

It was late in 1914 that Ian Fairweather—then Captain Fairweather—was captured and imprisoned in Germany and it was there during his enforced idleness that he began his studies in Chinese calligraphy. Later he was to spend six years in China where he picked up a fascination for Chinese studies which has remained with him ever since. Even today for recreation he delights in translating Chinese books into English. His translation of *The Drunken Buddha* is the result of this unusual hobby, and one of his dearest wishes has been to see his work published.

The original novel—a popular devotional tale, based on the life of a saint—has been widely known for centuries in China. It is the story of a Buddhist monk named Chi-tien who lived in the province of Chekiang in the thirteenth century A.D. Although he was considered a saint, he continually scandalized his fellow monks by his drunkenness and apparent irreverence, and yet disconcerted them with unexpected saintliness. Chi-tien's eccentric approach to traditional religious teachings made him a very popular figure, and the story of his life has been much embellished with pious legends over the years.

The form of *The Drunken Buddha* is a standard one for medieval Chinese novels, preserving many features which recall the origin of this type of literature in the tales told in instalments by Chinese story tellers. Vagueness about time and place and the inclusion of a great deal of verse make this tale characteristic of Chinese popular literature.

Ian Fairweather possesses a great knowledge of popular Buddhism and of the Chinese language, and his translation of *The Drunken Buddha*, retaining as it does the spirit of popular Chinese literature, becomes entirely convincing. It is not surprising, therefore, that Chinese scholars have praised its faithfulness to the style of the original story.

Reluctant at first to turn his formidable talents as a painter to illustrating his translation, Mr Fairweather eventually succumbed and even became enthusiastic over the possibility. The twelve paintings he has now done delightfully capture the life and vitality of this fascinating story and preserve and enhance its charm. They enter so entirely into the spirit of the book that both story and paintings emerge as a beautiful and complete unity. *The Drunken Buddha* is a book that will be treasured by all who enjoy and admire beauty and harmony.

(Original jacket text from the 1965 edition)

THE
DRUNKEN
BUDDHA

IAN
FAIRWEATHER

50TH
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION

UQP

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

University of Queensland Press is proud to publish a fiftieth anniversary edition of Ian Fairweather's remarkable *The Drunken Buddha*. Originally published by UQP in 1965, it has long been out of print.

This new edition coincides with the first exhibition of Fairweather's *Drunken Buddha* artworks, at TarraWarra Museum of Art, in Victoria's Yarra Valley, since the inaugural exhibition at Macquarie Galleries fifty years ago. The artworks in this edition have been reproduced from photographs taken of the works gathered for the new exhibition, with the exception of the images on pages 27, 115 and 143. As access to these works was either unable to be obtained or the location unknown (p143), the images have been scanned from the original 1965 edition.

The artworks in the original edition were printed as colour wraps around twelve-page sections of text. With changes in printing technology, we have been able to print this edition in full colour, which means the artworks are now either facing or nearer the text to which they were referenced in the original edition.

A detailed list of works, not featured in the original edition, has been included, kindly provided by TarraWarra Museum of Art.

UQP would like to acknowledge the goodwill and support of the family of Ian Fairweather.



This book has been published on the occasion of the exhibition *Ian Fairweather: Drunken Buddha* at TarraWarra Museum of Art (29 November 2014 – 15 March 2015). The exhibition has been curated by Steven Alderton. www.twma.com.au

INTRODUCTION

The Drunken Buddha, which Ian Fairweather has translated and illustrated with his own paintings, is a well-known Chinese novel based on the life of a Buddhist saint, Tao-chi, who lived in the province of Chekiang in the thirteenth century A.D. in the neighbourhood of the capital of the Southern Sung Dynasty. Tao-chi's eccentric approach to religious teaching, which is in accordance with an ancient and respected Chinese tradition of how a sage should behave, made him a very popular figure and the story of his life was embellished with pious legends to such an extent as to completely obscure the real facts of his biography. The title, *The Drunken Buddha*, is a translation of the title by which the book is known to Chinese readers. The more 'official' title is *The Life of the Great Ch'an Master Tao-chi* but several variants are found in different editions.

It is impossible to say anything with certainty about the authorship or the date of composition of *The Drunken Buddha*. Until the present century the novel was a most disreputable literary form in China and a novelist, especially if he had an established reputation in some respectable field such as poetry or history or if he held an academic degree, took great pains to conceal his identity. Novels were printed in cheap editions, seldom preserved in state libraries, and in very few cases has the date of first printing or subsequent publication history of a work of fiction been established with any degree of certainty. A novel is not even necessarily the work of a single hand. Editors and publishers had no scruples about adding or subtracting substantial parts of the text; many important works have several variant versions. Sometimes whole chapters from other books were adapted and interpolated in new editions. The disfavour with which the Imperial government regarded novels, and the frequency with which prosecutions were

launched at books considered obscene or subversive, made authors and publishers conceal their identity behind pseudonyms and spurious colophons.

The text on which the present translation is based is a moveable type edition of the twentieth year of Kuang-hsu (1894–95). The complete text is translated with all its inconsistencies except for the emendation of a few obvious typographical errors in the Chinese original, with the hope of giving the non-specialist reader as clear an impression as possible of a famous and very popular example of a type of Chinese novel which has hitherto been inaccessible to those unacquainted with the language. The verses have necessarily been treated much more freely than the prose passages. It is in most cases impossible to reproduce the Chinese metres and rhymes and the original metaphors are likely to be unintelligible to Westerners. The aim here has been to try to convey the spirit of the original in some sort of metrical form rather than to render the meaning literally.

C. B. BREDT

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First call for wine and call again ...

Thus in the world's way. A flower gathered with laughter is the teaching of Buddha ... Alone in contemplation ... and pure in heart within the family circle ... seeking the way is good. But then meeting flesh and wine how to know when to stop—how to play but not be lax—to swear but not be lewd. When only the surface is seen—what lies beneath is missed. Through play the spirit learns wisdom—by turning things over, and finding underneath the traces of the true among the false. Men and pines, waves and bamboo shadows—rain and the smell of flowers on the wind; these things awaken thought—but also the desire that all things should be thus—all of one measure—and that is not so ... He that keeps a worldly measure missing what is strange and new, seeking in peace for understanding, loses the way.

CHAPTER 1

*The Lo-han rests in peace and shuns the world,
The high priest speaks of the future.*

Love law, love also licence,
For gold has many shades.
The quiet heart seeks quiet only
But better know the world;
Not trouble shun but trouble joining
Both life and death to learn,
The green branch in the fire withers
But in the lotus flower is flame.

These lines of verse explain that in Buddhist teaching, though the Lo-han¹ is greatly esteemed, yet without destruction there can be no life—then how explain the Buddha's way and awaken understanding? It is done by seemingly stupid ways—as now ...

¹ *Lo-han*, a person who through accumulated merit of pious acts performed in many incarnations has finally attained Enlightenment which leads to the Buddhist form of salvation, complete extinction of ego. Chinese Buddhists, being Mahayanists, believed that Lo-hans, although by their merits they had escaped from the Wheel of Reincarnation, might undertake a further voluntary cycle of reincarnations in order to help others towards the goal of Enlightenment.

The Lo-han of whom we all think with compassion lived by the West Lake. His teaching will last for 5,000 years and be venerated by countless generations. When the Emperor Kao-tsung of Sung retreated to the south he re-established the government at Lin-an in Chekiang.² The Holy Mountain, the dwelling place of the Living Buddha, was located there. The Emperor established T'ien-t'ai county around it. Here many monasteries were built, and they adopted the method of instruction by Chang-laos.³ The Chang-lao in this particular monastery is sixty-eight years old; he is called K'ung. For a long time no Lo-han has manifested himself here and direct transmission of the Ch'an has been cut off.⁴

One day all have come together for instruction. It is winter-time—snow is on the ground. The north wind blows and all shiver. ... After the evening meal the Chang-lao sits in the Buddha Chair in the inner court, at first alone, then all the monks gather on both sides—incense sticks are lit making clouds of smoke—and many lamps, casting shadows. When all are seated one whose heart is moved comes and kneels before the Chang-lao saying, 'In this moment that is beautiful and quiet my heart awakens to receive the Master's teaching.'

The Chang-lao smiled and said, 'Though peace may help the understanding—yet there is movement also—not only peace is good.'

The disciple said, 'If in peace comes understanding, how can there be good in chaos?'

The Chang-lao said, 'If in movement is no thought how in peace may thought move?'

Just then there was a loud crash as of thunder; all the monks were frightened, but the Chang-lao said, 'There is no need to be frightened; if in this peace there

² Kao-tsung, Emperor from 1127 to 1162, came to the throne in the course of a disastrous war with a Juched people from Manchuria in which his father and elder brother were captured. The northern third of the Empire, which included the former Sung capital, K'ai-feng, became the Chin Empire while the Sung Dynasty moved their government to Hang-chou in Chekiang province. Hang-chou was renamed Lin-an when it became the capital in 1129.

³ *Chang-lao*, 'elder' or 'abbot', is the title of the spiritual head of a Chinese Buddhist monastery.

⁴ Lo-han is used here in the sense of a transmitter of the authentic tradition of Buddhism. According to the teaching of the Ch'an sect Enlightenment can only be communicated directly by one who has it. Hence this monastery is in decline.

Ch'an, 'meditation', is the original Chinese reading of the word more familiar to Western readers by its Japanese pronunciation, *Zen*.

comes a disturbance seek out first the reason for it.' The monks then formed a line and with the leader carrying a lamp they went from the courtyard to investigate. In the Hall of Meditation all was quiet, but in the Hall of the Founder a large chair that stood before the gold and purple painting of the Lo-han had fallen over. They then knew what had caused the noise and returned to tell the Chang-lao.

The Chang-lao said nothing at first but sat frowning, then went into the hall to see. When he returned he said there was a noise that shook the earth and caused the chair to fall, 'but the Lo-han is unmoved, he has already renounced the world. Perhaps the day is not far off when this will be made clear. Wait till the full moon and this old priest will look again into this mystery.' All the monks were afraid and knew not what to expect.

That which is to be, will be,
Its time of coming draws near,
Both coming and going shall pass
By the Bodhi Tree.⁵

In T'ai-chou prefecture in the district of T'ien-t'ai there was an official called Li, his second names were Mao-ching and Tsan-shan; his native place was Pai-chun-fang. Tsan-shan was virtuous and sincere—not covetous of power and fame. After some years in office he retired and came to live at home. His wife was of great piety. She had passed thirty years but had no child. Tsan-shan was faithful to her and would take no concubine, but continued to pray daily to Buddha. Then one night in a dream a Lo-han appeared to his wife and gave her a piece of the five coloured lotus to eat. She did this six times until the full moon of the tenth month. In the third year of the Sung Emperor Kuang-tsung in the twelfth month on the third day (22 February 1192) she bore a son. His face was like the full moon and his eyes were bright. At the time of birth the house was filled with a red⁶ light—a sign of great happiness for the house. Tsan-shan

⁵ The banyan (*ficus religiosa*) under which the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, experienced Enlightenment. Many monasteries had trees which were believed to be grown from cuttings of the original tree.

quickly lit incense sticks and offered up thanks to heaven and earth. All their friends came to visit them and congratulate them. When the moon was full a banquet was held to celebrate.

Just then news came that K'ung Chang-lao from Kuo-ch'ing monastery had come to visit them and was outside. Tsan-shan thought, 'This K'ung is a great Buddhist priest, he would not leave the monastery unless on some important matter, what can have brought him here?' Then with due ceremony he ushered him into the hall and said, 'For the Chang-lao to visit this humble neighbourhood there must be some urgent reason.' The Chang-lao replied, 'Only to congratulate you on the birth of a son at the full moon. This son, so long awaited. I would like to see him.' Tsan-shan was very grateful and went to tell his wife, and have the nurse wrap up the child and bring it to the Chang-lao.

The Chang-lao took the child and placing a hand on its head said, 'This child will be quick to learn and not feel the cold—by the end of the season of Big Snow he will already be walking. Alas that all roads end, but such is the way.' The child seemed to understand, murmuring and smiling. The Chang-lao then beating time recited:

'Don't laugh ... don't laugh ... I see for you no easy way, but hard. In movement you will learn to jump in tiger jumps, in peace your lamp won't shine or else may lead you after gold instead of wine. When cold and sickness come a blessed broth will be good for you ... now you are be-coming and I go ... our ways divide ... so little time is left.'

When he had finished he handed the child back to the nurse and asked Tsan-shan what name he had chosen. Tsan-shan said, 'There has been so much excitement I have not had time to think of a good name yet.' The Chang-lao said, 'If no name has been chosen perhaps this old priest may be permitted to suggest Hsiu-yuan (prepare first). With such a name he will persevere to become a great man.' Tsan-shan said, 'Yes, that will be good and he will always be grateful to the venerable master for it.'

⁶ The auspicious colour, signifying good fortune.

The Chang-lao then got up and prepared to leave but Tsan-shan said, ‘The venerable master has visited this humble house when we have guests and make merry. The cooks are inexperienced and the food has no flavour, yet will the master not stay and dine with us?’ The Chang-lao thanked him and said, ‘How can I refuse, but soon I will be returning to the west.⁷ I shall take with me a memory of your kindness.’ Tsan-shan said, ‘Venerable master, the twelfth moon is not yet spent, it is fitting to make merry, so why these sad words?’

The Chang-lao said, ‘There are those who come and those who go according to the law of the circle which none can change.’ He said good-bye to Tsan-shan and returned to the monastery. Arriving there he remained quiet for some days, then at length he went into the inner hall and ordered the gongs to be struck and the drums rolled to call all together. Then seated in the Buddha Chair he said, ‘I have no more days left—I am returning to the west. There are still some words I wish all to hear.

Flowers that open in the first moon of the year are fallen by the last. So this old priest sees now his time is come—alas! How can one doubt that one returns home, but tell another and he will not believe. So I do not tell—but say to all the monks that for one that goes on the ninth there is one that comes. Have no fear of living and dying, for all the road is the same, yellow spring or white bones, all become the mountain green. Water has sound and the hills have colour. The God of Death bids you prepare to go with joy to the place of burning.’

When the Chang-lao had finished speaking all the monks hearing that he was about to return to the west were greatly alarmed. They knelt before him and said, ‘We are foolish and have no understanding, how without you can we seek the way?’

The Chang-lao said, ‘Why should the light of wisdom be extinguished because one old priest must go—it is the way of life and cannot be changed. Go and tell the monks to be here early on the eighteenth day to take me.’ Then he left the Hall of the Law.

⁷ An allusion to the Western Paradise, hence the Chang-lao’s impending death.

The monks then prepared the coffin and invited all the monks from the neighbouring monasteries to come on the eighteenth day, and also Tsan-shan and various officials. Then K'ung Chang-lao was bathed and dressed in fresh clothes and brought to the Hall of Peaceful Joy where he sat in the Buddha Chair. All the priests and the monks crowded round waiting for him to speak.

He then called five disciples before him in the robes and with the alms bowls of the Order, and said to them, 'Though the nature of the body is finite yet through you the spirit will continue. You must guard it that it may not stray from the path.' So saying he reached out and touched each of them on the head. Then he signed for incense to be lit, and remained silent while the priests chanted passages from the Buddha's scriptures. Then asking for paper and brush to be brought he sat for a time resting, then wrote the verse:

'My span of years is overspent by nine,
All forms are empty, and with no regret
Scatter them with your hands towards the west
And go into the world with joy.'

When the Chang-lao had finished he closed his eyes for the last time. All around was heard a sigh and for a time he was left alone. Then his body was placed in the coffin and the guests left, to return in the second month on the ninth day. Seven then carried the coffin. It was a fine day; many banners went in front and music behind as was the custom in the mountains. Having reached a place deep in the pine woods they put the coffin down and the five disciples then asked Han-shih-yen Chang-lao to light the fire. Han then took the torch and recited for all to hear.

'If the fire is not bright
Within the coffin he may not wake,
Or waking, know not where he is
And there are none to set him right.
Beneath the canopy of red smoke
And red clouds closing all around,



*The priests
chant passages
from the Buddha's scriptures*

Making a pavilion of the empty air,
How tell the shining south or which the east,
How find the way back to the ancestors;
Though his mortal nature he discards
Yet all is Buddha. Waking from a dream
Of three score years and nine,
He will be guided on the way.
Ai!
Follow not the drifting clouds
Let the fire light your way.'

Han-shih-yen having said this lit the fire. The coffin was soon burning brightly and rose up in flame. Then in the flames above it a figure appeared looking down on them and giving thanks to all. Then calling Tsan-shan it said, 'Your son Hsiu-yuan belongs to the house of Buddha but without proper teaching he cannot become a priest. He could be directed to other and evil ends if not constantly watched and guided. To become a priest he must go to Yin Pieh-feng, to Yuan Hsin-t'ang. This must never be forgotten.' Tsan-shan hearing this message coming from the clouds could not do otherwise than attach the greatest importance to it. He raised his hands in the air and said, 'The master's message is received and will be faithfully obeyed.'

The vision then gradually disappeared. Tsan-shan decided to send Hsiu-yuan to Ling-yin monastery to be educated.

Through peace and movement
Darkly shows the way,
Marked by the footprints
Of those that are gone.

What happens after this? Listen, and it will be told in the next chapter.