

References

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Robert E. MORRELL, *Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishū): The Tales of Mujū Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism*. State University of New York Press, 1985. xxii + 383 pp.

The *Shasekishū* by Mujū Ichien (1226–1312) is not only a repository of Mujū's anecdotal musings on the Buddha-Dharma as practiced (and not) in his times. It is also an eyewitness report on the state of Kamakura Buddhism. Robert Morrell's masterful translation, *Sand and Pebbles*, brings this valuable record of Kamakura Buddhism to the attention of Western scholars. His translations are both accurate and good English.

Morrell begins with a Preface describing Mujū as a teller of tales (*setsuwa*) and writer of vernacular tracts (*kana hōgo*). He invites the reader to adjust to Mujū's vocabulary and style. Mindful of his readers, Morrell avoids burdening them with the doctrinal subtleties of Mujū's thought, of interest only to specialists in religious history. Instead he judiciously alternates passages of full translations with summaries, maintaining the sense of the book as a whole while dispensing with unwanted detail.

For ease of reference he includes a chronology of dates referred to in later pages (pp. xix-xxii). His Introduction catches the spirit of Mujū and enflashes him within his historical context, describing Kamakura Buddhism and Mujū's place within it (pp. 1-13).

In Part I (pp. 13-68) Morrell presents a biographical sketch of the life of Mujū, dividing it between the years before his coming to Chōboji and his subsequent life at Chōboji from 1262 until his death in 1312. He concludes the Introduction with an insightful essay on Mujū's World of Ideas. Part II

is devoted to the translations and summaries of the *Shasekishū* and covers the bulk of the book (pp. 69-272). Part III presents selected translations from Mujū's *Casual Digressions (Zōtanshū)* to fill out the picture.

Four appendixes add translations of two Tokugawa biographies by Kenryō and Tainin, the two major sources about Mujū apart from his own writings, a chart of Mujū's doctrinal affiliations, a chart on the relationship between Mujū and the Esotericism of the Sanbōin School, and the Yamada Family lineage.

The Notes are clear and often helpful, especially as Morrell constantly endeavors to clarify the use of Buddhist terms and make his translations understandable. He presents two Selected Glossaries, one of terms and the other of Japanese characters. A Selected Bibliography gives textual information of Mujū's texts, while a General Bibliography covers relevant studies in both Japanese and Western languages. An Index is included.

All in all this book can be recommended as a model presentation of an important historical figure in Kamakura Buddhism.

As in his forthcoming *Early Kamakura Buddhism: A Minority Report*, Morrell argues against the prevalent view of Kamakura Buddhism along sectarian lines as presented through its principal figures, the great reformers Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren. The biased portrayal thus engendered, Morrell argues, sets off the reformers against a "decadent" Nara establishment. He shows convincingly that we must widen our perspective to include the polymorphous factors contributing to Kamakura Buddhism. It is here that *Shasekishū* fills an important, if not crucial, role, for it presents an eyewitness account of Mujū's Kamakura world, depicting not only decadence and hidebound traditionalism vis-à-vis the reform movements, but recounting as well attempts at reform within the traditional sects and stories of wise monks from a variety of sects. It is thus that Morrell sees Mujū as "a voice for pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism."

Yet in the process of "getting into Mujū's skin," as he attempts to do in his Introduction, Morrell tends to identify Kamakura Buddhism with Mujū's doctrinal stand and to denigrate other, different strands of Kamakura Buddhist thinking. He is quite aware that Mujū never mentions Shinran, Dōgen, or Nichiren, "the three great charismatic leaders of Kamakura Buddhism" (p. 18), but adverts that "the reason for Mujū's silence is surely because all these reformers, however greatly they differed in their religious programs, shared a common attitude: the rejection of the doctrine of skillful means, which Mujū never tires of defending" (p. 18), referring to Nakamura 1964, p.563 to bolster this assertion.

I would suggest, however, that this question of "skillful means" is symptomatic of more fundamental doctrinal options that in fact identify not only

Shinran, Dōgen, and Nichiren, but also Mujū himself in rather clear lineages, although it is obviously true that Mujū's doctrinal stance allows him to be much more ecumenical than, say, Nichiren.

Mujū's doctrinal lineage is *hongaku* 本覚 thought, "that way of thinking which, overcoming and transcending all dualistic thought, expounds an absolute world of non-duality, and in that context affirms all factual reality as a manifestation of original awakening (i.e. the one primal reality)" (Tamura 1983, p. 243).

The origins of *hongaku* thought can be traced back to India, where the Tathāgatagarbha scriptures affirm the non-empty reality of the *garbha* (seed, womb) of enlightenment in each and every sentient being. Mujū quotes the *Anūnatvāpurnatvanirdeśā*, a basic text of this lineage, to the effect that the Dharma-body is the one true reality behind all appearances (p. 80). Indeed, in embracing *hongaku* thought, Mujū follows a specifically Buddhist version of monism, as so described by Takasaki Jikidō in his article, "The Monism of Dharma-body: The Notion of Dharma in Tathāgatagarbha Thought" (1975).

Throughout *Shasekishū*, Mujū focuses upon the one essential reality behind all forms. We are to "ignore the forms and hold to the essential nature" (p. 79). "All sentient beings are essentially Buddha" (pp. 96, 79). Echoing *The Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, he declares that the "one mind is the source of all phenomena" (p. 97).

It is in this *hongaku* doctrinal context that Mujū attempts to enfold all doctrines. "Whatever the sectarian differences (The Japanese text includes here the doctrines both of emptiness and conscious construction-only, i.e., Mādhyamika and Yogācāra, as if these foundational Mahāyāna teachings were only sectarian differences), the substance of the Dharma is the same" (p. 173). All doctrines are irenically received, as long as they reflect and lead to that one substance. "Starting from the expedient having form, we ultimately enter into the formless reality. This is the basic principle of the various teachings, the central rule of all sects" (p. 179).

In the light of Mujū's *hongaku* assumption, it is not difficult to see why he fails to mention Dōgen or Shinran. Nichiren may indeed have been passed over in silence because of his reputation as "a zealot or fanatic" (p. 18).

Shinran's attitude on *hongaku* is a matter open to interpretation (Tamura 1984, pp. 250-254), but his constant focus on the other-power of Amida's vow as the prime factor in salvation is directly refuted by Mujū, who relegates the help of buddhas to the level of an "incidental cause" (*adhipati-pratyaya*), unable to function "without good roots of merit on the part of sentient beings" (p. 119).

Dōgen explicitly rejects *hongaku* thinking. Throughout his *Shōbōgenzō* he

refutes it (see Tamura 1984, pp. 264-265), identifying it as “the view of the nonbeliever Senika” (Nishiyama and Stevens 1975, p. 155).

Mujū’s pluralistic voice is circumscribed by his *hongaku* stance. At times it approaches that ecumenical strategy which admits that others may have some of the full truth that “I” affirm. He is indeed able to include many Kamakura thinkers and doctrines within his purview, since *hongaku* thought did constitute a central stream of Buddhist thinking. But that purview remains itself circumscribed and unable to appreciate the thought of some of the most creative Buddhist thinkers of the time. Mujū describes Eisai’s practice of Zen as “inwardly Zen, but Shingon elements appeared on the surface” (p. 263). The same can, I think, be applied to Mujū, who, pluralistic as he was, remained inwardly committed to the *hongaku* doctrine of Rinzai Zen.

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