

REVIEWS

ROBERT KRITZER, *Vasubandhu and the Yogācārabhūmi, Yogācāra Elements in the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, Studia Philologica Buddhica, Monograph Series XVIII, Tokyo, The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2005.

Although the traditional classification of *Sarvāstivāda*, *Sautrāntika* and *Yogācāra* as three clearly separated Buddhist schools has been recently questioned, such a classification still influences the Buddhist studies, and it represents an obstacle to the comprehension of Vasubandhu's work. In fact, the famous philosopher is associated with all three schools; in particular, his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* is said to have appeared after he had rejected *Sarvāstivāda* in favour of *Sautrāntika*, but before he adhered to *Yogācāra*. In this context, Robert Kritzer's study is a valuable contribute to the scientific debate concerning the relation between the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* on the one hand, and *Sarvāstivāda* and *Yogācāra* on the other hand; furthermore, it sheds a new light on the meaning that *Sautrāntika* assumes in the text. Through a systematic comparison between the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and the *Yogācārabhūmi* – together with an extensive reference to the *Nyāyānusāra* – Kritzer “shows for the first time the extent of Vasubandhu's dependence on the *Yogācārabhūmi*”. Thus, the main body of the study presents passages from all eight chapters of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* compared with related passages from the *Yogācārabhūmi*. The correspondences between the two texts are clas-

sified according to a number of general themes (“*sarvāstivāda*”, “*prajñapti*”, “*bīja*”, “the coming together of causes and conditions”, “special people and their powers”); “in most cases, these involve rejections of major *Sarvāstivādin* doctrines”. Such a comparison results in the fundamental statement that – with the exception of *bīja* – Vasubandhu generally relies on passages of the *Yogācārabhūmi* that are not specifically connected to *Mahāyāna* and do not expound the doctrine of *ālayavijñāna*, or even contain terms like *vijñāptimātra* and *trisvabhāva*. Typical *Mahāyāna* themes, like the emptiness of *dharmas* or the three bodies of the Buddha, are not even mentioned in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. Nevertheless, “the disagreements regarding these *abhidharma* issues between Vasubandhu and the *Sarvāstivāda* are far from insignificant. [...] Vasubandhu’s criticism of the Vaibhāṣika *abhidharma* system reflects a very different view of the world, one that we can now see is provocatively similar to that of the authors of the *Yogācārabhūmi*”.

Mimma Congedo

SWAMI SARADANANDA, *Biographie de Ramakrishna*, Paris, Les Editions Du Cerf, 2005.

The text is the second translation in a Western language – following the English one by Swami Jagadananda appeared in 1952 – of the biography of Ramakrishna (1836-1886), one of the most famous and prominent Indian contemporary *guru*-s, written by Swami Saradananda, a disciple of his. Swami Saradananda’s original Bengali work, entitled *Śri Śri Rāmakṛṣṇa Lilāprasaṅga*, has been translated into French by Michel Meex, Christine More and Swami Amarananda. The text has also been reduced, re-organized and adapted, becoming more readable for a Western public. The teachings and life of Ramakrishna, a veritable living saint, were an *exemplum* for all his followers (like Swami Saradananda himself and the even more influent and well known Swami Vivekananda), and still represent a precious source of religious inspiration for the members of the *Ramakrishna Mission Association*, founded by Vivekananda in 1897, and many other people as well. In particular,

Ramakrishna's Muslim and Christian religious experiences show the pureness and loftiness of his comprehension of God, overcoming all external distinctions among faiths in a direct and immediate experience of God. Although Ramakrishna's language was simple and plain, reflecting his simple education, his wisdom was illuminating for all his disciples, as Swami Saradananda shows in the five volumes constituting his work. Actually, Saradananda first wrote the third and fourth volume of the biography, devoted to Ramakrishna's teachings and life as a *guru*. Later, thanks to Ramakrishna's wife, Sarada Devi, and nephews, Saradananda was able to gather the material about the episodes of his *guru*'s life that he had not witnessed. Thus, he managed to complete his work, adding a first volume, devoted to Ramakrishna's childhood and youth; a second volume, dealing with Ramakrishna's spiritual apprenticeship; and a fifth volume, concluding the work by narrating how Vivekananda and the other disciples joined the *guru*.

Mimma Congedo

NIELS GUTSCHOW, AXEL MICHAELS, *Handling Death, The Dynamics of Death and Ancestor Rituals Among the Newars of Bhaktapur, Nepal*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005.

The book – written by an architectural historian, Niels Gutschow, and an indologist, Axel Michaels – is an extremely valuable contribute to the study of South Asian – especially hindu – death and ancestor rituals. What is quite remarkable is the methodological approach of the research: a combination of textual and contextual approaches that Axel Michaels defines “ethno-indological method”. In this perspective, the text is divided into three parts, preceded by an introduction. The introduction is devoted to South Asian life-cycle rituals in general, specifically focusing on death and ancestor rituals in Nepal, and it is based upon diverse textual and ethnographic sources. Several notions appear to be related to death rituals: impurity among the closer relatives, embodiment of the soul of the deceased, its deification and pacification, memory and mourning. Nevertheless, these elements cannot fully grasp the meaning of death and ancestor rituals in a specific social and local context. Thus,

the first part of the book focuses on a very specific setting, that is the ancient city of Bhaktapur, in Nepal, where it has been developed a peculiar urban culture over the last two thousand years. This section of the text outlines the ritual spatial conditions, presents the specialists involved in the death and ancestor rituals and describes these rituals themselves. Firstly, it is worth noting that the Brahmin results to be assisted in his duties by a large number of members of sub-castes. Secondly, it is interesting to notice that the death and ancestor rituals – many of which had never been described before – can be grouped in two categories: “calendric rituals of death and renewal, in which mostly a generalised group of ancestors or gods is worshipped, and personal death and ancestors rituals which are more or less directly related to the deceased and his family”. In the second part of the book the authors describe in full detail – as a prototype – one of the most important death rituals: the union of the deceased with the forefathers (*latyā*, Sanskrit *sapinḍikarāna*). Such a ritual is also documented in a DVD which is attached to the book. The description is completed by the edition and translation of the texts used by the Brahmin priest while performing the ritual. This collection of texts not only includes the Sanskrit ones, which have a pan-Indian distribution, but also local and even personal books, also written in Nevārī and Nepālī. In the third part of the book the authors present their conclusions, which might be summarised as follows. Death and ancestor rituals, if not all rituals, allow much more freedom than it is generally believed by scholars. Although the rituals are codified and formalized by the texts, they can be changed, modified, transformed and fitted to specific contexts and situations. In the end, it is worth reminding that this book – enriched by a wonderful set of photos – is the first one of a series which will hopefully cover child, youth and marriage rituals as well.

Mimma Congedo

BANASA, *A Spiritual Autobiography*. Translated and introduced by Monika Horstmann, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2003.

This book presents a translation into English of “*Merā anubhav*” (“*My Experiences*”), the autobiography originally written in Mārvarī

language by Banāsā, the woman devotee who lived in the twentieth century Rajasthan (1896-1957). The autobiography gives an account of Banāsā's personal religious experience, hinged on the encounter with the most venerated saint Baldev, whom she looked after and considered as her *guru* until his death in 1947. Horstmann's translation is based on the text edited in 1990 by Dāmodarprasād Śarmā, who worked on the manuscript edited by Padmā, Banāsā's daughter. Furthermore, in her introduction to the translation, Horstmann describes the historical context and the privileged social milieu in which Banāsā was brought up. She also argues that Banāsā's religious experience was influenced both by Baldev's teachings and by the sixteenth century saint Mirā Bāi. The latter, in particular, appears to be influential both in the religious language used by Banāsā and in her pointing out the conflict between women's ordinary role in traditional Indian society and their possibility of directly savouring God according to the *bhakti*'s norms.

Anna Bonisoli Alquati

Stages and Transitions: Temporal and Historical Frameworks in Epic and Purāṇic Literature (Proceedings of the Second Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, August 1999), edited by Mary Brockington, generally edited by Radoslav Katičić Zagreb, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2002.

This volume contains the proceedings of the Second Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and *Purāṇas*, held in Dubrovnik in August 1999. The papers delivered during the Conference deal with different topics within Indian epic and Purāṇic literature and approach them from various perspectives. The proceedings then mirror the variety and complexity of the current researches dealing with these topics. Nevertheless, it is possible to find threads linking the papers. As remarked by Greg Bailey in his "*Stages and Transitions: Introductory Reflections*", the choice of a guiding theme such as "Stages and Transition (in Epic and Purāṇic Literature)" shows the contributors' common philological methodology, which

aims both to underline the historical changes of the received texts from a diachronic point of view and to analyse the same texts on the synchronic level in order to find out the narrative frames and new lines of interpretation. Therefore, some papers aim to draw attention to the use of the appropriate methodology, either focusing on the philological issues as in Andreas Bigger's paper (*"The Normative redaction of the Mahābhārata: possibilities and limitations of a working hypothesis"*) or on the analysis of the texts' strata as in the contributions by Horst Brinkhaus (*"The Division into Parvans and the Bhaviṣyaparvan of the Harivaṃśa"*), Christophe Vielle (*"An Introduction to the Jaiminīyasamhitā of the Brahmaṇḍapurāṇa"*) and Przemysław Szczurek (*"Some remarks on the so-called Epic Layer of the Bhagavadgītā"*). Other papers investigate the diachronic development of the texts and the history of their composition approaching them from a detailed textological analysis of particular characters, the passages relating to them and the connected literary features (John Brockington, *"Jarāsaṃdha of Magadha (Mbh 2, 15-22)"*); James Fitzgerald, *"The Rāma Jāmadagnya 'Thread' of the Mahābhārata: a new survey of Rāma Jāmadagnya in the Pune text"* and Mary Brockington *"The rise and fall of Mārīca: stages and transitions in the portrayal of the Rāmāyaṇa's golden deer"*). The paper by Yaroslav Vassilikov (*"Indian practice of pilgrimage and the growth of the Mahābhārata in the light of new epigraphical sources"*) uses a more structuralist approach in order to analyse the cultural context of the rise of epic literature in India as well as in other cultures. Other papers focus more on religious and mythological themes attempting to detect the structure of the Purāṇic works (Peter Schreiner, *"Five topics, three functions, one god: on the interlardedness of Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa-material and trimūrti concept in the Viṣṇupurāṇa"*); Freda Matchett, *"Some reflections on the Frame-Narrative of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa"*) and the wider development of the religious and śāstric literature in Indian tradition (Mislav Ježic, *"The Bāṣkalamantra-Upaniṣad and the Bhagavadgītā"*); Renate Söhnen-Thieme *"Goddess, gods, and demons in the Devīmāhātmya"*; Petteri Koskikallio *"The Gargasamhitā and the Ānandarāmāyaṇa: additional sources for studying the pseudo-Vedic ritualism in the post-epic texts"*; Annemarie Mertens *"What defines a stage? The Purāṇic myth of Satī's death in*

transition”; Klara Gönc Moaçanim “Nāṭyaśāstra as a (distorting?) mirror to the epic / purāṇic mythic image: the question of its dating”). The investigation of the transmission of the texts through the fate of a Purāṇic manuscript is the topic of Heinrich von Stietencron’s paper (“An illustrated manuscript of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa: genuine or fake?”).

As a whole, these proceedings cover many of the issues investigated by the scholarship in the field of the epic and Purāṇic literature and, though the variety of the papers mirrors the state of the current researches, nevertheless many common threads can be found among the contributions.

Anna Bonisoli Alquati

Kāttavarāyaṇ Katai. The story of Kāttavarāyaṇ. An Annotated Translation. By Eveline Masilamani-Meyer, Wiesbaden, Harrasowitz, 2004.

According to the editor’s words, the here given English prose translation of the Tamil *Kāttavarāyaṇ Katai* attempts to give the students the necessary tools to interpret and enjoy one of the most famous examples of this type of Tamil ballad poetry. For this reason, Eveline Masilamani-Meyer, in using the edition published by B. Irattithṇa Nāyakar and Sons, Madras, 1980, provides many explanatory footnotes about textual problems and language peculiarities of the text. The book also contains an introductory essay about the different versions of *Kāttavarāyaṇ*’s story and the results of the editor’s fieldwork on the spread of this hero’s cult in the Tiruccirāppaḷḷi region, its historical and sociological background. Furthermore, the translation is followed by an appendix which contains heterogeneous useful material, such as maps of the mentioned places, a synopsis of the *Kāttavarāyacuvāmi ammāṇai*, photos and drawings, an index of the Tamil words explained in the footnotes and a final reproduction of the text in the Tamil script.

Anna Bonisoli Alquati

Kāmpilyamahātmya of Durgadatta Sharma. Translated into English by Corrado Puchetti (Venetian Academy of Indian Studies Series, no. 3), New Delhi, Venetian Academy of Indian Studies and D. K. Printworld, 2003.

This book, part of Corrado Puchetti's Ph.D. work, contributes to the efforts made by the missions of the Kāmpilya Project, promoted by the Venetian Academy of Indian Studies and other important international Institutions, in order to trace the history of the ancient city of Kāmpilya, and to locate its archaeological site. Mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* as the capital city of the Southern Pāñcāla kingdom, Kāmpilya was a prosperous centre and an important place of pilgrimage on the river Ganges until its decline, during the Moghul rule. Many archaeological surveys have been undertaken to find Kāmpilya's location since the British Raj and promising results have been gained by the missions organized by the Kāmpilya Project team. During one of these missions, Corrado Puchetti discovered an original manuscript of the *Kāmpilyamahātmya* composed by Durgadatta Sharma on pre-existing material and undertook its translation. This book is arranged in such a way that the Sanskrit *ślokas* in Devanagari script are separated from the prose translation into English, which is given below the text. The text is also divided into chapters according to the original *adhyāyas*. An English translation of the introduction from the original manuscript is given as well. As Puchetti argues, this *mahātmya* not only represents an interesting contribution to the study of the history of Kāmpilya, but also casts light on the Purāṇic literature, its composition and role within the Indian religious tradition.

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