

## THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

I had better put "artist" in quotes, because Sengai almost certainly would disdain the title. He obviously did not create as a self-consciously "artistic" organism. Hence he is not rewarded with inclusion in the anthologies and official collections and remains eternally a discovery, like the sculptor Enkū.

I am a little doubtful about the authorship of a few of these drawings. Not being an art historian I may well be mistaken, but in works like "Buddha and his attendants" (p. 40) I do not see the striking, authentic handwriting (sometimes curiously akin to the work of members of the contemporary Cobra Group, Alechinsky, Appel, Lucebert), which is so unmistakable for instance in the Monju Bosatsu (p. 51), who has not come to bring a quick, smooth peace, but the Sword of Vajraraja, or in the Hotei (p. 55), who finds no place to set down his burden or rest his head. For Sengai, the authentic, enlightened draughtsman and Zen Master, things are Such as they are. His hand, his brush, caresses, traces Suchness. There is no fancy symbolism to be found here—"Zen," says R.H. Blyth, "is the un-symbolisation of the world." Sengai's Maitreya is as concrete as his magnificent "Woman offering Pickles" (p. 136), as concrete as the clear water running through the reeds (p. 114) and the Maillol-like Kanzan and Jittoku (p. 93).

With Sengai, with Bashō, with D.T. Suzuki, we jump forever, playfully, youthfully and profoundly:

An old pond  
Bashō jumps in  
Sound of water! (p. 177)

*Sengai, the Zen Master* is a beautiful way for Suzuki Daisetz to take leave of life, to go on living.

FREDERICK FRANCE

*ART IN JAPANESE ESOTERIC BUDDHISM.* By Sawa Takaaki, translated by Richard L. Gage. Weatherhill/Heibonsha: New York, 1971, 151 pp., 180 pl.

This book is one of the first published volumes of the projected collection "Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art" which will consist of English translations of the "*Nihon no Bijutsu*" Series recently published by Heibonsha.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Except for the exclusion of folded charts, which are an attraction of many such Japanese books, the format of both the Japanese and English versions is the same. Since these folded charts—a kind of “gadget” for the Japanese reader—would have been useful for the foreign reader as well, their exclusion is unfortunate. The book benefits from the same advantages as its Japanese counterpart: excellent illustrations (sometimes a little repetitious) and readable and reliable text accurately translated.

The author, Sawa Takaaki, better known under the more clerical pronunciation of his *myōji*-name: Ryūken, is a specialist of the Esoteric tradition of Kūkai and the Japanese Tantric iconography. He subsequently became an authority on Buddhist art in general as well. His *Butsuzō zassetsu* (Buddhist Iconography, Tokyo 1962) is altogether handy, almost complete, clear and well informed about the literary sources. It succeeded in creating among the general public, who are more and more doing artistic pilgrimage throughout the country, a new interest in the meaning of Buddhist art. Two scholarly works, *Mikkyō Bijutsu Ron* (Kyoto 1955) and *Nihon no Mikkyō Bijutsu* (Kyoto 1961) made clear Prof. Sawa's ability to take care of Esoteric art in the Heibonsha/Weatherhill Series.

As this series has no specialized ambition, Prof. Sawa must have felt that it would be all right to present the material in a rather dilettantish way. The absence of footnotes forced him to put ancillary information in an appendix at the end of the original book. The translator seems to have tried to give a more systematical aspect to the division in chapters than in the original. Unfortunately he omitted the subtitles which run conveniently through the five main chapters of the original book. He also converted the appendix of the original into three supplementary chapters. The result is that occasionally the same point, instead of being treated once and for all, appears unnecessarily in two or three different places in this rather thin volume.

There is no doubt that Tantrism is inherent to Buddhism, as it is to all Indian religions since their origin. The Buddha observed a rather negative attitude toward the use of magic. But with the development of popular Buddhism, powerful incantations and powerful images became elements which cannot now be neglected. In Japan, Tantrism is associated with the radiant personality of Kūkai (Kōbō Daishi), but Prof. Sawa was right to take account of the two following points:

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Before the beginning of the Heian Period, when Kūkai and a few Tendai monks, mainly Ennin and Enchin, borrowed Tantrism from T'ang China, it was already somewhat known in Japan. There is an Esoteric art in the Nara Period and even earlier. For example, there are the layouts of the Asuka Period monasteries, as well as the wonderful Fukūkenjaku Altar in the Hokkedō (Sangatsudō), and even the giant Vairocana of the Tōdaiji which can be considered as types of Mandala. On the other hand, the strong impact of the "Mountain Religion," which seems to have been carried on in the statues of such folk artists of recent date as Enkū or Mokujiki, allows Prof. Sawa to annex to Esoteric art a large part of the popular religious traditions expressed mostly in naïve stone-carving and rough wood-carving.

Therefore, in this book, the classical Esoteric art, even though actually centered in the early Heian Period, appears to have been sandwiched between the mystical representations of the Nara Period and the variegated art of popular worship. Nevertheless, it is made clear that Kūkai has introduced into Japanese art some capital innovations: 1. the adoption of the Two Worlds Mandala, with the frontality of the figures, the symbolism of colours and the subtlety of hierarchical placement; 2. a new type of voluptuous sculpture, in the Indian style, which, paradoxically enough, is particularly apparent through the comparison of the first, rather fleshy, Fudō Myōō images with the earlier, terrifying representations of the Nara Period, e.g. Kongō Rikishi, as well as with the later types of Fudō, especially under Tendai influence, e.g. Yellow Fudō; 3. the compromise between Shintō and Buddhism and, subsequently, the first formal representations of Shintō divinities. All those trends of the Shingon Esoteric art are vividly described by Prof. Sawa. About the Tendai Esoteric art, of which so much has been lost or is yet kept from view in the main centers of worship, Prof. Sawa gives useful clues.

I am afraid that many readers will remain eager to know more about the Mandala Doctrine than they will find in the two short commentaries that this book affords, and which are in fact mostly descriptive. But perhaps this cannot be helped in a book more concerned with fine arts than with esoteric doctrine. It is a pity then that the two folded charts about Mandala found in the Japanese edition have not been incorporated here.

The translation, in a very few cases, shortens or oversimplifies the original text. In other cases, the translator brings in complementary information, which

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is generally welcome. The Sanskrit equivalencies of the Chinese names of the mythological figures have been supplied (with a few inadequacies, e.g. p. 25, p. 54), though they were absent from the Japanese book. A mistaken addition is to locate Kumano in Kyoto (p. 126).

Concerning this tedious question of the location of the Japanese works of art, let us suggest to the Editors of the whole series not to follow strictly the Japanese way. Whenever an ambiguous geographical term appears like Kyoto, Nara, Osaka (City? Prefecture?), the location should be made clear. Too many readers could imagine that Osaka City possesses such a treasure as the Kanshinji (Plate 10) of Kawachi Nagano, Osaka Prefecture, or would look with despair on a map of Kyoto City for the location of the Matsu-no-o-dera (Plate 121), which is located in Kyoto Prefecture, close to the Japan Sea.

HUBERT DURT

*MUDRA.* By Chogyam Trungpa. Shambala Publications Inc: Berkeley and London, 1972, 105 pp.

This little book on Tibetan Buddhism contains translations, songs, poems, an essay, a commentary on the Zen oxherding pictures, and a glossary of terms. These, the author, now a teacher of meditation in America, uses as a medium to convey his spiritual experience to the world.

Originally the Sanskrit word "mudra" meant "seal," then when adopted by Tantric Buddhism it became applied to the hand symbols assumed by Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and other heavenly beings. The fundamental object of the mudra is to demonstrate externally the original oath or aspiration, or virtues, which are internally possessed by the respective Buddhist heavenly beings. Thus the hand symbol or mudra is like a king's royal seal in that the power represented by it can only be implemented by someone duly authorized to act in the king's name. Thus in Tantric Buddhism, or Mantrayana, mudra is extremely important and mystically highly significant. From being a hand symbol it has developed a much wider cosmic sense or gesture of action. When the worshipper through correct procedures assumes the mudra of a holy being, he can see the true body of the holy being and become identified with its true nature, also. Its meaning becomes self-evident when understood, or rather, experienced correctly. The rich symbolism of Tantric Buddhism is likely to be rather baffling