

Introduction

Contemporary Asia is a mixture of traditions and inertia, aspirations and frustrations, reforms and revolutions. From the studies presented in this volume one gets glimpses of the complexities of Asian society, the deep, diverse, and often conflicting strains of thought, some manifestations of external pressures which helped trigger and feed new nationalist sentiments, and the enormity of the problems of national and social reconstruction.

One of the most ancient of beliefs which still govern the life and attitudes of millions of Indians is the concept of Saṃsāra, which according to Father Francis J. Corley, S.J., provides a cyclic view of cosmology closely related to the theology of reincarnation. Father Corley delves into the Vedic literature to trace the beginnings of the Saṃsāra idea, an enterprise which draws upon his impressive erudition and considerable semantic skills. He is currently professor and director of the Institute on Asia, Saint Louis University.

An intimate examination of the financial records and administration of a contemporary Hindu monastery and its related temple provides us with one concrete measure of the gap between tradition and modernity. This study by Professor James Luther Martin is based to a large extent on information he gathered through personal interviews with many of the personnel described. He conducted his field study in South India, 1963-1964, as a Fellow of the American Institute of Indian Studies. He is professor of religion and coordinator of Non-Western Studies at Denison University.

In contrast to the relatively unchanging ideas and institutions of Hinduism, Buddhism in many Asian countries has sought to provide inspiration and leadership to the multitude of people who seek identity and personal dignity in the rapidly changing social environment of the twentieth century. Often leadership has been thrust upon Buddhism by harassed peoples, forcing the religious hierarchy to re-examine their theology, their immediate objectives, and their roles and responsibilities.

The resurgence of Buddhism in India and Ceylon dates back to the late nineteenth century, according to Robert J. Miller, professor

of anthropology at the University of Wisconsin. Professor Miller finds that the reactivation of interest in Buddhism in these countries may be attributable in part to the scholarly investigations of Westerners. Much of Miller's inquiry is based on field research in India.

Miss Eleanor Zelliot studied for a year and a half, 1963-1965, in India as a Junior Fellow of the American Association of Indian Studies. Most of her work was carried on in Maharashtra, where she gathered material on Dr. Ambedkar, the great leader of the Untouchables. Miss Zelliot suggests that there is a relationship between Dr. Ambedkar's constant search for means to uplift the Mahar Untouchables and his gradual attraction and eventual conversion to Buddhism. Miss Zelliot is completing her Ph.D. dissertation on the life of Ambedkar at the University of Pennsylvania. Her enlarged study of Buddhism and politics in Maharashtra will appear in the forthcoming volume *Religion and Politics in India*, edited by Donald E. Smith.

The pre-War phenomenon of the turn of India's socially underprivileged to Buddhism finds its counterpart in contemporary Japan. The Sōka Gakkai appeals to the less well educated, economically insecure Japanese who are caught on the fringes of a society undergoing rapid technological transformation. This modern offshoot of the Nichiren sect of Buddhism professes a new "value creation" philosophy which claims rewards for believers in their present temporal life.

The success of the Sōka Gakkai both in gaining converts and in winning political elections has attracted world-wide attention and caused some apprehension. Dr. David J. Hesselgrave, Chairman of the Division of Missions, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, gives a sketch of the rise of the Sōka Gakkai and its techniques of propagation. Professor Minoru Kiyota of the University of Wisconsin in a complementary study suggests some of the strengths and weaknesses of present-day Japanese Buddhism. His assessment is based on long years of study and residence in Japan.

Religious and cultural differences among the peoples of Southeast Asia constitute major obstacles for political leaders who desire to create national unity. The studies by Professor M. Ladd Thomas and Professor Robert O. Tilman both emphasize the difficulties of reconciling modern nationalism with cultural provincialism. In

Thailand the "Thai-Islam" are an Islamic minority in a predominantly Theravada Buddhist population, while in Malaysia the Hua-ch'iao (Overseas Chinese) are a Confucian-oriented minority among Islamic Malays. The Thai-Islam pose an irredentist threat, while the Hua-ch'iao community is not entirely devoid of Chinese chauvinism. Both authors are concerned with the problem of political socialization of these minority groups, and their accounts have relevance to assessments of future stability in these countries.

Professor Thomas is in the department of political science and is co-ordinator of the Southeast Asian Studies program at Northern Illinois University. He has spent five years in field research in Southeast Asia and has written extensively on the politics and administration of various Southeast Asian countries. His most recent article, "Value Systems and Administrative Behavior in Southeast Asia: Roadblock to National Development," appeared in *United Asia*, July-August, 1965; and his monograph *Southeast Asia* is scheduled for publication in 1966. Professor Tilman is a specialist on Southeast Asian politics at Yale University. Among his varied writings is "Public Service Commissions in the Federation of Malaya," which appeared in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 2 (Feb. 1961).

The above accounts of Thailand and Malaysia illustrate the positive program of nationalism essential to gaining the allegiance of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Often in earlier phases of Asian nationalism much energy is expended in simply reacting to imperialist domination. Two illustrative examples of imperialism are presented by Professor E. Mowbray Tate of Hanover College and Professor Grant Goodman of the University of Kansas. Professor Tate notes that the U.S. gunboats of the Yangtze Patrol became increasingly visible and assertive at a time when Chinese nationalism was most sensitive to their presence. Professor Goodman shows Japanese dual diplomacy in action, as representatives of the Foreign Office and military and right-wing elements pursued different policies concerning the establishment of the Philippine Great Asia Society. Professor Tate spent several years teaching in Thailand, and Professor Goodman was in the Philippines in 1959-1960 as a Fulbright lecturer. He contributed to the 1963 issue of this series his findings on "Davao? Japan in Philippine Politics, 1931-1941."

Communism has sprung from and contributed to the turmoil in various Asian countries. George M. Beckmann, Associate Dean of Faculties at the University of Kansas, focuses on the Japanese Communist party in the 1920's and its factional disputes on issues involving strategy and tactics for the party. A view of more recent Communism is given by Professor Joseph S. Chung, who details the economic program and policies of the North Korean government. Dean Beckmann is a specialist on Japanese political history. He has written two books, *The Making of the Japanese Constitution* (1957) and *The Modernization of China and Japan* (1962). Professor Chung is in the Department of Business and Economics at the Illinois Institute of Technology. He is editor of the forthcoming volume *A Pattern of Economic Development: Korea*, to which he contributes two articles. He is currently engaged in the writing of *The North Korean Economy: Structure and Development*, for which he has been awarded research grants from the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. During 1966-1967 he will lecture at Seoul National University as Fulbright Exchange Professor.

All of the above studies were initially presented at the Midwestern Conference on Asian Affairs which met in October, 1965, at the University of Colorado. The MCAA is a scholarly organization concerned with the exchange of information on all phases of Asian studies. *Studies on Asia* seeks to make available to a wide circle of readers a selection of the Conference papers. At the same time, the editor will welcome material from scholars who are outside of the Conference.

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