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A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America. By J. W. de Jong. Tokyo: Kōsei Publishing Company, 1997, 184 pages, ISBN: 4333017629, US \$19.95.

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This book consists of six chapters which span the chronology of Buddhist studies in the West from antiquity to 1990. Chapter one deals with “The Early Period (300 B.C.-1877),” chapter two with “The Middle Period (1877-1942),” and chapter three with “Recent Decades: A (1943-1973).” These three chapters, along with chapter four, “Future Perspectives,” were originally published in the May and October 1974 issues of *The Eastern Buddhist*, and are reprinted here with minor alterations. Many Buddhist scholars interested in the history of their discipline will already be familiar with them, for they have achieved a certain status and renown in the field. Chapter five, “Recent Decades: B (1973-83),” first appeared in *The Eastern Buddhist* ten years later, in 1984, and chapter six, covering the period from 1984 to 1990, was originally published in *Chūō gakujutsu kenkyūjo kiyō* in 1990. It is very useful to have them added to the original essays and all reprinted here in book form.

Taken together, these chapters cover a vast number of works — primarily studies, editions, and translations of Buddhist texts — by over 500 scholars writing principally in English, French and German, although there are some references to publications in Dutch, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and others. The task of reviewing such a volume, given the scope of its coverage, presents certain logistical problems. In an attempt to solve them, I will try to keep my remarks at a fairly general level and construct this review around a critique of the book’s title which, I hope, will serve to highlight some of the work’s riches, as well as clarify some of its limitations. For, as a title, “A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America,” is somewhat misleading. More accurate would be something like: “The Study of Indian Buddhist Texts in Europe (and America): a Bibliographic History.” In what follows, I would like to explain the reasons for this opinion, point by point.

(1) First, as Professor de Jong readily admits (indeed, he emphasizes this on several occasions), this book is not really about the study of Buddhism as a whole, in all its aspects, but about the study of Buddhist texts. The focus is primarily on philological studies. As a consequence, certain scholars whose works one might expect to find discussed in any overall consideration of the field of Buddhist studies escape any mention whatsoever. Paul Mus’s *Barabud.ur*, for instance, is not touched upon at all; nor is there any mention of any of Mus’s other works, or of a classic such as Foucher’s *Art gréco-bouddhique du Gandhāra*, which so influenced Mus. Even more neglected are the studies of anthropologists; thus the trio of books (whatever one thinks of them) that helped transform the study of Theravāda Buddhism in the early 1970s — Richard Gombrich’s *Precept and Practice*, Stanley Tambiah’s *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults*, and Melford

Spiro's *Buddhism and Society*, — are passed over in silence. And properly so, one might say, in a study that focuses on philology, but improperly so in a “history of Buddhist studies,” even a brief one.

There is, of course, more involved here than simply a misnomer. Disclaimers aside, it seems to me that there lies behind the title of this book an unshakable confidence in the final and fundamental importance of philology to an understanding of Buddhism. “A religion like Buddhism,” Professor de Jong asserts, “cannot be understood without a thorough study of its scriptures,” and he points out that missionaries (and presumably others) “whose knowledge was based upon what they observed, and on discussions with Buddhist priests,” rather on the study of Buddhist texts, must have found it “very difficult to gain a clear notion of the main Buddhist teachings” (p. 18). Moreover, it is assumed here that Buddhist texts are meant primarily to be read, studied, and interpreted (rather than to be worshipped or used ritually), and that what they tell us is what Buddhism is all about. This is not the place to critique the orientalist assumptions, sociological ramifications, and elitist consequences of such a bibliocentric view; suffice it to point out that it is operative in this work. Bibliographically, however, this limitation is also a strength, for it enables Professor de Jong to limit the scope of his work and focus on the material he knows best, better perhaps than anyone else in the field: the books of Buddhism. Occasionally, of course, it is possible to wonder about some seemingly overlooked textual study (for instance, how — or rather why — did Léon Feer's works on the *Avadāna'sataka* and the *Karma'sataka* slip by unmentioned?), but these are more than compensated for by the plethora of references to works and scholars who are often ignored (for example, Poul Tuxen, of whom I, at least, was unaware). Granted, one person cannot “read everything,” but Professor de Jong comes closer than most. In other words, whatever criticism one may have of this volume, there is much — very much — to be learned from it. Within the confines of his undertaking, de Jong's coverage of textual studies is truly impressive.

(2) Secondly, it should perhaps have been made more clear in the title of this book that its focus is not just on Buddhist texts, but more particularly on Indian Buddhist texts — primarily in Sanskrit and Pali — although some attention is paid to Tibetan and Chinese materials as well. This, again, is a focus that Professor de Jong readily acknowledges at a number of points, indicating that he prefers to leave to others the task of greater non-Indian coverage. This makes it possible for him to concentrate on his forte, but it does mean that little attention is paid to the works of founders and masters of the various Chinese and Tibetan schools (and virtually no mention is made at all of Japanese Buddhist developments). Thus, for

example, a scholar like Jeffrey Hopkins, who has been prolifically involved in the translation of Tibetan sectarian texts, gets no notice at all. Similarly, the study of vernacular works — in Sinhalese, Thai, Burmese, and so on — is only peripherally touched upon. Professor de Jong, of course, is well aware of all of this, and in his last chapter proposes a possible scheme by which a truly comprehensive international bibliography of Buddhist studies could be compiled.

(3) Thirdly, and not unrelated to this, is the suggested placing, in my proposed revamping of the title, of the words “and America” in parentheses. In fact, comparatively little attention is given to the works of American scholars in this book. Only about fifteen or twenty of the over 500 scholars mentioned by Professor de Jong are Americans, and some of them, such as Richard Robinson, figure only for their book reviews or obituaries. But perhaps even better than putting “and America” in parentheses would be to re-subtitle the book “A bibliographic history for Americans,” for one of the strengths of Professor de Jong’s survey lies in his coverage of German and French works which, sadly, American students and scholars often ignore or neglect. In this context, this book serves an important function as an eye-opener and a reminder of what has gone on internationally in the study of Indian Buddhist texts. As such, it (and the materials it describes) should be required reading for every graduate student — but especially for every American graduate student — in the field.

(4) Finally, I think the title of this work should make it clear that it is not so much a history as a “bibliographic history.” Simply put, much attention is paid to “who” wrote “what,” but there is little discussion of “why.” The cultural context of this history is somehow missing. This is especially true in the last two chapters (written in 1984 and 1990) which are quite different in tone and structure from the first four (written in 1974). In the latter, which cover the period from 1973 to 1990, little attempt is made to interpret the “flow” of Buddhist textual scholarship; de Jong simply describes it, often with footnotes to book reviews in lieu of a critical assessment of the work. This is bibliographically useful, perhaps, but fails to give the reader — especially the non-specialist student — a sense of the field. Much more helpful and interesting are the first four chapters, which deal with the period from antiquity to 1973, and are often structured around themes debated and scholarly stances taken. Thus, for example, Professor de Jong’s presentation in chapter two of the Emile Senart-Hermann Oldenberg spectrum on the life of the Buddha is both informative and enlightening. So too is his focus, in chapter three, on the philological debates surrounding Franklin Edgerton’s “Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.” Moreover, in these chapters de Jong allows his own enthusiasms for the work of par-

ticular scholars — Eugène Burnouf, Sylvain Lévi, John Brough, to cite but a few — to come through. The result is a lively and focussed bibliographic history of this period. In conclusion, then, we should welcome the reissuing of these essays of Professor de Jong in book form. They are not quite what their title says they are, but they remain an important and helpful presentation of the study of Indian Buddhist texts in the West by a scholar whose knowledge of that field is superlative and authoritative.