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Review

Reviewed Work(s): 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 by Mary Brockington: Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures. Proceedings of the Third Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas, September 2002 by Petteri Koskikallio

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Source: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Jan., 2007, Third Series, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Jan., 2007), pp. 81-86

Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25188691>

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the emergence of that of Nizam al-Din as the premier tradition of the three, in part as a consequence of the close association between Nizam al-Din and the Nizam al-Mulk, the founder of Hyderabad State, and in part through Nizam al-Din's association with Chishti circles in north India which are skilfully demonstrated by an examination of the use which Sayyid Ahmad Khan makes of them in his *Athar al-Sanadid* or Traces of the Great (Delhi, 1846). Green then considers the role of the three saintly traditions in the context of political and religious change from 1857 to 1948; he notes among other things the efforts to preserve saintly tradition in the context of the emergence of print media and the replacement of Persian by Urdu, and the uses to which saintly traditions are put as Hyderabad State increasingly projects itself as the champion of Islamic traditions in India. Finally, Green explores the fate of his saintly traditions in independent India: their role for Muslims as a symbol of the now defunct Hyderabad State; their adjustments to cope with a world of increasingly intense Islamic revival and reform; and their re-writing of the past of at least one tradition to reduce its contacts with the wider world of Islam and to portray deeper roots in an Indian past. He concludes, driving home his concern that Sufis must be understood in their quotidian and mundane contexts: "for what was visible in the architecture of the shrines was not a Sufism of abstract themes and metaphysical refinement but a means of writing the epiphanies of local history into the urban fabric of everyday life".

Inevitably, there are some matters that require further explanation. For instance, it is extraordinary that Barelwi *ulama*, who in the context of north India would usually be regarded as "unreformed" and supporters of intercession at saints' tombs and believers in the miraculous powers of their residents, should, in the context of post-independence Awrangabad, be described as "reformist" and opposed to the idea of miraculous events. This said, Green's overall achievement is considerable: he has demonstrated the changing social roles of three Sufi traditions over three hundred years; he has explained how through their responsiveness to political, social and cultural change they were able to survive; and he has established an important new argument concerning relationship between the entanglement of saintly traditions in different pasts and their sacredness – "the collective act of veneration that we know as sainthood may itself be seen as a strategy of cultural memory". Green's conclusions rest on research, which is rooted in deep knowledge of the sources in Arabic, Persian and Urdu, and which shimmers with ideas. This is an unusually accomplished first book.

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STAGES AND TRANSITIONS: TEMPORAL AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORKS IN EPIC AND PURĀNIC LITERATURE. PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND DUBROVNIK INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SANSKRIT EPICS AND PURĀNAS, AUGUST 1999. Edited by MARY BROCKINGTON. pp. Zagreb, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2002.

EPICS, KHILAS, AND PURĀNAS: CONTINUITIES AND RUPTURES. PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD DUBROVNIK INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SANSKRIT EPICS AND PURĀNAS, SEPTEMBER 2002. Edited by PETERI KOSKIKALLIO. Zagreb, Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2005.

doi:10.1017/S135618630633684X

These two handsome volumes continue the series begun in 1999 with *Composing a Tradition: Concepts, Techniques and Relationships* (edited by Mary Brockington and Peter Schreiner). Each volume is fatter than the last, with *Epics, Khilas, and Purānas* topping 700 pages. The triennial, week-long "DICSEP" conference is one of the only international forums dedicated to Sanskrit epic and Purānic texts; because

of this – and no doubt also partly because of its beautiful location – it attracts a high proportion of the internationally distinguished scholars in the field, and its published proceedings, which are selected and regulated by an international editorial board, are indispensable for anyone working with these texts historically. The proceedings are in English, with Croatian summaries of each paper appended, and with useful indexes.

As will be surmised from their titles, each volume (and each conference) focuses on certain key themes. It can hardly be said that each volume provides a sustained, integrated and rounded exploration of its themes, but this is inevitable given the piecemeal nature of the individual contributions, which sometimes announce their own sub-themes in their titles. The papers are sensibly organised according to the approximate chronology of the texts they treat (epics first, Purāṇas later), with footnotes rather than endnotes, and with individual bibliographies at the end of each paper. In each volume a preface surveys and summarises each paper, and a theoretical introduction sets out the key themes and details the papers' various interactions with them. Continuity between volumes is evident in Greg Bailey's providing the introduction for all three, and in each featuring a group of core contributors: fourteen of the twenty-three papers in the third volume are by scholars also featured in one of the previous volumes, and eight scholars have papers in all three volumes.

There is a longstanding methodological tension in the study of the Indian epics, particularly the *Mahābhārata*, which has implications for the whole range of texts covered by the Dubrovnik conference. Bailey remarks in the introduction to *Stages and Transitions* that "Even if several of the papers had not explicitly attempted to locate themselves within the conference theme, an overlap with it was inevitable. The methodological dependence of many of the conference participants on the *text-geschichtliche Methode* and the historicist vision of textual analysis it brings with it, would in any case have guaranteed a significant representation of papers implicitly focusing on stages and transitions" (p. 1). But Bailey says of the historical methodology that its "aim is to understand what lies beyond the text rather than, first and foremost, the literary and compositional features of the text" (p. 7). He also asks, "what is the nature and breadth of the gap between the scholars' view of this kind of literary history and that of the indigenous audiences who are the actual receivers of these texts in the many forms they are transmitted?" (p. 5). The question remains unanswered, since none of the contributors, for all that they obviously number amongst the texts' audiences, are part of "indigenous" ones in the sense intended. But Bailey thoughtfully provokes us right from the start, urging clarity and precision of terminology and imagination, and devising possible synchronic understandings of textual "stages and transitions" which are not much in evidence in the remainder of the volume.

The vast majority of the papers in *Stages and Transitions* concern the *Mahābhārata* or one or another Purāṇic text; the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Harivaṃśa* are under-represented. Andreas Bigger's paper discusses the implications of the Poona Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata*. He argues that lower textual criticism cannot answer the question of whether there was a textual archetype or, as he calls it, a "normative redaction": "What we are facing here is the limitations of philology as such" (p. 28). He also stresses the integrity of vision which individual manuscript traditions can embody, and the importance of the critical apparatus (those elements which occur in some of the various manuscripts but which do not find a place in the critically reconstituted text) for our understanding of historical developments. Bigger thus enshrines the validity of studying history through the Critical Edition, but indirectly problematises the validity of studying the reconstituted text as an artistic unit.

Przemysław Szczurek's paper concerns the "epic layer" of the *Bhagavadgītā* – that is, those parts of it which were integral to the hypothesised proto-*Mahābhārata* before the main body of Kṛṣṇa's teachings were added. Paying particular attention to the previous work of Georg von Simson and Mislav Ježić (with regard to the latter, he remarks on "The objectivity of its philological procedure",

p. 57), Szczurek reconstructs and comments upon the ‘pre-*Gītā*’ and the process of its expansion. Exploration of the latter topic is continued in his paper on “*bhakti* interpolations and additions” in the following volume; neither paper is unpersuasive. Yet while reading the papers in these volumes I have been plagued by a devilish suspicion that some portions of each paper must have been written before some other portions, and that the interpretation of any paper at face value as a unitary and autonomous statement (without attention to its composite nature and the potentially reconstructable diachronic process of its creation) might be a matter deserving some considerable methodological circumspection and scrutiny.

James Fitzgerald’s paper employs a very different approach, and I reproduce Fitzgerald’s own words to summarise it: “It isolates most, if not absolutely all, the instances in the *Mahābhārata* . . . where Rāma Jāmadagnya . . . or his deeds are described or mentioned and it maps the locations of these different forms against a general map of the epic as a whole. It then surveys the major forms these literary instances take, looking at the thread again in the tapestry in which it was woven. Finally, the paper closes with a brief evaluation and discussion of the significance of this thread in the epic as a whole” (p. 89). Fitzgerald shows that the character of Rāma is integrated into the *Mahābhārata* narrative at many different levels, and, by viewing him in light of the wider thematics of genocidal slaughter, he goes some way towards achieving his stated desideratum, “*a convincing reading of the text as a whole*” (p. 92, italics original).

Yaroslav Vassilkov’s fascinating paper surveys the *Mahābhārata*’s “pilgrimage texts” and hypothesises that the text was put into its known form as a result of the interaction, at *tīrthas*, of different types of professional textual performers. If Szczurek’s approach were to be labelled “chronocentric”, Fitzgerald’s “text-centric”, and Vassilkov’s “milieu-centric”, Annemarie Mertens’s approach might be “story-centric”. She contributes a comparative study of fourteen different Purāṇic versions of the story of the death of Satī, which is associated in earlier texts with the story of Dakṣa and his sacrifice, and in later texts with the foundation of various centres of Goddess worship. The transitional process is analysed in an interesting and useful fashion in terms of six identifiable stages through which the story develops and incorporates new aspects, including specific connections to different locations and religious orientations.

The volume from the 2002 conference, *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures*, is most notable in comparison with its predecessors for its section collecting papers on the *Harivaṃśa*, the supplement to the *Mahābhārata* (and the *khila* of the title – the plural is a bit odd). In his introduction to the volume Bailey locates this text at the chronological interface of the epics and the Purāṇas, and considers the generic implications of this position and the opportunities it provides for the exploration and theorising of “continuities and ruptures” in textual and in broader historical terms. Bailey mentions “the reluctance Indologists have traditionally held towards theory construction”, and warns that “we need to be aware of the underlying assumptions of what we are doing in privileging an historicist approach” (p. 2). Indeed, a striking and amusing feature of both volumes is the way that Bailey’s introductions locate themselves at a critical distance from and even deconstruct some of the material they frame. Perhaps there is something of a culture clash embedded between the pages; many of the contributors have previously published in and draw on many scholarly sources in non-English languages, and one may wonder whether the English of the texts might be viewed by analogy with the Sanskrit of the epics and Purāṇas.

The “epics” papers in *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas*, which again rather neglect the *Rāmāyaṇa*, begin with contrasting offerings by Michael Witzel and Alf Hiltebeitel. Witzel assumes from the start that “the *Mahābhārata* is based on bardic materials that accumulated over a long time period” (p. 22) in a process very different from that which apparently produced Vedic texts, which were transmitted “as a sort of tape recording” (p. 25) and which contain in *R̥gveda* 7.18 an “eye witness account” of a

battle which Witzel sees as “the prototype of the *Mahābhārata*” (p. 22). Witzel provides excellent charts detailing the overlap between the *Mahābhārata*’s character genealogies and those in Vedic texts, but his preference for “historical facts” (p. 27) and his exaggerated assumptions about the various traditions of textual production and transmission may seem to overdetermine some of his conclusions, and his sketch of the *Mahābhārata*’s growth and development resembles that of E. W. Hopkins in *The Great Epic of India* over a century ago. Hiltebeitel’s paper by contrast – which includes detailed footnoted engagement with a critique of an earlier draft, produced by Vassilkov as part of the editorial review process – argues that there may not have been “a pre-written *Mahābhārata*” and that the text could have been produced in one or two generations by an authorial “atelier” (pp. 86, 89).

The *Mahābhārata* papers in *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas* also include particularly interesting contributions from Vassilkov (comparing the philosophical positions of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Anugītā*), Klara Gönc Moaçanin (on the text’s culture of dicing for high stakes), and Georg von Simson (exploring the sub-story of Nala and Damayanī as an allegorical “calendar myth” with carefully embedded botanical and meteorological references tracking the cycle of the year). Von Simson has now produced a series of interpretations of Indian narrative texts in light of solar and lunar mythology, and if taken in concert his studies have a distinctive cumulative effect which it is to be hoped will inspire other researchers in future.

The *Harivaṃśa* papers, which cover 140 pages, are a significant milestone in the history of scholarly engagement with that text, which since 1971 has been re-presented by the Poona Critical Edition whose reconstituted text is dramatically shorter than the widely known “vulgate” version commented on in the seventeenth century. These papers follow that of Horst Brinkhaus in *Stages and Transitions* which presented an account of how a (likewise dramatically shorter) “kernel” text expanded through time in order to become the *Harivaṃśa* that the Poona Edition reconstructs – or attempts to (since, as Brinkhaus shows, there is scope for editorial individuality in the process). Brinkhaus’s enthusiasm for the textual history of the *Harivaṃśa* has encouraged the production of an electronic transliteration based on the Poona Edition, which was presented to him at the 2005 Dubrovnik conference and on which much future research will surely depend.

Mary Brockington’s paper charts in detail the points of textual contact between the *Harivaṃśa* (the critical apparatus as well as the reconstituted text) and Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*. She shows that the *Harivaṃśa* is influenced in particular by those portions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* which are often considered to be “late” – that is, crudely, by the material in its first and last *kāṇḍas*, most of which finds no place in the *Mahābhārata*’s story of Rāma Dāśarathi: “We are left [by the *Harivaṃśa*] with the impression of a Rāma (or rather, of a Viṣṇu) who is supreme in all respects . . . focused solely on ridding the world of Rāvaṇa and other troublesome *rākṣasas*, as the purpose of his birth, not as the result of his life” (p. 303).

Peter Schreiner’s paper surveys the *Harivaṃśa*’s treatment of Śiva. He finds that “Śiva is not called *śiva*. He has nothing to do with yoga . . . He is not associated with the *trimūrti* function of destroying the cosmos . . . None of the classical Śaiva myths are extensively related in the *Harivaṃśa*, though cursory references to them makes it clear that they were known . . .” (p. 343). He makes interesting comments concerning an evident “theology of identification” of Rudra and Kṛṣṇa, which may be “the reflection of a situation of social coexistence”, the text having been produced “in a milieu socially and politically dominated by Śaivites” (pp. 343–344).

John Brockington’s paper is best seen as a doublet with his paper in *Stages and Transitions*: both centre on the character of Jarāsaṃdha, the earlier paper in the context of the *Mahābhārata* (where he features in only one main episode), this one in the context of the *Harivaṃśa* (where he appears on several occasions). Brockington analyses the linguistic features of the main *Harivaṃśa* passages dealing with Jarāsaṃdha, and then discusses his narrative role and his relationship to various other literary “bogeymen” (Kāṃsa, Śiśupāla and Kālayavana), and to various political groups in ancient north India.

André Couture's paper deals with the words *yoga* and *yogin* as used in the *Harivaṃśa*'s *Puṣkaraprādurbhāva* section (Critical Edition appendix 41, featuring Viṣṇu's creation-via-navel-lotus and Brahmā's subsidiary cosmogonic adventures). Couture, who has worked extensively on the *Harivaṃśa* (and translated much of it into French), lists and comments on each occurrence of these words and concludes that, despite the text's extended compositional period and various interpolational agendas, *yoga* "never loses its basic meaning of harnessing, linkage, connection" (p. 391), and "The *yogin* appears to be the one who has become . . . as knowledgeable, as powerful and as independent as the sovereign is supposed to be" (p. 408). As such, these words serve as useful examples through which to explore the *Harivaṃśa* as a continuous and coherent textual tradition.

Elsewhere in *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas*, the papers concentrating on the Purāṇas feature several addressing the issue of "frame stories", that is, stories which set out the context in which another, embedded narrative was allegedly previously told. The epics and Purāṇas abound in such frame stories, and sometimes frame similar narratives very differently, allowing those narratives to be presented in differing perspectives. Renate Söhnen-Thieme follows up her study of the well-framed *Devī-Māhātmya* (in *Stages and Transitions*) with a paper on "Frame Stories, Layers of Interlocution, and Ultimate Authority", which focuses principally on *Harivaṃśa* 11–19 and its relationship with various Purāṇas. There are also interesting contributions from, amongst others, Sandra Smets (on the *Jaiminīyaśaṃhitā*'s refashioning of the *Mahābhārata*'s story of Kauśika, the *pativratā*, and the hunter), Paolo Magnone (on the *Śivadharmottara-Purāṇa*), and Eva de Clerq (on "The Jain Rāmāyaṇa-Purāṇa").

Angelika Malinar's paper, acknowledging that of Freda Matchett in the previous volume, compares the versions and functions of the story of Parikṣit in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* and the *Devībhāgavata-Purāṇa*, and demonstrates their inter-textual relationships. The paper is sophisticated and fascinating in many ways, but it throws up methodological and terminological issues which might usefully be mentioned here. When discussing the *Mahābhārata*, Malinar separates the Pāṇḍava narrative out from the various frame stories and suggests that the latter "reflect stages in the transmission and composition of the MBh" (p. 468), despite the fact that the only known ancient *Mahābhārata* – the reconstructed Poona text – features all the frame stories in question. She seems to see the frame stories as representing the types of uses to which a pre-existing Pāṇḍava narrative was put in the years between its production and that of the *Mahābhārata* as we now know it. The specific methodological difficulty here is that the approach depends on a certain interpretation of *Mahābhārata* 1.1.50, where Ugrāśrava, a character within the text, says that "the Bhārata" can be recited "beginning with Manu", "beginning with Āstika", or "beginning with Uparicara" (that is, apparently, with various of its initial portions omitted). Perhaps more telling is the terminological result: formulations such as "the epic", "the epic story" and "the *Mahābhārata*" are used by Malinar (albeit with negligible loss of clarity) sometimes to denote the text as normally understood – the Pāṇḍava narrative plus the frames—and sometimes to denote the Pāṇḍava story on its own. Admittedly the use of the first two terms in something approaching this latter sense has some history, for at one time the application of the term "epic" to the *Mahābhārata* depended on a perceived resemblance between so-called epic texts in other languages and the martial narrative sections of the *Mahābhārata*, which were – perhaps not unconnectedly – presumed to be older than its "didactic" sections (Hopkins's infamous "pseudo-epic"). However, the word "epic" has long been used to refer to the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* in their entireties, and one might naturally be loath to understand the text on the assumption that much of its first book is somehow secondary or adventitious. When, for example, Malinar writes that "The story of the Bhāratas is not made to end up with Janamejaya's and Parikṣit's fate" (p. 479), one might counter that on the contrary, the way the *Mahābhārata* is arranged and presented makes it clear that the Bhārata story *does* end up with the events of the frame story several generations after the Pāṇḍavas. Is one not to take this as one's starting point, and view the so-called frames as integral parts of one extended story

(as one might do, for example, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)? These considerations also draw attention to the use of the word "epic" as a genre category in the title of the Dubrovnik conference and publications: it should be noted – for all that it is widely known – that the Sanskrit tradition tends to categorise the *Mahābhārata* predominantly as *itihāsa* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* as (*Ādi*)*kāvya*.

In conclusion, it should be reiterated that the studies collected in these two volumes constitute a major contribution to scholarship on the *Mahābhārata*, the *Harivaṃśa*, and various Purāṇas. In all cases the data collected and painstakingly tabulated are not just in service to the contributor's particular interpretations and conclusions, but will be of use to other scholars for a wide variety of research purposes. And if there is evidence within these volumes of a certain persistent methodological squeeze, this can also be read as evidence of the timeliness and vitality of the ongoing Dubrovnik project, whose publications will no doubt continue to be in the vanguard of the scholarly exploration of these marvellous texts, and to whose organisers, editors and contributors the international academy owes a sizeable debt of gratitude.

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THE EMPIRE OF THE QARA KHITAI IN EURASIAN HISTORY. BETWEEN CHINA AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD. By MICHAL BIRAN. pp. 279. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

THE MONGOLS IN IRAN: CHINGHIZ KHAN TO ULJAYTU 1220–1309. By JUDITH KOLBAS. pp. 414. London and New York, Routledge, 2006.  
doi:10.1017/S1356186306346846

The two books under review are notable additions to the recent wave of monographs on ancient and medieval Eurasian history, among which we should mention George Lane's *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth Century Iran* (2003), Peter Jackson's *The Mongols and the West* (2005), Thomas Allsen's *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (2006) and the volume *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World*, edited by Victor Mair (2006). Undoubtedly the student of medieval Inner Asia has at his or her disposal today a much more substantial number of studies than were available only five or six years ago. Both books respond to the need to fill gaps in our present knowledge and to focus on issues and concerns that have so far been overlooked or under researched.

Michal Biran's work on the Qara Khitai is, and will stay for many years, the standard reference on this little known but critical period of Inner Asian history. Showing sensitivity and receptivity to new research on medieval Inner Asia, and especially to Thoman Allsen's theoretical contribution, the book is divided into two parts, the first dedicated to political history, the second to "aspects of cultural and institutional history". The first part presents a tripartite organisation of the history of the Western Liao (or Qara Khitai): its establishment, a short period of relatively peaceful existence, and its downfall after the Liao dynasty (907–1125) came under attack and eventually succumbed to the rising power of the Jurchen – founders of the Jin dynasty in China – a group of Khitans under the leadership of Yelü Dashi moved West to today's Xinjiang and Transoxiana, where in 1142 they established a kingdom whose territory spanned from the Oxus to the Gobi desert. Eventually the sophisticated empire the Khitan refugees created was wiped out by the Mongol onslaught in 1218. No other extant history provides as lucid and an account as reliable of the history of the Qara Khitai as Biran's does. The author's ability to draw on an enormous array of sources, and surely on all the most important ones in Chinese, Arabic,