

## REVIEWS



JEAN DELOCHE, *Studies on fortification in India*, Institut Français de Pondichéry, Pondichéry, 2007.

The book by Jean Deloche examines the fortifications scattered over the Indian subcontinent, particularly in South India. The author gives precise and detailed information about countless defensive works which have been constructed over many centuries and have had considerable influence on the growth of kingdoms of empires. The first chapter describes the fortified cities of the Harappan period, which are located to the north-east of the subcontinent, and shows the different typology of the sites and the classification of layers. The information is based on the results of archaeological excavations and are supported by illustrations. All the other chapters, covering South India from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D., consider Hindu (3<sup>rd</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and Muslim (15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century) systems of fortification. For each period the book provides outstanding examples of fortification in order to analyze the building techniques, drawing attention to the evolution of military technology, to identify and dating defensive works in India. This volume shows that is possible to pick out the defence systems taking the masonries into consideration, the way the materials are laid, fit into each other, with the additions, the modifications in the stoneworks, the layout of the walls, the form of the flanks, the structure of the gateways, the nature of the parapets. Moreover, this book is provided by a rich and functional series of illustrations and photos that show the fortified sites and the different types of fortification. Certainly, this volume by Deloche constitutes an useful and practical study.

Giada Franchini

François Gros, *Deep Rivers. Selected Writing on Tamil Literature*, Institut Français de Pondichéry, Pondichéry, 2009.

This volume contains all the major essays written by François Gros on Tamil literature. Great relevance is devoted to studies of Caṅkam literature and devotional texts of the Tamil Bhakti traditions, as well as to contemporary Tamil novels and short stories. The first section examines various aspects of classical Tamil literature: the Agastyas' shift from North to South and its weight on the Indian studies; the Caṅkam literature and its public; the *Paripāṭal* as the song of the river Vaiyai; the introduction to *Tiruvalluvar*, or the book of love, with attention to its commentaries; the legend and the works of Kāraikkālammaiyaṛ; the Tēvāram, or canonical collection of hymns to Siva; the reading on *Periya purāṇam*, the poem composed by Cēkkiḷār around the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> c.; the lectures about two poems by Aruṅakirinātar, which are dedicated to the celebration of Murukaṇ. The second section analyses the contemporary Tamil literature; the author aims to discuss the Tamil cultural landscape; he introduces the short stories and examines literary elements and features. Gros treats the topic of dalits literary inspiration, gathered in the west of India during the 1960s; he draws attention to reading *Vaṭivācal*, “one of the very first works of fiction to bring into Tamil literature the spoken language and folklore”. Moreover, he gives importance to various affinities between G. Nagarajan and the style of some American novelists and illustrates the different features of modern Tamil novel and short story.

Giada Franchini

*Streams of Language. Dialects in Tamil*, Institut Français de Pondichéry, Pondichéry, 2008.

This volume contains the proceedings of the International Conference “Dialects in Tamil”, held on August 23-25<sup>th</sup> 2006 at the French Institute of Pondicherry. In this occasion has

been examined the idea of dialects in Tamil and it emerged that a specific series of elements shared by people – caste, region, landscape and material culture – influenced the development and expansion of them. The book is structured in sections and their order shows the different contexts where has been analyzed the concept: are considered international scholars, linguists, Tamil creative writers and also approaches holistic and multidisciplinary. The topics offered by authors are arranged in dialogues emerging between the papers and between the sections, and great scholars from different countries confront each other. Some scholars treat the question from international perspectives (François Gros, “problems and policies in languages and literature”; Jean-Luc Chevillard, “The concept of *tikai-c-col* in Tamil grammatical literature and the regional diversity of Tamil classical literature”; Herman Tiekens, “Metaphony, or height harmony, in written Tamil and Malayalam”; Alberto D. Formai “Regional languages/dialects in Italy”; Elisabeth Sethupathy, “Scope and limitations of translating modern Tamil prose into French”); historical perspectives (Iravatham Mahadevan, “Rare early old Tamil words and grammatical usages in Tamil-brahmi inscriptions”; Subbarayalu, “Study of the dialects in inscriptions”); regional perspectives (Gopinathan Nair, “Dialect survey of Malayalam in retrospect”; Raghava Varier, “Literary uses of Malayalam dialects”; Jayadheer Tirumala Rao, “Telugu dialects as vehicle of socio-political communication”); linguistic perspectives (Shanmugam, “Historical dialectology: with special reference to old and late middle Tamil”; Kothandaram, “Remarks on Tamil dialects”; Śrinivasa Varma, “A brief survey of the study of Tamil dialects to date”; Gnanasundaram, “Survey of Tamil dialects: some methodological issues”); anthropological perspectives (Bhakthavatsala Bharathi, “Dialects of peripatetics in the Tamil region: an ethnographic approach”; Perialwar, “A plea for the documentation of the ancient Tamil dialects of Karnataka”); lexicographical perspectives (Subramanian, “Dialects as sources of language enrichment”; Madhukesvaran, “A dialect novel and a dialect dictionary”); experiential perspectives (Gopal Iyer, “Dialects as vehicle for the construction of regional and social identities”; Vengada Soupraya Nayagar, “Influence of the

French language on Puducherry Tamil”; Pasupathy, “Identifying Puducherry proverbs”; Senthil Babu, “Dialects in practice”); literary and creative perspectives (Perumal Murugan, “Dialects as creative language: some notes”; Alakiya Periyavan, “Existence inherent in words”; Kanmani Gunasekaran, “Peanut people”; Imaiyam, “Dialects and writers”; Jeyasankar Sivagnanam, “A look at the shifting usages of the Tamil language in Śri Lanka today: a theatrical perspective”; Narenthiran, “Texts on dialects: bibliography from the IFP library”; Subbarayalu, “Appendix I: Note on the twelve Tamil dialectal regions”). The volume also presents an “Appendix II: Tamil dialectal regions according to linguistic analysis”.

Giada Franchini

T. GANESAN, *Two Śaiva Teachers of the Sixteenth Century. Nigamajñāna I and his Disciple Nigamajñāna II*, Institut Français de Pondichéry, Pondichéry, 2009.

In this book Thiagarajan Ganesan, senior researcher in the French Institute of Pondicherry, analyses all the *oeuvres* of two great teachers of the sixteenth century, Nigamajñāna I and Nigamajñāna II, which have elaborated and propagated the *śaivasiddhānta* religious system and philosophical doctrines. The study by Ganesan is very important because for the first time are completely published all the available manuscripts in Sanskrit and Tamil of these two scholars. The author considers Nigamajñāna I e II as “the two best representatives of that 16<sup>th</sup> century activity both in the field of doctrinal systematization and ritual development in Sanskrit as well as in Tamil” and he analyses their respective works in order to show their contribution to the propagation of *śaivasiddhānta*. This book is arranged in two sections: the part I contains the analysis of texts composed by Nigamajñāna I and the part II contains the study of texts writing by his disciple. The topics are various in general: some texts represent simple ritual

manuals explaining the performance and value of some vows observed by common people, others are independent manuals explaining the fundamental system of the *śaivasiddhānta* and some texts illustrate the complexity of ritual pollution. Certainly the work edited by Ganesan is a remarkable attempt to point up the importance of these two prominent teachers and undoubtedly this volume is a good source for those who want to approach the *śaivasiddhānta* religious system.

Giada Franchini

SIEGFRIED LIENHARD, GIULIANO BOCCALI (a cura di), *Poesia indiana classica*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2009

This comprehensive anthology of Indian classical poetry – a substantially revised and expanded version of a text first published in 1994 – is by far the best work available in Italian on the subject: it ties together sophisticated and up-to-date scholarship with remarkable clarity and a step-by-step methodological approach, so as to guide even a beginner into the depths of the bewilderingly complex, fascinating ocean of *kāvya* literature. The authors, S. Lienhard and G. Boccali, are renowned authorities in the field. The text begins with a masterful introduction by Boccali (pp. 9-57) articulated in five sections: *Definition of Classical Literature*; *Chronology*; *Requisites of Classical Literature* (subdivided into *Themes and Motifs*; *Structure of Texts*; *Phonic and Symbolic Evocativeness*; *Lexical Research*; *Nominal Composition*; *Figural Richness*); *Literary Theory*; *Between Code and Magic*. The 143 translated texts are accompanied by a most useful, synthetic commentary (pp. 133-213). Along with an essential bibliography (pp. 215-222) is an informative note on the languages of the selected poems (Vedic Sanskrit, Sanskrit, Pāli, Maharaṣṭrī, Apabhraṃśa, Avadhi, Brajbhāṣā) and their authors, dates of composition, and editions utilised (pp. 223-232). A set of three indexes relative to authors, works, literary themes and technical

terms closes the volume (pp. 235-250).

Following a consolidated tradition the anthology is a ‘garland’ (*mālā*) of single, independent stanzas (*muktaka*) identified as the origin and actual ‘soul’ of ornate poetry, whose quintessence is defined from its inception as the conjunction i.e. coherence of meaning and sound (*śabdārthau sahitaū kāvyam*), of “ornaments/figures of sound” (*śabda-alaṃkāra*) and “ornaments/figures of meaning” (*artha-alaṃkāra*). To be sure, in India the favourite form of poetry has always been the anthology or *kośa* (lit. “treasure”) of single stanzas. In chronological order, the book sets off by offering a few *Ṛg Veda* and *Atharva Veda* hymns and the first ‘experiments’ of classical poetry as mirrored in the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* stanzas of the Buddhist Pāli canon (circa 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), and ends up with a selection of poems developed at the Mughal court by authors such as Malik Muhammad Jayasi and Bihārī Lāl in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The anthology thus spans over a period of more than two millennia of multiform poetical genius (pp. 63-132), presenting selected ‘gems’ by master *kavis* such as Aśvaghōṣa (1<sup>st</sup> century), Hāla (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century), Kālidāsa (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century), Bhārthari (5<sup>th</sup> century), Bhāravi (6<sup>th</sup> century), Amaruka (7<sup>th</sup> century), Māgha (*ante* 9<sup>th</sup> century), Bilha‘a (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century), Jayadeva (12<sup>th</sup> century) and others.

In the introduction Boccali observes how the literary conventions which structure Indian poetry at all levels – thematically, rhetorically, metrically, stylistically, in its reneved vocabulary etc. – are in fact almost completely constituted from the very beginning (pp. 14, 28) as testified by the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* ‘precursory’ poems. This technical repertory remains substantially fixed over the centuries. A non secondary merit of the book is that it covers all major, traditional motifs and *rasas* (lit. “sap”, “taste”), “ltering individual experience through the impersonality of the human condition and human feelings” (p. 20) i.e. always giving prominence to the objective and universal rather than to the subjective and particular: the reader is thus invited to relish *muktakas* which offer the subtle description and contemplation of nature (oceans, rivers, mountains, clouds, birds, animals, the four seasons, etc.), the appreciation for the various dimensions of passionate love, the depiction of daily

life activities as well as of ascetic practice, the representation of the main myths of Hinduism and its principal deities. The translations into Italian, all but a few done by Boccali, are superb, literally accurate and at the same time ‘empathic.’ Though it is impossible to recreate the density and plural meaning of the intricate compounds or the authors’ subtle use of alliteration and phonic artifices, Boccali’s sensitive rendering captures the gist and underlying inspiration (*pratibhā*) of the original, elevating the reader to an actual ‘tasting’ of the peculiar *rasa* or aesthetic experience which the poet wished to convey. The power of *kāvya* lies precisely in its capacity of manifesting supplemental meanings which are thought to be hidden in the text, expanding and even transcending its literal expression. Indeed, “poetry is essentially *dhvani*, “resonance”, “suggestion,” “manifestation” of unexpressed and implicit meanings which would not be otherwise communicable” (p. 46).

Antonio Rigopoulos

G. BÜHNEMANN, *Forms of Gaṇeśa*, Institut für Indologie, Wichtrach, 1989.

This small volume written by Gudrun Bühnemann contains a detailed study of the main forms of God Gaṇeśa/Gaṇapati occurring in the Vidyārṇavantara (VT), a large compilation on *mantraśāstra* attributed to Vidyāraṇya Yati. Starting from this text, the author provides the reader with *mantras*, *yantras* of the special forms of Gaṇeśa, iconographic peculiarities and instructions for the correct application of the *mantras* devoted to the God. As Bühnemann declares in her work, all the information collected in the Vidyārṇavantara has been deeply compared with other Gaṇeśa’s presentation in Tantras and in iconography, trying to create a link between the textual proves and the sculptural as well as photographic representation kept in the archives of the Institut français de Indologie in Pondicherry.

In order to deepen the visual aspect of Gaṇeśa’s forms as described

in VT, in this volume Bühnemann inserted all the data obtained during two trips to South and North India, where she was able to examine important temples, as well as the rich sculptural collections of the museums of Mathurā, Gwālior, and Khajurāho in a particular way. Although Gaṇeśa is a widely beloved and worshipped deity in many parts of Asia (Indonesia, Nepal, Tibet and Japan), the author underlines her interest in describing that God mainly in the Indian area. Such a decision may represent a limit for this book, first of all for those readers who would have a more general knowledge of Gaṇeśa's worship, not only in India. Furthermore, a small number of pages has been devoted to God's pictures, while a very exhaustive bibliography and a series of accurate indices (Names of Deities, Sanskrit terms, Attributes and Colours, Materials and Rites) enable the reader to look for information individually.

Mario Russo

DHAMMAVIHARI THERA, *Dharma, Man Religion Society Governance in Buddhism*, Buddhist Cultural Centre, Dehiwala, 2006.

Conceived as a dialogue between students and teacher, according to what Dhammavihari Thera refers in the Preface, this book aims at giving the reader the freedom to directly communicate and question the author over his points of view on Buddhism and Buddhist studies, developed in more than a thirty-year career. To do so, the structure of the book has been created as a sequence of nineteen lessons, subdivided in four sections (Man, Religion, Society, Governance). All the contents of the lessons reflect the personal way of thinking of Dhammavihari and the convictions he attained on Buddha's messages, always supported by what others say about Buddhism. In less than two hundred pages, he casts a glance at the different areas influenced by Buddha's teachings: social philosophy, economy, health, poverty, hunger, and so on (for instance in the thirteenth lesson).

In the section 1, the writer analyses the different aspects of Buddhist Religion concerning to the Man, focusing his attention on birth, life, death and rebirth. The section 2 represents a deep immersion into the Buddhist Religion, in order to discover the Four Truths, the Nirvāṇa theory, the Observance of the Uposatha, the Meditation Retreats, the Degradation of Religiousness, etc. The section 3 is an essay on the Human Resource from the Buddhist point of view. Every lesson of this third section reveals how the Buddha's message may be applied to human topics, such as poverty, hunger, basic needs, under-development. On the other hand, within the fourth section, devoted to the theme of the governance, the author points out the application of Buddhist principles to the Śrī Laṅkā territorial preservation, the role of the religion in the making of the Nation and the Buddha's message validity for the future. A very interesting part of that work, although too short, is the paragraph dedicated to the importance of the women in the learning and propagation of *dhamma* in the Śrī Laṅkā. To conclude, Professor Dhammavihari Thera helps the reader to broaden horizons on the Hīnayāna Buddhism as rooted in the different field on the Śrī Laṅkā's society.

Mario Russo

*Origin and Growth of the Purāṇic Text Corpus, with Special reference to the Skandapurāṇa*, Papers of the 12<sup>th</sup> World Sanskrit Conference Vol. 3.2, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 2004.

Edited by Hans T. Bakker, the volume here reviewed represents a collection of the main contributions to the research done on *Purāṇas* and *Skandapurāṇa* in particular, in the context of the "Skandapurāṇa Project" started at the Institute of Indian Studies of the University of Groningen. In addition, the editor wants to underline the cooperation extended to the colleagues of the University of Philadelphia, Kyoto, Lille and Hamilton (Ont.). The papers presented in this work are the result of a renewed

interest born in the field of Purāṇa literature, as it is demonstrated by the publication of several critical editions of Purāṇa texts, among them that of the original *Skandapurāṇa*. This book contains six papers, personally selected by Bakker, as he declares in the preface, discussed during the 12<sup>th</sup> World Sanskrit Conference held in Helsinki in July 2003. Such a choice took place in order to give homogeneity to the volume and avoid as much as possible inconsistencies and radical disagreements. The first paper by H. Bakker has been titled “The Structure of the Vārāṇasīmāhātmya in Skandapurāṇa 26-31”; Judit Törzsök is the author of an interesting analysis of śaiva material tracked down in the *Skandapurāṇa*, as we can read in her “Three Chapters of śaiva Material Added to the Earliest Known Recension of the *Skandapurāṇa*”. Again, it is focused on two specific recensions of the *Skandapurāṇa* the paper written by Kengo Harimoto “Some Observations on the Revā- and the Ambikākhaṇḍa Recensions of the *Skandapurāṇa*”. Peter Bisschop aims to describe as accurately as possible the different Śiva’s sanctuaries (*āyatana*) named in the *Skandapurāṇa*, within his contribution “Śiva’s Āyatanas in the Various Recensions of *Skandapurāṇa* 167”. In “The Relation between the Skandapurāṇa and the Āvantyakhaṇḍa”, Yuko Yokochi examines two parallel passages pointed out in these texts by the editors of the *Skandapurāṇa*, trying to draw the scheme of the relations between Āvantyakhaṇḍa’s text and Skandapurāṇa’s recensions. The last paper presented in this volume is titled “Saving the Saviour: Śiva and the Vaiṣṇava Avatāras in the Early Skandapurāṇa”; its author, Phyllis Granoff, declares an interest in glancing at the first stages of classical śaivism and at the process of development of Śiva’s myths.

Mario Russo