

Hugh Richardson. *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, Serindia Publications, London. Limp Bound, pp. 136. £16-95.

It is difficult to imagine a more qualified scholar than Hugh E. Richardson to write this book. Spending as he did a total of nine years in Tibet between 1936 and 1950 as a diplomatic representative at the British and Indian Mission, Mr. Richardson, an attentive, sympathetic and knowledgeable connoisseur of traditional Tibet and, in addition, a fine scholar of the dynastic history of Tibet, was fortunate enough to witness at first hand all the colourful annual state rituals and the religious and popular festivals of

an independent and free Tibet that were officially enacted in the Tibetan capital prior to the Chinese occupation. Without treating the subject exhaustively (this would, ideally, require an approach to each ceremony and festival similar to the one undertaken by J. Karsten on the Ya-Sor),¹ the book nevertheless fills a yawning gap in our knowledge of the set of rituals which highlighted the Tibetan calendar and the array of official and festive ceremonies throughout the year. Uniquely equipped with his own notes, an apparently unfailing memory, and items of information provided for him by Tibetan friends, monk or lay, and supported by a number of written narrative accounts recently made by Tibetan scholars who also have recorded details of these colourful ceremonies, Richardson has written a truly compelling book, a delightful feast for the specialist as well as for the non-specialist or indeed any true aficionado of Tibetan culture and civilization. In addition, the accompanying photographs are a real asset to the text (and in fact decisively enhance the understanding of these not uncomplicated ceremonies), a narrative which Richardson has written in a lucid and perspicuous language, an unfeigned style for which he is rightfully renowned. This combination greatly facilitates the reading, and the reader in fact finds himself richly rewarded when he opens the book: he is taken on a tour, in strict chronological sequence, through the entire repertoire of both secular and legitimizing Buddhist rites which came to underpin the foundation of the Tibetan state.

It cannot come as a surprise that the majority of ceremonies are of fairly recent origin (going back, at the earliest, to Tsong-kha-pa (AD 1357–1419)) and that they often reflect ceremonial or ritualized adaptations gradually invented and subsequently stage-managed by the dGe-lugs-pas or by the successive Dalai-Lamas and Regents in order to buttress and countenance the legitimacy and the power of the Yellow Order. In fact, the majority of these celebrations appears to be directly associated with the names and repute of not a few of the most holy saints of this sect. Nonetheless, these traditions, it appears, are obviously only to a certain extent of Tibetan provenance, and their rather motley nature, a *mélange* that should tell us that they had been richly fertilized by a considerable number of alien elements gradually adopted down through history. Prior to their abrupt dissolution as a result of the Chinese colonization and the general acculturation of Tibet, the full pageantry and seemingly archaic panoply of ceremonial procession, dances, seances, and sportive festivals had assumed quite sizeable proportions. The importance attached to these ceremonies by the Tibetan population was immense, as is testified by the active and enthusiastic participation by the ever-convivial Tibetans. Richardson has, due to his rather long sojourn in Lhasa, succeeded in covering the whole range of events and in delineating these both vividly and in telling detail. It is, in that respect, perhaps irrelevant to

¹ See his, “A Note on *Ya Sor* and the Secular Festivals Following the *sMon-lam chen mo*”, *Proceedings of the Csoma de Körös Symposium*, Budapest, 1983, Vol. I, pp. 117–49.

note that a description of the secular and sacred ceremonies as well as agrarian festivals, such as the Agricultural New Year, performed and kept alive outside Lhasa, would offer us a different picture.² Richardson has moreover made an attempt to trace their origins (often shrouded beyond recognition) and to account for the deeper motives or aetiology behind the distinct ceremonies, an effort which, due to the complex, even nebulous texture of these rituals and due, not least, to the dearth of historical information available on their background, cannot be dealt with in any even remotely exhaustive fashion. Altogether, the book nevertheless offers us a curious and unique (and certainly charming) portrait of the religion and dramas which dominated an essential part of both official and ordinary life, highlighting a now deplorably defunct Lhasa, and of ceremonies and festivals which became (or rather were) a constant thread in the life of Tibetans until the middle of this century.

In order to offer a *tour d'horizon* of the colourful array of festivals characterizing the Tibetan capital annually, I shall here briefly recapitulate its highlights: the pre-revolutionary Lhasa-year commenced—following the Tibetan lunar calendar—with the month-long ceremonies and celebration in connection with the Tibetan New Year. As one of the major events of the Tibetan calendar, it was divided into the so-called “Priest’s New Year” (*bla ma lo gsar*) and the “King’s New Year” (*rgyal po 'i lo gsar*), reflecting the ecclesiastical and temporal aspects of the dual power (*chos srid gnyis ldan*) of Church and State invested and united in the theocratic rulership of the Dalai Lama. These legitimizing state rituals lead to the preparations of the “Great Prayer Festival” or sMon-lam chen-mo, a protracted and fascinating set of rites of major spiritual significance for all of Tibet. The three-week-long festival is essentially Buddhist in nature, but contains numerous elements of divination, offerings of incense, prayer or sermon sessions, religious debates, and apotropaic rituals.

The apex of the Great Prayer is the so-called “Festival of the Great Miracle” (*cho phrul dus chen*), commemorating the miraculous feats of Buddha and the “Offerings of the Fifteenth (Full Moon) Day” (*bco lnga mchod pa*), another spectacular evening and nocturnal offering and prayer festival replete with numerous popular elements. These are followed by different minor services and ceremonies such as, *inter alia*, the devotional and confessional ceremony called the Brilliant Invocation of the “Glorious Goddess” (*dpal lha'i gzab gsol*), and the more spectacular and processional ceremony known as the “Preparation of the Camp at the Klu-sbug Area” (*klu sbug sgar sgrig*), the “Review at Gr(v)a-phyi” (*gra phyi rtsis bsher*) and the “Casting out of the

² This can be seen in the studies by H. Francke, M. Brauen and M. Aris, on the festivals of Ladakh, West Tibet and, in part, of Bhutan. Similarly, local societies under strong Tibetan influence, such as those occupying numerous valleys of Nepal, the festive occasions are dominated by the annual or seasonal agricultural cycle, such as *dbyar ston*, *dbyar change tshong 'gugs* and *mda' chang*, etc.

Votive Offering for the Great Prayer” (*smon lam gtor rgyag*), the longest and most celebrated event of the entire New Year celebrations.

Where the previous events may be seen as cathartic means or apotropaic devices instituted in order to avert evil influences, the ensuing ceremony of the first month, i.e. the processional “Invitation of Maitreya” (*byams pa gdan ’dren*) terminates the Great Prayer Festival. The last two festivals of the first month are competitive and sportive in nature, namely the so-called “Gallop behind the Fort” (i.e. the Northern Escarpment, Potala; *rdzong rgyab zhabs ’bel, gzhar ’phen*) and the so-called “Sky Archery” (*gnam mda*). The second month in turn is marked by three eventful ceremonies, the “Great Assembly of Worship” (*tshogs mchod chen mo*), commemorating the demise of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, the “Demon-Ransom King” (*glud ’gong rgyal po*), an intriguing scapegoat ritual, where a demon embodying ill-boding sins and calamities is driven out, and finally the “Golden Procession of the Assembly of Worship” (*tshogs mchod (g)ser sbreng*), a pompous circumambulation around the Potala.

The fourth month is highlighted by the “Great Procession” (*chibs bsgyur chen mo*), in which the Dalai Lama on an auspicious day is taken in procession from his winter-palace in Potala to his summer-residence situated in the Norbulingka garden. The fifteenth day of the same month sees the ceremony designated the “Full Moon of the Constellation of Saga” (*sag ga zla ba*), which commemorates the *bodhi* of the Buddha and his attainment of *nirvāna*. This period is devoted to intense prayers, religious observances and, first and foremost, to a grand-scale holy circumambulation around the city (*gling bskor*), involving large crowds of the local population. On the same day, the so-called “Flower Offering at Gung-thang” (*gung thang me tog mchod pa*)³ of Grib (the district lying opposite Lhasa) takes place, a ceremony associated with a local protectress, a fierce form of dPal-ldan lHa-mo, known as dGra-lha chen-mo ’Dod-khams dBang-phyugs-ma. Her consort is Grib rDzong-btsan, the protector deity of Tshe/rTse-mchog-gling of Grib, a dGe-lugs-pa monastery located along the sKyid-chu river. The ceremony consists in essence of a processional encounter between these two divinities. It may perhaps be of some interest to note that a seemingly early text, the biography of Rva Lotsava (rDo-rje-grags-pa), who lived in the XI–XIIth centuries, reports the existence of two local telluric deities (*gzhi bdag*) of the area of sKyid-shod lHa-klu, respectively named Ma-gcig dPal gyi lHa-mo and Grib rDzong btsan-pa. Whatever it may be, it only suggests that the ceremony boasts quite archaic roots.⁴

A newer festival is the “Birthday Festival” (*’khrungs skar dus chen*), in-

³ Mentioned and observed, e.g., by the famous iron-builder Thang-ston[g] rgyal-po (AD 1385–1464), cf. *Thang-ston gnam-thar* (ed. Si-khron mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khañg, 1982, p. 106).

⁴ Cf. *Rva Lotsā-ba’i mam-thar* (ed. Xining, 1989) p. 262; cf. also *IHo-rong chos-’byung*, pp. 178–9 (ed. *Gangs-can rig-mdzod* 26, Lhasa, 1994).

stituted on the fifth day of the fifth month. It allegedly celebrates the birthday of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Dalai Lamas. A few days later, on the eighth, a ceremony takes place (albeit not regularly, in fact only each twelfth year, the monkey-year), called the “Comparison of the Deities at gNas-chun” (*gnas chung lha bsdur*). It includes the spectacular presence of eight spiritually possessed oracle-priests who convene in the courtyard of gNas-chung (adjacent to ’Bras-spungs of lHa-sa), hosted by the leading Tibetan oracle-medium, the gNas-chung chos-skyong. A number of seances by these spirit-possessing media are performed.

Barely a week later, on the fifteenth day, the “Universal Incense-Offering” (*’dzam gling spyi bsangs*) festival is celebrated, which alludes to the founding of the bSam-yas monastery (AD 763–75) during the heyday of Tibet’s dynastic past. It signals the triumphant victory made by Padmasambhava when he subjugated the gods, the *nāgas*, and the local deities of Tibet and eventually turned them into protectors of the Buddhist creed. The burning of incense in their honour from the roofs of every holy site and household and from every hilltop around the city is a celebration of this historic event, but the festival is in actual fact a welcome occasion for popular amusement and picnicking, when the local populace repairs in large numbers to the numerous riverside resorts along the sKyid-chu river and to the several parks and gardens of Lhasa.

The sixth month, another important festive month, is opened by the holy Buddhist ceremony simply known as the “Fourth Day of the Sixth Month” (*drug pa tshes bzhi*). It celebrates the “First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma” (*dharmacakra-pravartana*), signalling the preaching of the Dharma by the Buddha at Sarnath. The day is marked by the peopled devotional visits to the holy sites of Lhasa, for circumambulation and pilgrimage, but as with other religious ceremonies, it too is strongly tinged by a popular or secular imprint, since the Tibetans never fail to avail themselves of the golden opportunity of merrymaking, and therefore turn the rest of the day into one of picnicking, singing, and of making music. Another signal event of this month is the so-called celebration of the “Eighth Dalai Lama’s Birthday” (*rgyal dbang brgyad pa’i ’khrung skar dus chen*), celebrated at sKyid-tshal klusding, west of Lhasa, where a *a-lce lha-mo* theatre and drama company offers performances in honour of the birth-deity of the Eighth Dalai Lama. The performance by the drama troupe is a prelude to one of the most interesting feasts of the year, the “Start of Curd Feast” (*zho ston ’go btsugs*), which commences on the twenty-ninth of this month and lasts well into the following month. This is the musical and theatrical highlight of the year, where troupes and bands of playing and dancing actors perform different highly popular musical dramas, mainly Tibetan adaptations of Buddhist stories or of regular historical events. The plays, possibly conceived of as edifying means, were originally introduced in connection with the partaking of refreshing curds by the monks at the end of their summer-retreat (*dbyar*

gnas), during a period where they had been immured in their monasteries.

The following day the Curd Feast continues, namely at 'Bras-spungs and Se-ra ('*bras spungs dang se ra zho ston*), the two major monastic universities outside Lhasa, where such plays are performed in the courtyards of some of the major colleges. It simultaneously offers an occasion to display the huge *gos-sku* banner, resembling a similar display at Potala in the second month. The main part of the Zho-ston festival, the "Lhasa Curd Feast" (*lha sa zho ston*), runs from the first until the fifth day of the seventh month, days replete with similar performances in the Norbulingka Palace. The tenth day of the month is marked by a minor festival called the Tenth Day Festival at Yer-pa' (*yer pa tshes bcu*), which commemorates the founding of a temple at this hermitage site associated with ICing Srong-btsan sgam-po, allegedly raised simultaneously with Ra-sa 'Phrul-snang, alias Jo-khang. Richardson also reports on a harvest festival, known as the processional "Circumambulation of the Fields around Lhasa" (*lha sa 'ong bskor*). It was undertaken on an auspicious day in the first half of the seventh month. The eighth month is only marked by the bathing season (*chab (b)zhugs*), whereas the ceremony known as the Divine Descent (*lha babs dus chen*) on the twenty-second of the month, commemorates the mythic descent of Lord Buddha from Tuṣita after having paid his mother a visit. The tenth month is similarly a busy period, when the "State Procession and the Assembly" (*chibs bsguyr yar phebs dang tshogs phebs*) which brings the Dalai Lama back from Norbulingka to the Potala Palace again takes place. The fourteenth and fifteenth day of the month are known as the "Mountain Visit of the Glorious Goddess" (*dpal lha'i ri gra or ri khrod*), the Chief Protectress of the Buddhist Creed and of the City of Lhasa. The idol is brought from the Jo-khang in a spectacular and formal procession around the intermediate circuit (*bar bskor*). The twenty-fourth day sees the ceremony called the "Offerings on the Twenty-fourth Day at Se-ra" (*se ra bzhi mchod*), followed by a similar one known as the "Offerings on the twenty-fifth Day at dGa'-ldan" (*dga' ldan lnga mchod*). Finally, the ceremonies of the last month are naturally linked up with the approaching New Year. On the twenty-seventh day a procession to Lhasa is undertaken, called the "Sera Ritual Dagger" (*se ra phur bu*), carrying along the most precious item of Sera, a *kila* ritual dagger with the head of Hayagrīva. The year ebbs away with a grand ceremony denoted the "Votive Offering of the Twenty-ninth Day" (*rtse dgu gtor*). It consists in the main of an elaborate and mystic 'cham performance, intended to purge the accumulated sins and calamities of the past year and to pave the way for the approaching one. Richardson adduces that this is the most intricate and recondite piece of all the ceremonies filling the Lhasa year. The dance is set in the grand eastern courtyard (*bde (db)yangs shar*) of Potala. The *dramatis persons* displayed in this prolonged dramatic dance are the yak-headed *chos rgyal* gShin-rje, the Lord of Death, followed by other pairs of dancers, known as the *mgon po*-s, wrathful protector deities and other messengers, and regarded as a retinue

of the Lord of Death. Finally Black Hat dancers perform. The presumably final ceremony is recorded as taking place on the thirtieth day and is known as the Prayers at Ramoche (*ra che smon lam*).

Without attempting to be churlish or to try to belittle this highly readable book, it may be worthwhile to point out a few minor inaccuracies, all the more so as Richardson, in a laudable attempt to increase the usefulness of the book to his fellow specialist, has already furnished the book with the proper orthography of names and places that occur. On page 11, Richardson writes that the name of the western assembly-hall (*tshoms chen*) in Potala,⁵ the greatest hall in the Dalai Lama's imposing winter palace, and commonly known as Srid zhi[']i phun tshogs, should be understood as "the accumulation of blessings of peaceful existence" but, as is generally known, the binominal compound *srid zhi* should be construed as a dvandva, where *zhi* (= *zhi ba*, *śanti*) is a synonym for *nirvāṇa* (*mya ngan las 'das pa*) and *srid* (= *srid pa*, *bhava*) is a synonym for *samsāra* (*'khor ba*). So the name should rather be taken to mean, "the Hall for the Accomplishment (or Perfection) of (both) Tranquillity and Worldly Existence", which alludes, in all likelihood, to the (absolute and relative) happiness that accrues from these states (*zhi srid' i bde skyid*). On page 20, read *gr(v)a sgrigs*. On pages 91 and 97, one should read *sKyid-tshal klu-sding(s)*.

Finally, to the still insatiable specialist, I shall call attention to additional readings—beyond the ones offered by Richardson in his bibliography—pertinent to the ceremonies and festivals of Tibet (in Tibetan):⁶

Kun-dga': "lHa-sa'i sngar-srol dus-ston gtso-che rigs rags-tsam ngo-sprod byas-pa," *Bod-ljongs zhib-'jug*, 1985, (4), pp. 75–101.

Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan: "Zho-ston", *Bod-ljongs mang-tshogs rig-rtsal*, 1988 (1–2), pp. 64–7.

Khri-drung Blo-bzang thub-bstan: "Bar-skor byang-chub byon-lam gyi dar-chen rnam kyil lo-rgyus", *Bod-ljongs nang-bstan*, 1988 (2), pp. 123–7.

dGa'-ldan dGe-bshes dKon-mchog shes-rab: "Cho-'phrul dus-chen", "Sa-zla'i dus-chen", "Drug-pa tshes-bzhi", "lHa-babs dus-chen", *Bod-ljongs nang-bstan*, 1986, (1), pp. 85–91, 91–8, 98–102, 102–4.

bsTan-pa'i sgron-me: "sNgar-srol lHa-ldan sMon-lam chen-mo'i rjes-'bjrel gtor-rgyag rta-pa'i ya-sor spyi-khyab-pa'i byed-sgo'i ngo-sprod", *Gangs-ljongs rig-gnas*, 1990, (4), pp. 39–50.

Ye-shes 'phrin-las: "Bod-zla bzhi-pa'i lha-sa rdzong-rgyab klu-khang", *sPang-rgyan me-tog*, 1988 (2), pp. 50–1.

——: "lHa-sa'i dus-chen", *sPang-rgyan me-tog*, 1989, (4), pp. 36–51.

⁵ On this hall, cf., e.g., *Pho-brang Po-ta-la'i lo-rgyus phyogs-bsgrigs* (Bod-ljongs mi-dmangs dpe-skrun-khang), Lhasa 1987, pp. 56–60.

⁶ Cf. Per K. Sørensen, *A Provisional List of Tibetological Research-Papers and Articles Published in The People's Republic of China and Tibet*, Nepal Research Centre Publications, No. 17, 1991.

Anonymous: *mChod-sprin gar-rol*. Ed. and publ. Bod rang-skyong mang-tshogs sgyu-rtal-khang dang lHa-sa grong-khyer mang-tshogs sgyu-rtal-khang. Lhasa, 1985, pp. 11-13.

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Brief Notices

Xiao Dengfu, *Daojiao shuyi yu mijiao dianji*. Taipei: Xinwen feng, 1994. pp. 500 (hardbound/paperback).

The importance and centrality of the esoteric tradition within Chinese Buddhism is at long last starting to gain attention among the scholarly community. This recognition has among other things sparked an interest in the accommodation of esoteric Buddhist ritualism in Chinese society, and how these practices were understood and used. The obvious similarities between esoteric Buddhism and Daoism are now becoming widely recognized, and we are slowly beginning to see how the lore and beliefs of these two major traditions converged in a hybrid and popular ritual tradition.

The present study, *Daojiao shuyi yu mijiao dianji* [Daoist Ritual Methods in Esoteric Buddhist Scriptures], is Xiao Dengfu's third book, and has been designed as an introduction to the ways esoteric Buddhism in China assimilated Daoist beliefs and concepts into its ritual lore. As such, this publication is a highly welcome contribution to a relatively little studied aspect of Chinese religion that is nevertheless extremely important. The author's two earlier studies, the *Daojiao yu mijiao* [Daoism and Esoteric Buddhism], and *Daojiao xingdou fuyin yu fojiao mizong* [Daoist Talismanic Seals of the Constellations and the Esoteric School in Buddhism], focus on similar and related issues.

A major part of Xiao's study deals with the corpus of esoteric scriptures as found in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (*T.*). This is both very useful and logical since that collection of Buddhist works is regarded as standard. However, this focus on *T.* also causes problems, since a substantial number of the esoteric texts found therein have slightly dubious origins, and often exist in late Japanese editions only. Hence the reader should beware of this fact, which means that the texts under discussion may not always have been in circulation in China, or even be of Chinese origin. Fortunately the author does not limit himself to scriptures found in *T.*, but also includes several of the texts from Dunhuang in his study. Some of this material is treated for the first time, and Xiao's observations make for interesting reading. Especially the material relating to the use of talismans is significant. The benefits of *Daojiao shuyi yu mijiao dianji* should be obvious to anybody with an interest

in Chinese religion and esoteric Buddhism in particular, and the fact that it focuses on ritual practices makes it even more significant.

On the negative side, one may say that the *Daojiao shuyi yu mijiao dianji* is a very “Chinese” book insofar as it contains no annotation whatsoever. This means that the author has apparently not cared to consult other secondary studies—either in Oriental or in European languages—nor is he very conscientious in providing information on his own references. This is irritating, especially when one wishes to check with the Daoist works from which the Buddhists have borrowed concepts and ritual methods. In addition, neither the author nor the publisher has deemed it necessary to include indexes for technical terms or for the titles of the numerous primary sources the study refers to. This is a shame, since it would have made Xiao’s book much more useful. On the whole, these obvious drawbacks make the book less valuable and attractive as a reference work; however, they do not invalidate it critically.

As it stands, the *Daojiao shuyi yu mijiao dianji* provides a very useful introduction to esoteric Buddhist beliefs and practices as influenced by Daoist lore, and the great number of sources it covers makes it much easier for the interested scholar to gain access to otherwise highly complex and difficult material. For anybody working with Chinese esoteric Buddhism and Buddho-Daoist issues in general, Xiao’s book should not be missed.

(HHS)

Ways of Enlightenment. Buddhist Studies at the Nyingma Institute. Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1993. Paperbound, US\$25.

The present work is a modern recension, consisting of a plethora of Buddhist doctrines and issues relating to practice loosely based on Lama Mipam’s encyclopedic work, the *mKhas-pa’i tshul-la ’jug-pa’i sgo zes-bya-ba’i bstan-bcos* [The Gateway to the Ways of the Learned Ones], also known as the *Khenjug*. It has been compiled by the followers of Tarthang Tulku of the Nyingma Institute in Berkeley as a guide to beginners who wish to gain easy access to the major doctrines and practices of Tibetan Buddhism as taught by the Nyingmapas. It goes without saying that this publication is not meant as a scholarly study, but it does reflect a certain awareness on the part of the compilers to provide the interested reader with reference to the classical works it quotes, as well as indexes and a bibliography.

Although the value of this publication is rather limited when seen from a scholarly point of view, it does contain many important passages excerpted from classical Tibetan and Indian Buddhist works, and for that reason it might prove useful in undergraduate course work. In any case, *Ways of Enlightenment* is largely free of the usual piety that characterizes the vast majority of popular Buddhist books on the market, and as such it may serve

a broader audience of readers as an intelligent introduction to the complex and highly variegated Tibetan Buddhist doctrines. As such it may be said to fulfil the purpose for which it was written.

(HHS)

The Lotus Sūtra. Translated by Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. pp. 352.

This is yet another translation of Kumārajīva's Chinese translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* from AD 406, of which we already have four complete and one partial translation into English. As far as the present translation goes, Burton Watson appears to have done a good job, although, as he himself admits, he has made certain minor changes in order to accommodate the non-scholarly reader (pp. xxiii–v). However, even so, it is personally hard for me to see the justification for publishing yet another translation of this scripture. The logic behind the present translation should undoubtedly be seen from the perspective of the Sōka Gakkai, for which Watson has previously done translations of sectarian scriptures (pp. xxvi–vii). Undoubtedly the sponsors of the present translation did not feel comfortable with the previous translations, and therefore felt a need to have a translation of their own. If there are serious mistakes in the older translations these might have been used as a justification for having a new version made, something which could have been discussed in the introduction: such, however, is not the case. On the contrary, Watson lauds the earlier translations. A modern and fully annotated translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, including a discussion of the historical development of the various versions, related scriptures, and their doctrines, as well as a comparison with the extensive Dunhuang material, would, on the other hand, have been a welcome contribution to the study of this important *sūtra*. As it stands now there is in the opinion of this reviewer no apparent reason for having yet another popular translation of the scripture in question. Both Leon Hurvitz's translation from 1976, and the revised Bunnō Katō translation by Yoshirō Tamura and Kōjirō Miyasaka published in 1975, are very well done. Despite the fact that they deviate on a number of minor points, both are excellent and can be said to render full justice to the original Chinese text.

Watson argues that the reading and interpretation of the *sūtra* is sometimes problematic, due to the fact that its grammar is often oblique. Hence he has chosen to rely on the Japanese *yomikudashi* readings, based on Nichiren's interpretation of the *sūtra* (pp. xxvi–vii). The logic behind such an argument is not easy for me to see. Why would anybody want to translate a scripture written in classical Chinese, from a Japanese edition when there are literally hundreds of highly reliable, nineteenth and twentieth century, punctuated Chinese editions of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* available,

with and without commentaries? The only plausible explanation is that this new translation was made as an explicitly sectarian translation, i.e. commissioned by the Soka Gakkai, so to speak.

When referring to the importance of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, the translator is undoubtedly correct when he says that “East Asian culture cannot be fully understood and appreciated without some knowledge of the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*”—in effect much of medieval culture in China and Japan becomes oblique without it. However, the rather peculiar assertion that it is the “most important Buddhist scripture” will probably only make sense to a follower of the Nichiren Shū or of course the Sōka Gakkai. In any case it is hardly a statement worthy of a serious scholar.

In conclusion it can be said that Watson’s translation does little to alter or change the status of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* in the West, and personally I find this publication quite redundant. However, if the translation, after a close textual analysis—and contrary to Watson’s expressed intent—should turn out to deviate significantly from Kumārajīva’s original, and instead reflect the thought of Nichiren, it will undoubtedly be of value to those who study the way this Japanese arch-sectarian and his later followers tampered with the Buddhist canon.

(HHS)

Heinz Bechert (ed.). *The Dating of the Historical Buddha / Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*. Part 2 (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung, IV, 2). Göttingen 1992. pp. x, 530.

This is the second volume of papers that were read at a symposium on “The Date of the Historical Buddha and the Importance of Its Determination for Indian Historiography and World History”, in Hedemünden, near Göttingen, in 1988. The first volume appeared in 1991.

In addition to the eight papers read at the symposium this volume contains some additional texts on important issues not dealt with during the conference. The contributions are arranged as follows: (1) History of Research; (2) The Date of the Buddha in the Context of Indian Cultural History. (3) Indian Traditions (4) The Theravāda Tradition; (5) Traditions of Later Indian and Tibetan Buddhism; (6) Central Asian and Iranian Traditions; (7) East Asian Traditions; (8) Comparative Traditions; (9) Documents Concerning the History of Research (papers by N. L. Westergaard, T. W. Rhys Davids, J. S. Speyer, *et al.*).

In spite of the huge amount of work that has been devoted to this conundrum, scholars are still far from having reached consensus about the date of the Buddha (see, in particular, S. Dietz’s very convenient survey of the work that was done until 1980, “Die Datierung des historischen Buddha ...”,

op. rec., pp. 11–83). But let us, before we form our own opinion, see what the third volume and its additional studies (in preparation) will bring!

Just one brief momento: What, exactly, do we mean when we speak of the “historical Buddha”? How historical is the “historical Buddha” at all? What is myth, what is history? Where do we draw the line? Are our earliest sources historical at all? Did myth come before history? What is truth, what is fiction? Is Buddhism in fact much older than the “Buddha”? From the first moment our sources begin to flow, the “Buddha”—and the same goes for Mahāvīra and Kṛṣṇa—is presented as a stereotyped semi-divine being, a *bhagavat*. The historical and the mythical Buddha are not necessarily identical. This distinction, obviously, must be quite clear before we can go into the discussion of the “historical Buddha”—if there ever was any such person! In other words, without necessarily discarding the historicity of the Buddha (H. H. Wilson), we should always be very much aware of the mythical character of our earliest sources (E. Senart). The line is, and has always been, extremely difficult to draw. But I cannot see how we can reasonably speak of the “historical Buddha” if we do not.

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Sanskrit-Wörterbuch der buddhistischen Texte aus den Turfan-Funden. Begonnen von Ernst Waldschmidt. Im Auftrag der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen herausgegeben von Heinz Bechert, bearbeitet von Georg von Simson. 3. Lieferung. Göttingen 1982. pp. vii, 161–240. DM52,-.

The third instalment of the *SWTF* (1981, covering the ground from *avadāta-varna* to *ātmadr̥ṣṭipratipakṣārtham*) reached us at such a late date that we can confine ourselves to referring to the reviews by W. Thomas, *Indogermanische Forschungen* 89 (1984), pp. 310–17; O. von Hinüber, *Kratylos* 29 (1984), pp. 166–9; D. S. Ruegg, in *JAOS* 106 (1986), pp. 596–7, and H. Berger, *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 1987, p. 577—all of which were duly taken into account in the *Nachträge* that appeared in instalments 6, 7, and 8, in 1990, 1992, and 1994, respectively (pp. 463–617). Fasc. 5 was reviewed in this journal, *SCEAR* 1 (1988), pp. 106–8. A brief review of fascicles 6-8 (1990, 1992, 1994) will appear in the forthcoming issue of the *Adyar Library Bulletin*.

With regard to the usage of *ācārya* (*op. rec.*, p. 232), in the sense of “Meister, Gelehrter (als Verfasser eines Textes)”, where only one reference (to *Pañvastukavibhāṣa*) is provided, one may also refer to *Abhidharmakośa* and *Tarkajvālā*, *passim*, where the author uses *ācārya*, in the prose, to refer to himself in the verse commented upon. The term *ācārya*, then, can be used by a commentator to refer to the author of the text being commented

upon—even if that author happens to be identical with the commentator. A similar usage is found by Jaina authors, e.g. Haribhadra, *passim*. In such cases it simply means: “I, the author, ...”.

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Untersuchungen zur buddhistischen Literatur. Bearbeitet von Frank Bandurski, Bhikkhu Pāsādika, Michael Schmidt, Bangwei Wang. Sanskrit-Wörterbuch der buddhistischen Texte aus den Turfan-Funden. Beiheft 5. Göttingen, 1994. pp. 203. DM75,-.

The book contains four independent contributions by the four authors mentioned above.

1. Übersicht über die Göttinger Sammlungen der von Rāhula Saṅkṛtyāyana in Tibet aufgefundenen buddhistischen Sanskrit-Texte (pp. 9–126). A meticulous description is given, with much additional information about editions, script, dating, language etc., of the copies of the photographs of Buddhist manuscripts made by the remarkable late Rāhula (1893–1963) in Tibet, 1934–8. The original negatives, often of poor quality, are (or used to be) in Patna, in the IC P. Jayaswal Research Institute. As we now know, nearly all the *original* manuscripts are at present to be found in the Central Institute of Nationalities (including the ones that Rāhula copied by hand only), i.e. Zhongyang Minzu Xueyuan, in Beijing. Unfortunately, it requires more than ordinary skills to procure copies from Beijing, although the facilities to produce such copies are certainly at hand. The whole issue has simply become nauseatingly political.
2. Abhidharma-Zitate aus der Abhidharmakośavyākhyā, der Abhidharma-dīpa-Vibhāṣāprabhāvṛtti und dem Arthavinīścayasūtra-Nibandhana (pages 127–54). The need of making these extracts from later sources is justified by the fact that they belong to the Abhidharma of Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda. As such they constitute some of the textual material of the *SWTF*. Once again, as in the case of his *Kanonische Zitate im Abhidharmakośabhāṣya des Vasubandhu* (cf. also *SCEAR* 2 (1989), pp. 212–13), Bhikkhu Pāsādika has done an excellent job. For quotation #15 (*op. rec.*, p. 15), see also M. Hattori, *Dignāga: On Perception*, Cambridge, Mass., p. 88 (n. 1.36).
3. Zur Schulzugehörigkeit einer nepalesischen Handschrift der Bhikṣuṇī-Karmavācānā (pp. 155–64). This fragment, first edited by La Vallée Poussin in 1920, seems to belong to Mūlasarvāstivāda, rather than to Sarvāstivāda. It is incorporated in *SWTF*, from fasc. 4, but will be excluded from the second volume of *SWTF*.
4. Buddhist Nikāyas through Ancient Chinese Eyes (pp. 165–203). A very

convenient account by Wang Bangwei, of what the Chinese Buddhists knew (or thought they knew) about Indian *nikāya*-s: Dharmaguptakas, Mahāsāṃghikas, Mahāśāsakas, Kāśyapīyas, etc.

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