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Forschungsprojekt "Buddhistischer Modernismus": Forschungsberichte.
Ed. Detlef Kantowsky. Universitaet Konstanz, Arbeitsbereich
"Entwicklungslaender und interkultureller Vergleich," Konstanz 1990–1996
(cont.).

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The series under review was founded by Prof. Detlef Kantowsky (Dept. of Sociology, University of Konstanz, Germany) in 1990. Until now, thirteen volumes of this series have been published; the fourteenth is in preparation. Generally speaking, it is evident that almost all of the volumes contain highly valuable materials and documents on the development of Buddhism in Germany to the present time. The heterogeneous character of the series as a whole, however, makes it necessary to consider and classify the contributions in detail.

If, as in many publications on (not only) contemporary Buddhism, the authors themselves are declared Buddhists, the critical reader has to decide in every single case whether he or she should take the actual book as a scientific study *on* contemporary Buddhism or as an expression *of* contemporary Buddhism itself.

The title, *Buddhistischer Modernismus* (“Buddhist modernism,” a term introduced by Heinz Bechert in his *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, Frankfurt 1966, and originally used for the Buddhist renewal movement in Asian Theravādan countries) is extended here over all efforts of a modern interpretation of the Buddhist doctrine (see vol. 4 of the series, new ed. 1994, 238f.; on the other hand, the limitation to the German context is not indicated in the title). As the title of a series, the term “Buddhist modernism” would admit Buddhist treatises as well as “buddhological” studies. The subtitle “Forschungsberichte” (“Research Reports”), however, suggests only the latter. In spite of that, we find both types among the contributions to the series.

To begin with the buddhological studies, the first work to mention is the two-volume “bio-bibliographical manual” *Lebensbilder deutscher Buddhisten (Life Portraits of German Buddhists)*, vol. 1: *The Founders*; vol. 2: *The Successors*) compiled by Hellmuth Hecker (vol. 1 of the series, 1990—new rev. ed.: vol. 13, 1996; and vol. 5 of the series, 1992—new rev. ed. in two volumes: vol. 14, forthcoming, spring 1997). In vol. 1 we find short biographical sketches and photographs of ten German Buddhists—all born during the second half of the nineteenth century—who played important roles in introducing, interpreting, and propagating Buddhism in Germany, and extensive bibliographies for each of them (including secondary literature). Vol. 2 of this manual provides similar material (with more emphasis on the biographies) on one hundred and seventy Buddhists who continued the endeavor of the “founders.” As in vol. 1, only late German Buddhists are dealt with. Both volumes constitute an excellent survey of the beginnings of and developments within Buddhist circles in Germany, illustrating especially the motives for “conversion.” They also contain materials relevant to sociological questions (Hecker himself gives suggestions

for further investigation: of women and Jews among the converts, birth places, academic and literary activities of the converts, and the like).

In this frame of providing bio-bibliographical material on German Buddhists, six other volumes of the series can be integrated. The volume on the occasion of the ninetieth birthday of the Ven. Nyanaponika Mahathera (*nicht derselbe und nicht ein anderer* [Not the Same and Not Another], ed. D. Kantowsky, 1991, vol. 3 of the series) contains—besides bio-bibliographical data—interviews with Nyanaponika, selected short essays (partly unpublished before), fifteen photographs and facsimiles of letters, diplomas, newspaper announcements, articles, and so on.

The life of Nyanaponika's teacher, Nyanatiloka, is described in the volume *Der erste deutsche Bhikkhu* (*The First German Bhikkhu*, ed. H. Hecker, 1995, vol. 10 of the series), of which the first part constitutes Nyanatiloka's autobiography describing the years 1878–1926 (published here for the first time), supplied with notes. The second part traces the years up to his death (in 1957), and includes statements by his pupils, the visitors' book of his "island hermitage" in Sri Lanka, and several other documents. In the third part we find pictures and facsimiles of letters, passports, and articles.

Collected material about one late German Buddhist is also to be found in the volume *Der Weg der weissen Wolken* (*The Way of the White Clouds*, ed. D. Kantowsky, 1996, vol. 12 of the series), in which texts, pictures, and other documents of the life of Lama Anagarika Govinda, the founder of the Arya Maitreya Mandala, are published. In this volume, emphasis lies on the re-publication of early articles written by Govinda but photographs and facsimiles of documents are included as well. As particular a supplement, we find the print of a colored picture of a "holy green lake" in Sikkim, painted by Govinda himself.

A similar collection was edited by Martin Baumann concerning Helmut Klar (1995, vol. 11 of the series), one of the few influential Buddhists in Germany of the older generation who is still alive. Klar's position and (self-)critical view on the development of German Buddhism is documented in a life portrait, re-published articles, statements of Buddhist companions, and in an interview with M. Baumann. A bibliography and several other documents complete this volume.

Personal reflections of a German Buddhist at the end of the nineteenth century are documented in the edition of diary notes of Karl Eugen Neumann (*Fluechtige Skizzen und Notizen* [Brief Sketches and Notes], ed. D. Kantowsky, 1994, vol. 9 of the series). In these notes, Neumann, whose translations of Pali texts into German are as celebrated as they are contentious, shows his personal impressions of a journey through Ceylon and

India in the summer of 1894. Surprisingly, the second part of his notes that deal mostly with grammatical questions, are given only in facsimile, i.e., were not transcribed by the editor, whose interest obviously does not lie on philological issues. Indological readers interested in translation discussions should find this unfortunate. Nevertheless, this volume—supplemented by a short biography and a bibliography—gives another insight into the life and mind of an influential German Buddhist.

Finally, the volume *Wegzeichen* (*Course Signs*, ed. D. Kantowsky, 1991, vol. 4 of the series; 2nd enlarged ed. in cooperation with Ina Roesing, Ulm 1994) should be mentioned among the biographical collections. Here interviews with ten German Buddhists are published: a group consisting of men and women, members of the Buddhist order, and “laypeople” from all three Buddhist traditions, working in different fields of propagating and realizing the Buddhist path. For the second edition, the editor himself was interviewed by Ina Roesing, and a supplement containing a short essay on Buddhist modernism was added. This volume gives a representative impression of personal motives and opinions about topics as Buddhist practice, the spread of Buddhism in the West, dialogue with Christianity etc. of eminent and influential German Buddhists as well as an impression of the variety of Buddhist activities in Germany today.

Each of the above-mentioned volumes is presented, clearly arranged, and properly worked out (perhaps except the little drop of bitterness in vol. 9) and contains partly unique material that can be exceedingly helpful for any study of Buddhism in Germany.

Maybe not appropriately placed in this series on Buddhist modernism, but nonetheless valuable is the guide through translations of the *Dhammapada* compiled by H. Hecker (1993, vol. 7 of the series). He lists twelve translations into German, seventy into English, eighteen into other European languages (incl. Latin), seventy-three translations into eleven Indian (incl. Sanskrit) and forty-three into ten other Asian languages (incl. Arabic) with bibliographical data. The supplement contains a list of citations in other canonical texts, facsimiles of the title pages of the German translations and—as an example of the variety of translations—all twelve German translations of two selected verses.

Two volumes of the series which deal with Abhidhamma doctrines (*Abhidhamma im Ueberblick*, [*Survey of Abhidhamma*] by Mirko Fryba, 1990, vol. 2 of the series) and with “death” in the Buddhist doctrine (*Wege zur Todlosigkeit*, [*Ways to Deathlessness*], by Alfred Weil, 1993, vol. 8 of the series) can be classified as expressions of modern Buddhism. The former tries to give an introduction to the way of thinking of Abhidhamma, the latter collects statements on “death” in the Buddhist canonical texts, based

on translations. These two volumes are definitely not “research reports” on Buddhist modernism but can be considered as contemporary Buddhist forms of interpreting Buddhist texts. Examined as such, they can be used as a primary source for the research in contemporary Buddhism.

A particular case, finally, is vol. 6 of the series, a second enlarged edition of collected papers and interviews of the general editor, D. Kantowsky (*Von Suedasien lernen [Learning from South Asia]*, 1992, 1st ed. Frankfurt/New York 1985). Though Kantowsky declares himself a Buddhist (see the interview in vol. 4 of the series, 2nd ed.), this volume cannot even be seen exclusively as primary source for the study of contemporary Buddhism, since the papers are only to some extent connected with Buddhist topics; academic articles on several sociological questions are to be found here as well.

The positive tone concerning Buddhism throughout the whole series may be appreciated. In further investigations, however, the critical scholar has to pay attention to this point.

Apart from the reservations made above, the series as a whole provides valuable detailed information about various aspects of the beginnings, the development and the present state of Buddhism in Germany. It can not only be used as a comprehensive source for the study of “German Buddhism” (e.g., as material supplement to Martin Baumann’s *Deutsche Buddhisten [German Buddhists]*, 2nd ed., Marburg 1995), by eliminating the inconsistencies it can also be considered as a model for collecting material of Western Buddhism in other countries (e.g., in America, where such data are still missing—as Charles Prebish pointed out in his article “Ethics and Integration in American Buddhism,” *JBE* 2 [1995]: 125–39).