

Brian BOCKING, *A Popular Dictionary of Shinto*. London: Curzon, 1996. 251 pp. UK£35 cloth, UK£12.99 paper. ISBN 0-7007-0446-9 and 0-7007-0447-7.

———, *Nāgārjuna in China: A Translation of the Middle Treatise*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press (Studies in Asian Thought and Religion 18), 1995. 500 pp. ISBN 0-7734-8981-9.

A POPULAR DICTIONARY OF SHINTO is a valuable edition to the small stock of books on the subject, and will be an indispensable textbook. It can also be read for pleasure. If one begins to follow the cross-references from article to article, one finds oneself so instructively engrossed that the book acquires some claim to be unputdownable. The indexes at the back are helpful if one wants to check a topic in ignorance of the technical Shinto term: thus “funerals” refers one to an interesting entry on *sōsai*. There was no entry corresponding to the references to *okuribi* (p. 11) and *shide* (pp. 12, 15), nor could I find the promised index listing variants (p. 35).

As a teacher of religious studies in a British university, Bocking has to wear more than one hat. His contribution to Buddhist studies is a translation of the *Middle Treatise*, one of the three basic texts of the San-lun school, which consists in Kūmarajīva’s translation (409 CE) of Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyama-kakārikā* with the commentary of Ch’ing-mu (T no. 1564). As a crib for those who wish to plough through the Chinese it is of service, but as an English rendering of Nāgārjuna it is outclassed by Jay L. GARFIELD’s translation of the Tibetan version, with a luminous commentary (1995). There is still no acceptable English translation of the Sanskrit original. However, since the Tibetan follows the Sanskrit closely, Garfield’s translation fills this lacuna for all practical purposes.

Kūmarajīva’s translation flattens out the nuances of the original, and Ch’ing-mu’s commentary is often only paraphrase. “His language is not elegant and apposite. The Dharma-master (Kumārājīva) edited and emended all the errors, deficiencies and redundancies in it, interpreting it according to the *Stanzas*,” wrote Seng-jui (p. 99). Ch’ing-mu’s name is also given as Pinchia-lo, traditionally reconstructed as Piṅgala. Following Richard Robinson, Bocking claims that the correct reconstruction is Vimalākṣa, the name of Kumārājīva’s vinaya-master at Kucha, who joined him in Ch’ang-an in 406; a post-406 date for the Treatise is suggested by the lack of any earlier mention of it by Kumārājīva and his disciples. Since Vimalākṣa’s specialty was the Sarvāstivāda vinaya, his commentary is “the work of a non-specialist, containing various errors and omissions which Kumārājīva had to repair” (p. 402). It

is probable that the most substantial excursions in the work are from Kumārajīva's own pen.

The San-lun master Chi-tsang (549–623) saw both ultimate and conventional truth as skillful means of instruction, not as corresponding to an objective duality in truth itself. Bocking suggests that his slogan “refutation is at once an awakening to the true dharma” was inspired by the *Middle Treatise* (p. 8). He has been accused of cultivating negation, emptiness, and a progressive disengagement from all formulations of truth, while neglecting to establish the validity of conventional truth (see LIU 1994, pp. 140–52). Perhaps this, too, owes something to Ch'ing-mu's commentary:

All dharmas are empty in their nature, but because of our worldly perverted perceptions we produce false and illusory dharmas, and this is worldly reality. Since the saints and sages know the true nature of these perverted perceptions, they know that all dharmas are utterly empty and that there is no arising, and this is the truth of the ultimate meaning which constitutes reality for the saints. (p. 342)

Here conventional truth seems to be written off as mere delusion.

Bocking's discreet notation clarifies some points neglected by Garfield, such as the sramana-fruits of *MMK* 24.3 (p. 458), but he does not attempt to comment on the complexities of Nāgārjuna's thought or to offer a critique of Piṅgala's work in a wider Madhyamaka context; he aims rather to isolate the specifically Chinese identity of the *Middle Treatise*, overlooked by Nāgārjuna scholars (p. 6). His deliberately plain translation, as far as I have checked it, is lucid and faithful. I noticed one or two stylistic infelicities. “To say that ‘dharmas are non-arising’ is the truth of the ultimate meaning and that the other conventional truth is not necessary, is not correct and why?” (p. 342). This should be: “It is not correct to say....” The “and why?” should be “Why is this?” (as on p. 340, translating the same Chinese sentence).

#### REFERENCES

- GARFIELD, Jay L.  
 1995 *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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 1994 *Madhyamaka Thought in China*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

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