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CONTENTS

I. ARTICLES

1. The Literature of the Pudgalavādins, by *Thich Thien Chau* 7
2. Modern Japanese Buddhology: Its History and Problematics, by *Minoru Kiyota* 17
3. Marginalia to Sa-skya Pandita's Oeuvre, by *L.W.J. van der Kuijp* 37
4. The Problem of the *Ichchantika* in the Mahāyāna *Mahā-parinirvāna Sūtra*, by *Ming-Wood Liu* 57
5. The Sanmon-Jimon Schism in the Tendai School of Buddhism: A Preliminary Analysis, by *Neil McMullin* 83
6. The Indravarman (Avaca) Casket Inscription Reconsidered: Further Evidence for Canonical Passages in Buddhist Inscriptions, by *Richard Salomon and Gregory Schopen* 107
7. The Tibetan "Wheel of Life": Iconography and doxography, by *Geshe Sopa* 125
8. Notes on the Buddha's Threats in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, by *A. Syrkin* 147

II. BOOK REVIEWS

1. *A Buddhist Spectrum*, by Marco Pallis (D. Seyfort Rugg) 159
2. *The Heart of Buddhism*, by Takeuchi Yoshinori (Paul Griffiths) 162

3. *Paritta: A Historical and Religious Study of the Buddhist Ceremony for Peace and Prosperity in Sri Lanka*, by Lily de Silva (Ter Ellingson) 164
4. *The Threefold Refuge in the Theravāda Buddhist Tradition*, ed. John Ross Carter
Buddhist Images of Human Perfection, by Nathan Katz (Winston King) 169
5. *The Word of the Buddha: the Tripitaka and Its Interpretation in Therāvada Buddhism*, by George D. Bond (Nathan Katz) 173

III. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

1. *Ascent and Descent: Two-Directional Activity in Buddhist Thought*, by *Gadjin M. Nagao* 176

IV. NOTES AND NEWS

1. *A Report on the Sixth Conference of the IABS, Held in Conjunction with the 31st CISHAAN, Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan, August 31-September 7, 1983* 184

ple, he wafted himself and his disciples through the air over a swollen river (pp.110–111). It was a world in which many super-humanly powerful gods appeared. But secondly, even in that seemingly innocent statement to Māluṅkyāputta, there are embedded, taken for granted, several all-important metaphysical presuppositions: all beings are endlessly reborn; their lives are shaped by their own voluntary deeds (karma); this chain of rebirth can be cut. *Indeed implicit in, necessary to, the achievement of arahant status is a particular kind of world and human constitution.* Could arahantship be achieved if this were not so, or in other terms and traditions, such as Muslim or Christian? That the Buddha's "no theories" approach is one of centering on the existential importance of the human situation rather than upon metaphysical theorizing I can agree; but that there should be a significant life-style, such as Buddhism is, without any metaphysical grounding or assumptions, I cannot accept.

The fact that such questions are raised—and many others—by Professor Katz's book attests to its value and importance in ongoing Buddhist studies.

Winston King

The Word of the Buddha: the Tipitaka and its Interpretation in Theravāda Buddhism, by George D. Bond. Colombo, Sri Lanka: M. D. Gunasena & Co., 1982. Pages xii + 221. Paperback, S.L.Rs. 56/50.

In accord with recent theoretical developments in religious studies, quite a few colleagues in Buddhist studies have been turning their attention to those modes of enquiry known as hermeneutics and semiology. This recent trend has not arisen out of an historical compulsion that whatever is current in the West must be found in ancient Buddhist scriptures. Such thinking is a relic of a well-forgotten past when Buddhism itself was on an ideological and neocolonial defensive. Rather, such research is being done in the firm conviction that the Buddhist traditions have genuine contributions to make towards an intellectual discussion that should not be confined to the West. In the context of this surge of scholarly activity, Professor George D. Bond's recent book, *The Word of the Buddha*, is a welcome and valuable contribution.

Upon a perusal of this work, what becomes apparent is that the Theravāda tradition offers refreshing and substantive insights into the problems of textual interpretation and exegesis. The book's foremost contribution is to admonish those of us working on similar questions in other forms of Buddhism (whether in the works of Candrakīrti, Tsong kha pa or Dōgen) to consider the Theravāda as well.

Chapter One sets forth the context in which specific exegetical techniques are elaborated (as in the *Netti-Pakarana*) and in which they are employed (as in Buddhaghosa's great commentaries). In the Theravāda tradition, all of the Tipiṭaka is held to be "the word of the Buddha" (*Buddhavacanam*), hence the title of the book. However, whether by "word of the Buddha" is intended an historical or philosophical claim has not been elucidated in Western scholarship. Bond argues that while many Theravādins may take it in the first sense, he presents strong textual evidence that the latter was also intended. Much as Mahāyāna writers claimed, the *Kathāvatthu* held that which is "well said" (*subhāsitaṃ*) to be *Buddhavacanam*. Problems of interpretation arise in the tension of the accessibility of the Dhamma. As Bond puts it (p. 33), "Theravāda has struggled . . . with the problem of how to provide access to the Tipiṭaka's teaching while at the same time guarding against false and misleading interpretations of these immeasurable truths."

To clarify the complex relations between the goal or meaning of a text (*attha*), which the tradition understands to be *nibbāna*, and its linguistic convention or phrasing (*byañjana*), the first century C.E. text, the *Netti-Pakarana*, assumed a crucial role in the development of Theravāda hermeneutical thought. By providing five guidelines (*naya*) and sixteen modes (*hāra*), the *Netti* seeks to interweave the text's inner and outer horizons of goal and convention. Chapter Two introduces the reader to the exegetical techniques conveyed in this much-neglected text.

Based upon a familiarity with the *Netti*'s methodology, Chapter Three views the vast collections attributed to the fifth century authoritative commentator, Buddhaghosa. While ". . . the *Netti* provided only a method for interpreters" (p. 100), Buddhaghosa brought this method to its flowering and set the standards for Theravāda exegesis ever since. By viewing Buddhaghosa in the context of the *Netti*, one comes to appreciate both his reliance on its methods and his unique contributions.

Chapter Four evaluates the significance of the study of the Theravāda commentaries for Western scholars. Setting his ap-

proach off against those which seek a "pure" Buddhism (such as Rhys Davids and Conze), Bond argues that to read the *Tiṭiṭaka* through its commentaries is to see it in its natural "life-setting." Claiming ". . . a pluralistic approach to a pluralistic tradition" (p. 205), a convincing case is made for such contextualized studies.

While I fully support Bond's position, there seem to be even wider implications for the study of Buddhist exegetical techniques, implications even beyond a more authentic understanding of Buddhist traditions. Given the tradition's very subtle and nuanced approach to language and its non-substantialist philosophical underpinnings, the resolutions of the problems inherent in reading Buddhist texts go beyond Buddhism itself. However, Bond's meticulous analysis of the *Netti-Pakarāṇa* and of Buddhaghosa's writings certainly facilitate the work of those interested in hermeneutical issues in cross-cultural perspective, in addition to his stated goal of enhancing our understanding of the Theravāda in particular.

Two additional points deserve mention. The first is Bond's evident familiarity with contemporary Sri Lankan scholarship on Buddhism. Many valuable contributions from Sri Lanka are lost to Western scholars because of poor distribution abroad, and this is a pity. The second is the very attractive printing and design by M. D. Gunasena's. Although there are a good number of printer's errors, the book is of high technical quality.

Nathan Katz