei, Takuan, and Hakuin were the greatest figures in Rinzai Zen during the 17th and 18th centuries. After attaining “final enlightenment” at the age of 36, Bankei greatly enriched the religious culture of Japan. Apart from his regular meditation retreats and indefatigable preaching, he founded important monasteries. “At a later period he reconstructed 47 temples and

was invited to be the founder of more than a hundred temples. He had eight great disciples who attained 'final enlightenment' and initiated more than 400 persons into the Buddhist priesthood. . . . It is said that . . . he had more than 50,000 followers." (*Ibid.*) According to Mori, Bankei evolved his original Dharma teaching to counter the improper use of kōans prevalent in his days. "Bankei Zen" was taught in simple spoken Japanese, without quotations from the Chinese Buddhist sūtras or shāstras. His method of teaching "seems to be one of the most Japanized Zen methods, transcending Chinese Ch'an." (*Ibid.*)

While there is no dearth of editions of Bankei's teachings and of modern works on Bankei in Japanese, nothing has been available in any western language on this master and his teaching apart from what Suzuki and Mori have written in English. So it was fortunate when Norman Waddell began publishing his translations of Bankei's records in *The Eastern Buddhist*. In 1984, these materials were augmented and revised and published in book form under the title *Unborn, The Life and Teachings of Zen Master Bankei* (North Point Press, San Francisco), upon which the present German translation by J. Eggert is based.

In the introduction to this book the translator gives a very interesting biography of Bankei. Part 1 contains Bankei's Dharma talks at the Ryūmon-ji and Hōshin-ji; Part 2 contains the master's Zen dialogues. The notes provide ample information clarifying historical and doctrinal points, followed by a bibliography.

A striking feature of Waddell's work is his success in conveying to the reader a tangible sense of the actual historicity of a towering Zen master of the past. For the historian the records dealing with Bodhidharma and the origins of Ch'an are, strictly speaking, mostly legendary materials, however inspiring they may be for the Zen practitioner. But here we have a still comparatively early phase of Zen history with handy facts instead of haze-shrouded hagiography. Waddell's book is replete with historical details throwing much light on the religio-cultural life with all its ups and downs in Japan during the 17th century. What emerges is a fascinating, vivid picture of the Zen School and its cultural and social ambience during the first century of the Edo period, amazingly reminiscent, it seems, of traditional and at the same time open-minded Zen circles of the present time, graced by such outstanding masters as the late Yamada Mumon Rōshi (cf. obituary note by Tokiwa Gishin in *The Eastern Buddhist*, XXII, 2, pp. 136-144).

As Mori has said, Bankei Zen transcended Chinese Ch'an, a fact which certainly holds true with respect to form, though not necessarily as far as content is concerned. Bankei preached in colloquial Japanese, "his sermons were popular in the best sense of the word" (p. 8). Never were ordinary people

taught Zen in such a relaxed but by no means superficial manner. Bankei's Fushō Zen, thanks to its inspiring force, its outer simplicity and perfect unity reminds us of the teachings of the great Chinese masters of the T'ang dynasty, the heyday of Ch'an Buddhism. The Ch'an school and the Zen school are, to be sure, the products of Chinese and Japanese soil, respectively. In their outer forms, these Far Eastern schools of Buddhism may be regarded as more or less autochthonous. Concerning the heart of their Zen teachings, however, it is the very essence of the teachings of Mahāyāna and even to some extent Hīnayāna Buddhism as preserved in certain strata of Pāli and Sanskrit texts.

To corroborate this statement, two brilliant pieces of research may be cited in which great pains have been taken to trace elements of classical Zen literature back to their Indian sources: a) Paul Demiéville's annotated French translation of the *Lin-chi lu* (*Rinzai-roku*), *Entretiens de Lin-tsi* (Paris, 1972), which owes a great deal to Yanagida Seizan's great work on this text; b) Kazama Toshio, "*Ein Anhänger einer fremden Lehre fragte den Buddha: Quelle und Entwicklung eines Kōans*," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* No. 8 (Göttingen 1982). In this latter study a kōan found both in the *Hekigan-roku* and *Mumonkan* is text-historically examined and traced to its ultimate sources, among which the author cites the Pāli version of the *Dīrghanakha Sūtra* in the *Majjhimanikāya*.

On perusing Waddell's book, one also comes across passages in Bankei's exposition which remind us of places in Indian texts. I should like to mention a few of these places, lest there be any misunderstanding regarding Suzuki's words praising Bankei Zen as "espousing a truly fresh departure for the first time since the time of Bodhidharma." Perhaps Bankei Zen is not really so much new in terms of its form or even its doctrinal content; its sweeping success may first of all be attributed to his actually having been a "fully enlightened person," very rarely to be met with.

Where Bankei's winning full enlightenment is referred to (p. 19, *passim*), and he has ultimately releasing insight into the fact that "Alle Dinge sind vollkommen gelöst im Ungeborenen," this is the liberating experience known in Sanskrit as *anutpattikadharmakṣānti*, which is mentioned quite frequently in Mahāyāna scriptures. Naturally, this fundamental experience is the very starting point of Bankei's Fushō Zen experience.

When Bankei says, "Ursprünglich jedoch haben Gedanken keine wirkliche Substanz. Wenn sie also gespiegelt werden, lässt sie einfach gespiegelt werden . . ." (p. 55, *passim*), he refers to what is known in Satipaṭṭhāna/Vipassanā meditation as *cittānupassanā*. Although Bankei always carefully avoids technical language, his sometimes charmingly unassuming, sometimes authoritative way of teaching betrays his awe-inspiring mastery of "skill in means" (*upāya-kauśalya/hōben*).

Bankei refers (p. 38) to his Zen tradition as the “Buddha-Mind School” (Buddha-Geist-Schule). Compassionately and untiringly he explains that the “unborn, enlightened wisdom is without doubt the Buddha-Mind” (p. 53, *passim*), which, by virtue of the Unborn, perfectly settles all things. There are well-known references to the “luminous mind,” *pabhassaram cittam* (not so much in the scholastic sense of *bhavaṅgacittam*, *Manorathapūraṇī* I, 60–63) at *Āṅguttaranikāya* I, 10 which are, however, unique in the Pāli canon. So it is all the more welcome to have Bankei’s exposition on the enlightened Buddha-mind, reading like an exhaustive commentary on the isolated Pāli passage.

Like the Sixth Patriarch and other great Ch’an masters Bankei does not stress the absolute necessity of prolonged formal zazen practice; see e.g., p. 71: “Ihr sollt meinen Worten lauschen, als wärt ihr heute geboren . . .” Or, to be taken *cum grano salis*, on p. 119. “Den Buddha-Geist klar vermirklichen—das genügt. Sonst ist da nichts zu tun. . . .” Important texts in the same vein are found in Pāli and Sanskrit scriptures; e.g., *Dīghanikāya* III, 241, *Āṅguttaranikāya* III, 21, *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* (Wogihara ed.) 54, 1–33, 55, 1–5, 96, on the “five gates of entry into release” (*pañcavimuktyāyatanāni*).

In several places in his sermons, though, Bankei seems to make sweeping statements at variance with what may be considered ‘orthodox’ Buddhist doctrine. On p. 83, for example, due to ignorance or nescience (“Torheit” is not a suitable German translation of *avidyā*) excessive mourning on the part of the bereaved is said to yield such karmic results for both the mourners and the mourned as to cause them to be reborn as animals doomed constantly to fight against each other in their next existence. It would have been advisable to comment upon such a passage (as has been done in another content [p. 195]) in a note. So as not to misunderstand Bankei, one must always be aware of the two levels of conventional and absolute truth at which he alternately preaches; moreover, as in his passage, he makes use of therapeutic devices (*hōben*) sometimes as a sort of “spiritual shock therapy.”

The present book is beautifully produced. Some misprints, all the same, have escaped the proofreader: pp. 91, 132 (last lines; p. 141: for “tiefes Karma” read “schweres Karma”; p. 170 (read “Bodhidharma”), p. 175: Zeugnise (*sic*), p. 190 (read “Ryūmon-ji”).

Since practically nothing could be read about Bankei in western languages, Waddell has done all those interested in Zen Buddhism in particular and history of religions in general a really great service in making known to us such an eminent and touching personality of old Japan and his exposition of Unborn Zen.

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