

## Bukkyō Nyūmon (Introduction to Buddhism)

By *Yutaka Iwamoto* 岩本 裕

*Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha* 中央公論社, 1964, pp. 201.

Many introductions to Buddhism have been written and there will be more. Dr. Iwamoto has attempted one in a concise and readable form. It is interesting in the sense that it makes apparent to us the author's emotional and intellectual reaction to the actual history and current of Buddhism. The author may be said to have a so-called existential concern which, however, is not successfully expressed.

In the preface he makes clear his frames of references. He is critical of the superficial "Zen boom," and the misunderstandings among modern Buddhists, who confuse Buddhism and Buddhology. Then he presents his definition of Buddhism as the religion of Buddha, an historical person. Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, is his sole criterion in understanding and

evaluating the historical development of Buddhism. He believes that the best approach to Buddhism lies in the elucidation of the original type of Buddhism.

The following illustrates his approach: the Buddha's environment, background, teaching, Buddhism and sex, Buddhism and society, the development of Buddhism, and Mahayana Buddhism. According to the author, the first two chapters are intended to be the soup, the three middle chapters the main dish, and the rest the relish, all of which are seasoned with a view of cultural history. It is, however, difficult for us to taste the seasoning of which the author is so proud. If he is a cultural historian or a cultural-historically minded indologist, how can he neglect the function of the rites in religion and the

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symbolical meaning in them? Religion is not a mere aggregate of dogmas or ethics, at least in the cultural history of mankind.

The author is eager to point out the traces of cultural contacts between Buddhism and Christianity. He may be right in certain points, but isn't it necessary to discriminate, or at least to try to discriminate between factors universally human from those culturally variable, when we face a similar phenomena in different cultures?

As to the presentation of the original type of Buddhism, he throws light particularly on celibacy and the caste system. We should like

to take this as a sign of his interest in the actual, living questions which have rather been neglected by his predecessors. In some passages, however, we might feel a little suspicious of his aiming at popularity. There seems to be gaps between his well-grounded arguments and personal comments on present-day Buddhists, etc. (p. 35, p. 55, p. 99, p. 167)

Though it is lucid and suggestive in general and contains some "original relish," we should like to recommend it as a tossed salad for a summer evening.

Kyōko Motomochi  
Tokyo, July, 1964.