

ZEN DAWN: Early Zen Texts from Tun Huang. Translated by J. C. Cleary. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1986. 135 pp. ISBN 0-87773-359-7 (paperback), 0-394-74388-1 (Random House, paperback)

At first glance, *Zen Dawn* appears to be a pleasant rendition of three Ch'an texts. Indeed, the translator should be lauded for the effort taken in making the writings of this interesting and provocative period of Ch'an Buddhism available to the general public. Although apparently aimed at a non-scholarly audience—at least, there are no footnotes and no index, and only a brief introduction and glossary to aid the reader—a closer look reveals this to be a most perplexing book, for reasons which are very much relevant to the goals of critical scholarship and the further understanding of Buddhism.

In his introduction (pp. 3-4), Cleary describes the three texts he translates as valuable sources from the Northern School of the early eighth century that provide a perspective on early Ch'an different from that of the traditional account. This is accurate as far as it goes, but even interested lay readers might appreciate knowing a bit of the very rich and intriguing body of information that surrounds these texts. The first, *Records of the Teachers and Students of the Lanka* (*Leng-ch'ieh shih-tzu chi* 楞伽師資記), which was written in 713-716, is one of the two first "transmission of the lamp" histories of Ch'an Buddhism. The author was Ching-chüeh 淨覺 (683-ca. 750), younger brother of the ill-fated Empress Wei-shih 韋士, who was killed in 710 after attempting to follow in the footsteps of Empress Wu. Ching-chüeh was a student of Shen-hsiu 神秀 (606?-706) and Hsuan-tse 玄頤 of the Northern School, the former of whom is well known for his role in the fictional account of a verse competition found in the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liu-tsu t'an ching* 六祖壇經). Not only is Ching-chüeh's text a fascinating pastiche of late seventh and early eighth century materials, it constitutes one of the cornerstones of the Ch'an conception of religious transmission from master to student and patriarch to patriarch.

The second text is *Bodhidharma's Treatise on Contemplating Mind* (*Ta-mo ta-shih kuan-hsiu lun* 達摩大師觀心論). This title occurs only in the Korean printed edition of the text and its derivatives; elsewhere the text is known simply as the *Treatise on the Contemplation of the Mind* or the *Treatise on the Destruction of Characteristics* (*P'o-hsiang lun* 破相論). It has long been known that Shen-hsiu was the actual author; I suspect that he wrote this work during his quarter-century of residence (675-700) at Yü-ch'üan ssu 玉泉寺 in Ching-chou 荊州, if only because T'ien-t'ai Chih-i 天台智顛 (538-597), a former resident of the same monastery complex, wrote a work bearing the same title. Because of its authorship by Shen-hsiu, this text's numerous redefinitions of conventional Buddhist terms into metaphorical references to the contempla-

BOOK REVIEWS

tion of the mind provide important insights into the development of Ch'an.

Cleary translates the title of the third text as *Treatise on the True Sudden Enlightenment School of the Great Vehicle, Which Opens up Mind and Reveals Reality-Nature* (*Ta-sheng k'ai-hsin hsien-hsing tun-wu chen-tsung lun* 大乘開心顯性頓悟真宗論; my own rendition of this long and awkward title is *Treatise on the True Principle of Opening the Mind and Manifesting the [Buddha]-nature in Sudden Enlightenment [according to] the Mahayana*, abbreviated to *Treatise on the True Principle*). The provenance of this text is not precisely known: It was closely modelled on another work that claims to have been written in 712, even to the point of plagiarizing a large portion of the preface and the innovative dialogue structure of the other work.¹ Each text was written by an author who used both ordained and lay names, and the dialogue in each is between the author and himself in these two roles. The amusing point is that in both texts, the author-as-monk praises the first question posed by the author-as-layman as more profound than any other he had heard in all his twenty (or thirty-two) years in the Saṅgha!

The *Treatise on the True Principle* is undeniably an interesting text, especially in that it promises to give some insight into the early teachings of Shen-hui 神會 (684-758), mentioned here as one of the two teachers of the author, who is himself otherwise unknown. Shen-hui has been the focus of a great deal of attention by researchers during the twentieth century due to his active role in promoting Hui-neng 慧能 (683-713) as Sixth Patriarch and in criticizing the alleged gradualism of the Northern School. The fact that the Northern School figure Lao-an 老安 (or Hui-an 慧安; d. 708 or 709) is identified as the other teacher of the author of the *Treatise on the True Principle* means that this text derives from a period prior to the initiation of Shen-hui's anti-Northern School campaign in 730 C.E., when Shen-hui operated within the context of Northern Ch'an.

Cleary does the reader a disservice by providing no specific information about the texts he translates. The *Records of the Teachers and Students of the Lanka* in particular is a complex text with a great number of scriptural quotations and references to different historical figures, and the complete absence of annotation will leave even the lay reader frustrated and confused. (Since the diacriticals are dropped from the title, it is even unclear that the reference is to

¹ The title of the parent work is similarly long and awkward: "Essential Determination of the Doctrine of Attaining the Other Shore [of Nirvāna] by the Practice of Adamantine Wisdom [according to] the True Teaching of Sudden Enlightenment," or "Essential Determination" (*Tun-wu chen-tsung chin-kang po-jo hsiu-hsing ta pi-an fa-men yao-chüeh* 頓悟真宗金剛般若修行達彼岸法門要訣). The abbreviated titles given for these texts are chosen so as to be in accord with scholarly usage in Japan. It is possible that the *Essential Determination* was not written as early as it claims.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

the masters and students of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*.) It is also misleading to leave the reader with the impression that the *Treatise on Contemplating the Mind* actually records a dialogue between Bodhidharma and Hui-k'o. Although it would not be fair to suggest that Cleary should have provided exactly the information given above in his own presentation of these texts—since certain of the comments above may be idiosyncratic to my own perspective on the subject—virtually all of the information known about these texts is available in the secondary literature (most of it in Japanese).

It seems that Cleary deliberately chose to avoid benefitting from decades of modern scholarship. This extends even to modern editions of the texts: If nothing else, in the case of the *Records of the Teachers and Students of the Lanka*, his decision to use an edition published in 1934 meant that he neglected the first two hundred and sixty or so Chinese characters of the text as given in Yanagida Seizan's 柳田聖山 heavily annotated edition, which was published in 1971.² (For unknown reasons, Cleary also omits the first dozen or so Chinese characters given in the edition he uses.)

When we look at the introduction to *Zen Dawn*, it becomes apparent that the omission of descriptions of the three texts chosen for translation was a conscious decision. There is a palpably aggressive tone to Cleary's introduction, although the target of his invective is unclear. He alludes to the "many treatments of Buddhist history" (p. 4) that assume their subject is best interpreted in sectarian terms. Only the polemic purposes of doctrines and the quest for patronage, popularity, and prestige among the social elite are emphasized:

To serve this type of interpretation, texts are quoted in a fragmentary manner to show their supposed philosophical tenets, but their comprehensive meaning is studiously ignored. In particular, the message the primary sources give concerning the human realities of Buddhism is not heeded.

The result can only be pseudohistory, crippled by basic errors of method. Rather than derive from the sources an adequate paradigm for the human dimensions of Buddhist history, this type of approach simply transposes onto Buddhist history the set of human motivations and the limited range of human experiences considered normal or possible in our "modern world." As a consequence of such ar-

² The edition used by Cleary (personal communication) was Kim Kugyōng or Chin Chiu-ching 金九經, *Chiang-yūan ts'ung-shu* 薑園叢書 (Shen-yang, 1934). Professor Yanagida's edition and translation may be found in his *Shōki no Zenshi*, 1—Ryōga shiji ki - Den'hōbōki—Zen no goroku, no. 2 初期の禪史 I—楞伽師資記. 伝法宝紀—禪の歴史. 第二巻 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1971).

BOOK REVIEWS

bitrary presuppositions, the main factors seen at work in the formulation of Buddhist teachings are things like personal ambition and rivalry, greed for patronage, political intrigues, propaganda contests, and ideological manipulation and self-delusion through myth and fantasy. Filtered through such limiting preconceptions, which elevate the mere common sense of today's world to a universal, objective standpoint, the vision of the intent and manner of operation of the Buddhist teaching preserved in the primary sources completely escapes from view. (p. 5)

I cannot imagine who might be the target of this strongly worded broadside attack, and it seems best to interpret it as a blanket indictment of modern Buddhist studies in general. In any case, it is inaccurate, intemperate, and irresponsible.

Cleary's alternative approach is a "core and periphery model for the social history of Buddhism" (pp. 7-8). At the core are bona fide religious teachers who have independently realized enlightened perception and who have mastered the full range of Buddhist teaching methods. Radiating outward from this core are those of increasingly lesser sincerity, ability, and insight; those around the periphery "may be reached only weakly and indirectly, as their teachings have indirect effect on culture and customs" (p. 8). In other words, "worldly attitudes and motivations, including partisanship, jealousy, dogmatism, group rivalries, and political entanglements" (p. 8) are peripheral phenomena, and scholars who focus on them are "ignoring or glossing over the core teachings" (p. 9).

Cleary devotes almost half of his 12-page introduction to a discussion of Ch'an based on the writings of the ninth-century Hua-yen and Ch'an school systematician Tsung-mi 宗密 (780-841). The implication seems to be that Tsung-mi's writings contravene the modern view "that partisan rivalry and doctrinal differences over sudden versus gradual enlightenment were central factors in the formulation" of early Ch'an doctrines (p. 9). The attraction of Tsung-mi is his position that the teachings of Ch'an and the scriptures were identical, but Cleary misrepresents this position by selective quotation and only partially accurate summary. Cleary writes:

Sectarian feeling arises among those who fail to comprehend the underlying complementarity of the sudden and gradual accounts of enlightenment. Half-baked teachers feed on and promote partisan rivalries. . . . If all we do is search for evidence of supposed sectarian rivalries, and labor to piece together questionable hypotheses about long-forgotten controversies among the ill-informed, we are using a conceptual sieve that keeps the chaff and discards the grain. (p. 14)

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

Presumably, the "half-baked teachers" referred to here are the contemporaries of Hung-jen, Shen-hui, and Tsung-mi rather than modern students of Chinese Ch'an.

I assume that Cleary introduces Tsung-mi because he represents the "core" position of Buddhism. But is it fair to regard Tsung-mi's statements as purely nonpartisan? Nowhere is it mentioned that Tsung-mi was a fifth-generation successor to Shen-hui, nor that Tsung-mi may have falsified his own lineage in order to assert this relationship. Shen-hui, it must be recognized, was without question the one individual most responsible for injecting a spirit of partisan factionalism into early Ch'an Buddhism, and to the extent that Tsung-mi called for nonpartisan tolerance he was participating in a general reaction to Shen-hui's activities. Furthermore, Tsung-mi wielded the olive branch of non-partisanship only from the citadel of his own elaborate systematic ranking of the teachings of early Ch'an factions. The suggestion that Tsung-mi viewed the Northern and Southern schools as being of equal truth value (pp. 13-14) is simply incorrect.

Cleary's statement of his alternative approach to the analysis of Buddhist history is too brief for in-depth consideration, but as it stands his formulation is both naive and simplistic. How are we to gauge what is core and what is periphery, what is righteous anger and what is self-seeking pride? How do we set the standards for such distinctions? And why should the model be so strictly dualistic, a format that even Tsung-mi repudiates? Even if we grant the dichotomy, is it possible that only core elements truly affect the development of the Buddhist tradition? In the case of early Ch'an, imperial patronage and sectarian rivalry played very important roles, and not only because they inspired certain kinds of responses and reactions. Unless we are to assert that the content and quality of Chinese Buddhist spiritual experience remained entirely unchanged over time (a position I would not accept), can we really affect the implication that that experience was left totally unaffected by these "periphery" factors?

Let us now look at the translations. For the purposes of this review I will limit this discussion to Cleary's *Records of the Teachers and Students of the Lanka*. Cleary has an excellent reputation for his ability in Chinese, and some of his renditions are indeed felicitous. I particularly like his translation of a difficult line from the apocryphal *Dharmapāda Sūtra* (*Fa-chū ching* 法句經), "The dense array of myriad images is the impression of One Reality" (p. 21). Unfortunately, his English is more often an awkward mixture of formal phraseology and inappropriate colloquialisms. For example, each section opens with the statement that the subject "took it up" after the previous master, which I find to be both overly colloquial and of questionable accuracy; "followed after" would be more suitable. The following examples in-

BOOK REVIEWS

clude both stylistic problems and inaccurate readings:

“nirvāna aspect of all phenomena” (lit., the characteristic of extinction of the myriad dharmas; p. 23)

“one practice *samādhi*” (originally the *samādhi* of the single characteristic of all dharmas, this came to be interpreted as the *samādhi* of the single practice; p. 48)

“I often see people who go along creating *karma*, who have not merged with the Path” (p. 27)

“Those who [cultivated] mind-emptied still silence all believed in him. The type who cling to forms and fixate on opinions began to slander and denounce him” (p. 33)

“You must let it roll” (p. 53)

“There is only the vast depths of the One Reality. Ah, for the profuse diversity of the myriad forms” (p. 44)

My translation of the last example would be: “When I think on the profundity and breadth of the one reality, I sigh at the profuse diversity of the myriad characteristics.” Here as elsewhere, Cleary translates *hsiang* 相 as “form” rather than “characteristic.” (Also see p. 20). I would prefer to reserve the word form for the character *se* 色. Similarly, he translates *fa* 法 on occasion as “method,” without indicating the term also means “dharma” (p. 26). I also believe that “heretical teachings” or some other translation would be better than the “outside paths” he uses (p. 26).

In addition to the omissions mentioned above, Cleary sometimes makes errors based on the edition he uses. For example, following the 1934 edition he mistakes a colloquial compound meaning “right away” (*tang-chi* 當即) for “in the assembly” (*tang-chung* 當衆, p. 19). He is also misled by an incorrect homophone in a well-known passage from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, in which he renders the term “pure land” (*ching-t'u* 淨土) as “perfection of purity” (*ching-tu* 淨度, p. 22).

Some of the most egregious errors involve Cleary's repeated failure to recognize the precise extent of scriptural quotations. He recognizes only the first sentence of a quotation from the *Awakening of Faith*, which includes the next two paragraphs in his text (pp. 20-21). This is a very important citation, since it includes the term *li* 離, ‘transcend’, which was a very critical term in Northern School doctrine. (Other errors in this passage include the omission of any English corresponding to the words *hsiang* 相, ‘characteristic’, *yüan-chüeh* 緣覺, ‘pratyekabuddha’ or ‘solitary buddha’, and *i* 義, ‘meaning’.) In

another case (p. 25), a citation supposedly from a scripture is actually based on an essay in the *Chao lun* 肇論 (see Yanagida's note, p. 90). A sentence is also mistakenly not included in the subsequent quotation from the *Lankāvātara Sūtra* (p. 21). On the other hand, a few pages later (p. 26) he attributes to the *Lankāvātara Sūtra* an entire sentence, where the sutra citation is only a phrase of five characters; a similar case involving the same scripture occurs on p. 31. At another point (p. 29), Cleary fails to recognize the title of the *Chu-fa wu-hsing ching* 諸法無行經 ("Sūtra on the Inactivity of all Dharma's"), leaving the scripture unnamed, and he carries the quotation one clause too far. A quotation from the *Hua-yen ching* 華嚴經 is also taken one sentence too far (p. 39), and another from the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Fa-hua ching* 法華經) is taken three sentences too far (p. 44). Finally, a citation from the *Continued Lives of Eminent Monks* (*Hsū kao-seng chuan* 統高僧傳) is only one sentence (five characters), but Cleary's presentation implies that at least the next two paragraphs were from this text. (Since only a colon and no quotation marks are used, the extent of the citation is unclear.) Although I have not checked all the scriptural citations in *Zen Dawn*, it seems evident that Cleary checked none of them against either the original scriptures or against Yanagida's masterfully annotated edition.

The same sort of sloppiness is readily apparent elsewhere. On the first page of the translation (p. 19) he simply omits a reference to "Hsiao-ho Emperor Chung-tsung of the Great T'ang." When the "patriarch and Great Master Hung-jen" is mentioned just a few lines below, he omits the critical term *tsu* 祖, 'patriarch'. The colophon that occurs prior to the first section (p. 25), which identifies the author and the location where the text was compiled, is completely omitted. Contrary to conventional usage, Cleary's section headings are actually taken from the text. For example, his section heading and first sentence of the material dealing with Bodhidharma (p. 32) reads: "SECTION TWO/Tripitaka Dharma Teacher/Bodhidharma/Wei Period/It was Meditation Master Bodhidharma who took it up after Gunabhadra Tripitaka." The text here reads, more literally (and with correct diacritics): "Number two, the Tripitaka Master of the Wei Dynasty, Bodhidharma Dharma Master, followed after Gunabhadra Tripitaka Master." On the same page, Cleary also omits the statements that Bodhidharma went to Lo-yang, which is significant, and that he is identified as being from "a great Brahman country." In the section heading for Hui-k'o (p. 38), the reference to Yeh 鄴, a location with which Hui-k'o is closely identified, is also omitted. Just below, where Cleary has "the region [modern Henan]," the text actually has "Sung-Lo," or the Mount Sung and Lo-yang area. The next section heading (p. 43) should have [Seng]-ts'an, rather than Seng-ts'an (Sengcan in the Pinyin transcription that Cleary uses). Perhaps misled by the edition he used, Cleary

BOOK REVIEWS

also mistakenly gives the site of Seng-ts'an's death as "Nieshan Temple," when the text has Wan-kung ssu (p. 44). Where the text states there was a shrine and image of Seng-ts'an at that temple, Cleary mentions only the image.

Individually, these are relatively minor errors, but the cumulative effect is to severely reduce the reliability of the translation. Unfortunately, the tendency to carelessness is accompanied by occasional misinterpretations of content. On one or two occasions, Cleary obviously fails to recognize terminology important within the specific context of early Ch'an Buddhism. In addition to the *Awakening of Faith* passage mentioned above, the term "solitarily maintaining the pure mind" (*tu shou ching-hsin* 独守淨心) is translated "holding solely to the mind of purity" (p. 21). This fails to evoke the obvious allusion to the doctrine of *shou-hsin* or "maintaining [awareness of] the mind" attributed to Hung-jen. (I should point out that on p. 27 he does much better in translating a related phrase as "preserving the fundamental and returning to the real.")

Elsewhere (p. 27), Cleary interpolates the word "consciousness" to refer to the Yogācāra doctrine of eight *viññānas* in a passage that is admittedly obscure but where there is no explicit reference either before or after to this doctrine. (I do not believe the theory of the eight *viññānas* occurs anywhere in the original text.) He also misunderstands the basic structure of a long quote from the *Hua-yen ching* (p. 42): Where he has "Entering correct concentration in the east, *samādhi* arising in the west" and so forth, the text reads "[When I] enter correct concentration in the East, I arise from *samādhi* in the West." In a statement about Seng-ts'an (p. 44), Cleary adds considerably to the original meaning of the text. Where he renders the line as "He did not put any writings into circulation: he taught only intimately, at close range, and did not publicly transmit the Dharma," I would have translated "He did not produce a written record; [maintaining] secrecy, he did not transmit the Dharma."

Finally, there are minor problems that should be laid at the feet of both the translator and Shambhala, the publisher of this heavily flawed volume. The citation of the names of persons, places, and texts is inconsistent, so that we have Jinjue, Hongren, Huike, and Sengcan but also Zong Mi, Lao Zi, and Zhuang Zi (the latter two on p. 65), as well as Sikong Mountain and Shuzhou (p. 43), but Tun Huang. What can be the rationale for having *Huayan Sutra*, *Si Yi Sutra*, and *Chan Jue* (all p. 30)? What is the reader to make of these names, only the first of which might conceivably be recognizable? Throughout the volume, diacritical marks are done in a haphazard fashion, which surely should have been corrected in copy editing.

In conclusion, I must admit to being uncertain as to who benefits from such an uneven product as *Zen Dawn*: The introduction is clearly aimed at the

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

scholarly community (or at least is intended to warn the lay reader about the collective errors of that community), but the complete absence of annotation clearly marks this volume as intended for a popular audience. But to provide that audience with material of this quality seems patronizing at best, and detrimental to the wider understanding of Buddhism at worst. Perhaps the reader is supposed to look only for the "core" meaning of the texts presented here, but I question whether even the most non-scholarly reader will be content to read about individuals and texts that are left completely unidentified. In any case, the decision to forego annotation does not automatically relieve translator and publisher of the need for accuracy. (And even where Cleary's renditions are nominally accurate, they often obscure multiple layers of meaning or other nuances within the text.) There is certainly a valid need for popular works on Ch'an Buddhism, but one would hope for at least minimal standards of performance in the translation, interpretation, and editing of important primary texts.

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