

Bernard FRANK, *Dieux et Bouddhas au Japon*. Travaux du Collège de France. Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 2000. 462 pp. ISBN 2-7381-0824-5.

Bernard FRANK, *Amour, colère, couleur: Essais sur le bouddhisme au Japon*. Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises. Paris: Collège de France (distribution: De Boccard), 2000. xiv + 280 pp. + 67 plates. ISBN 2-913217-03-6.

TO SOME NAMES a special grace attaches, among them the name of Bernard Frank (1927–1996). One afternoon in 1987 I stumbled on his seminar in the Collège de France and was surprised to find in those surroundings a circle of Japanese ladies sipping tea as Monsieur le Professeur gently led them through the fragrant pages of an old *monogatari*. I was not able to follow up on his “Please come again,” nor did I come across substantial works from his pen (but see FRANK 1991). The news of his untimely death left a sense of the unfinished, which many others must have felt more keenly. They will welcome these posthumous volumes with a sense of satisfaction and with gratitude to Jean-Noël Robert and his colleagues who have seen them through to publication.

It is said that, like a more famous namesake, Frank was threatened in early years by the Nazi terror, from which he sought sanctuary through his baptism at St. Nicholas du Chardonnet. His religious quest reveled in all the forms of the *imaginaire religieux* rather than in doctrines and ideas. Japan, discovered through reading Lafcadio Hearn at age eighteen, provided a wonderfully intricate field for such inquiry, and he became attached to the country and its traditions by every fiber of his being. His researches brought a detective's flair to the most humble relics of folk devotion. Local cults in far-flung corners of Japan supplied the chief material of his study, which unites the realms of doctrine, ritual, and iconography and roots them in an ethnographical grasp of the dynamics of Japanese religion. He brought the same penetrating sympathy to the folk religion of Brittany, where he spent his summers. “He was convinced that monotheism and polytheism met in religious sentiment, art, and literature, and that this harmonious cohabitation could have come about in Western culture if the traces of ancient polytheism had not been so carefully erased” (Jacques Gernet, preface to *Dieux et Bouddhas au Japon*, 9–10).

Dieux et Bouddhas au Japon consists of the annual résumés of Frank's lectures at the College de France from 1979 to 1995. Frank shows how the Indian gods “affiliated” to Buddhism, “the benevolent riffraff of the Mahāyāna universe” (YIENGPRUKSAWAN 1999, p. 410), were arranged and interpreted within the Japanese Buddhist pantheon. Buddhist cosmology centered on Mount Sumeru, supplemented by doctrinal and sociological evolution, assigned to each divinity its place and significance. Frank uncovers the historical depth and complexity of this lore, from the distant Indic sources through the shifting concerns of popular religion in Japan down to today. The Tokyo reader guided by Frank's gaze will find new interest and dignity in the iconography of the seven gods of good fortune so central to *shitamachi* piety (even if their grouping was no more than an Edo period gimmick to encourage pilgrimage and tourism). He authoritatively “places” such distinctive phenomena as the Nichiren temple dedicated to Taishaku-ten (Indra) in Shibamata,

home of the movie hero Tora-san, pointing out that the association of Indra with good fortune and retribution goes back to ancient India. His accounts of Kishimojin (Hārītī), Benzaiten (Sarasvatī), and Kichijōten (Śrī) show how their different fates were shaped not only by their roles in the *Lotus* and *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* sutras, but by accidents of monastic and popular patronage. In Nichiren's hands Kishimojin became a fierce protector of the Buddhist teaching, while Benzaiten was increasingly Shintoized (a phenomenon less studied than the Buddhization of the kami). He notes, without giving details, that the interplay of learned and popular traditions followed a different course in Japan than in China.

The Nichiren school in particular combined doctrinal vigilance with hospitality to all sorts of cults. Nichiren's great mandala has a structure based on the Three Jewels. The Dharma, the *Lotus Sutra*, corresponds to the number one; then comes the Buddha, who is twofold: the preaching Buddha Shakyamuni and the attesting Buddha Prabhūtaratna who appears at the climax of the *Lotus Sutra*, with other buddhas including those of Shingon esotericism in a less prominent place; the Sangha, finally, is linked to the number four, the number of the leading bodhisattvas who come out of the earth at the start of the *honmon* half of the *Lotus Sutra*. These pillars in place, the mandala can freely embrace a host of bodhisattvas, teachers, gods (including Amaterasu and Hachiman). *Kitō* addressed to gods like Taishakuten or Bishamon-ten (Vaiśravaṇa) in the Nichiren tradition integrate the dimension of request for material blessings. Gods of little importance to Nichiren himself, such as Daikokuten and Shichimen-daimyōjin the protector of Mt. Minobu, or completely ignored by him, such as Sajjō-Inari, the Marishiten of Tokudai-ji in Ueno, and Myōken-daibosatsu—"a syncretic culmination of all the currents that met in the Japanese religious universe" (103–104)—were later brought aboard on the strength of miraculous apparitions or due to the influence of Ieyasu's concubine O-Man.

Frank shows that the *zuzō*, or collections of model images, from the late Heian and Kamakura periods, the product of vast research during those times, chiefly reflect the pantheon of the matrix and *vajra* mandalas of esoteric Buddhism. These are *fumonson-mandara* or mandalas of omnipresence, in contrast to the *besson-mandara*, particular mandalas, centered on another object of veneration than Mahāvairocana. The principal mandalas are syntheses reflecting centuries of esotericist thought, achievements of pure esotericism (*junmitsu*), while the particular mandalas though in theory subordinate to them represent older miscellaneous elements (*zōmitsu*) that could not be completely integrated. When these mandalas were imported from China, the pioneering Japanese *zuzō* compilers Shinjaku (886–927) and Shunmyū (890–953) had to deal with "all sorts of variants deriving from different textual traditions, commentaries and iconographic documents" (206). What Shinjaku called the *genzu* (actual mandala) was adopted as the canonical form of the principal mandalas, but the particular mandalas took different forms in the different sects and sub-sects.

Dieux et Bouddhas is more a reference resource, full of valuable bibliographical information, than a monograph. The course résumés vary in length

from sixteen to forty-eight pages, and one wishes more space had been given, or taken, so that the resultant compilation might have been less cramped. As things stand it is the cognoscente rather than the general reader who will most benefit from Frank's researches. In contrast, the essays and lectures collected in *Amour, colère, couleur* are a pleasure to read. Some, such as one discussing the lost Hōryū-ji statue of Seishi rediscovered by Frank himself in the Musée Guimet in 1989, are very technical, but even those addressed to popular audiences contain observations of interest to specialists, while the pieces on Aizen-myōō, Indra, Bishamon, and Myōken clarify and fill out the picture in the companion volume. (To identify the plates at the back one must search for the places, easily missed, where they are referred to in the text; they would have been more useful if accompanied by identifications or at least page references.)

Unlike many recent scholars Frank does not aerate his researches with scintillating flights of "theory." The three essays of "synthesis" that open *Amour, colère, couleur* are largely expositions of basic Buddhist themes. For the theoretical aspects of iconography, Frank draws on the Mahāyāna topics of form and emptiness, the three Buddha bodies, and the twofold truth. That is indeed a capacious framework for understanding a phenomenon that Frank admires, namely the Japanese gift for blending sacred things seamlessly into the texture of the familiar domestic universe, yet in such a way that folk beliefs and practices for all their ease of access offer "living mirrors" (121) of learned canonical Buddhism. Future scholarship may bring further theoretical insight into Buddhist ways of rationalizing or functionalizing the religious *imaginaire*, comparing the different methods of, for example, the Shingon and Nichiren schools, and looking as well at how the *imaginaire* is handled in other religions. Frank provides solid factual foundations for such reflection. In his preface Claude Lévi-Strauss, who was also drawn to Japan by Lafcadio Hearn, recalls that Hearn inspired Frank's quest for "a concrete Buddhism, intimately linked to each person's life and echoing with the noises of the street" (xi), and hails as of major importance for the human sciences Frank's ability to sustain a fascinating interplay "between the archaic and the contemporary, the abstract and the concrete, the speculative and the practical, erudition and the terrain" (xii).

The small change of Japanese religion becomes intellectually exciting if we see it as enacting, at a popular level, a play of skillful means based on the dialectic of conventional and ultimate truth. This play involves adjustment to changing social conditions, as when Bishamon, protector of General Uesugi Kenshin in the Sengoku period (116), becomes one of the gods of good fortune in Edo, and is today exchanging his association with the writing brush for one with the telephone card (121). Similar flexibility is seen in the fortunes of the term *ukiyo* (floating world), invented by ninth century Japanese poets who exploited the homophonic relationship with the term *uki* (painful) found in Chinese poetry: "To a term rich in ambiguity Japan thus furnished what we may call a welcoming sensibility, an affective substratum, while Chinese verse supplied a conceptual content tinged with a melancholy transformism perfectly in harmony, need it be said, with the old sentiment. One

sees how difficult it can be in such cases to take a decisive stand on whether the notion is Buddhist or not" (64). The functional efficacy of Japanese religious imagery is attested by tales of bodily substitution (*migawari*) in which statues even bleed in place of the devotee they protect. "A statue or painting ceases to be a mere material object to become a veritable icon charged with active and sacred power when it is the object of a consecratory rite called the 'opening of the eyes' (*kaigen-kuyō*)" (23). The image can become a transformation body of the Buddha, depending on the devotion of the user. In short, what one might be tempted to dismiss as fanciful quirks of piety may turn out to reflect a profound religious imagination envisioning in its own creative terms the soteriological dynamic of Buddhism.

The dozen essays in *Amour, colère, couleur* have an epilogue in the form of a survey of Buddhist tradition delivered *viva voce* to a journalist on a flight from Kathmandu to Paris, one of Frank's last utterances. Again he recalls favorite sayings from his predecessors in the great tradition of French Buddhism: "We do not transmigrate with our being, but with our having" (Paul Mus, referring to Gabriel Marcel's *Être et avoir*); "*Dharmakāya* is hollowed Brahman" (Mus); "The *dharma* are the ocean as waves; *tathatā* is the waves as ocean" (René Grousset). Frank takes his leave on a characteristic note of modesty and candor: "Mais là, pardonnez-moi si j'arrête, il faut demander à quelqu'un d'autre."

REFERENCES

FRANK, Bernard

1991 *Le Panthéon bouddhique au Japon: Collections d'Émile Guimet*. Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux.

YIENGPRUKSAWAN, Mimi Hall

1999 Buddha's bodies and the iconographical turn in Buddhism. In *Buddhist Spirituality II (World Spirituality, volume 9)*, Takeuchi Yoshinori et al. eds., pp. 391–416. New York: Crossroad.

Joseph S. O'Leary
Sophia University