



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures* by Petteri Koskikallio

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ship of Sanskrit and Tamil literary forms and images, a discussion that has, in other circles, often been unfortunately tinged by Dravidian political aspirations. The study of the modern Tamil novel emerges with a certain robustness from this volume, with four excellent essays examining either particular novels and authors or thematically ranging over a number of narratives: Indira Viswanathan Peterson's "Śaiva Religion and the Performing Arts in a Tamil Novel: Kalaimaṇi's *Tillāṇā Mōkaṇāmpāl*," R. E. Asher's "Vaikom Muhammed Basheer: Freedom Fighting into Fiction," Chantal Delamour's "La Poésie des 'Vies Minuscules' dans *Kaṇivu*, Recueil de Nouvelles de Vannadasan," and Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi's "Facing Death in Modern Tamil Literature." While the literary traditions of the Caṅkam, *bhakti*, and modern periods are well represented, David Shulman, in his "Notes on *Tillaikkalampakam*," rightly notes one of the major gaps in contemporary understanding of the history of Tamil literary culture: "there is perhaps no period in the history of Tamil literature so neglected as the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries—the period following the final collapse of the Cōḷa state" (p. 158).

The ten essays grouped under "Studies in Language and History of Language Description" cover a vast amount of ground, from Kamil Zvelebil's "Prolegomena to an Etymological Dictionary of the Iṟula Language" to Thomas Lehmann's discussion of pronouns in Old Tamil and Peter Schalk's refutation of the derivation of *īlam* from *sihaḷa*. Herman Tieken, in "The Nature of the Language of Caṅkam Poetry," explores his controversial thesis that Caṅkam literature, far from representing the earliest, turn-of-the-common-era work that has come down to us, is actually a much later "artificial" language that quite deliberately avoids Sanskrit loanwords and various Tamil grammatical forms. Sheldon Pollock's excellent study of the ninth-century Kannada *Kavirājamārga*—"A New Philology: From Norm-bound Practice to Practice-bound Norm in Kannada Intellectual History"—points to several important areas for Tamil and South Indian studies more generally to pursue: the history of South Indian languages and literatures beyond Tamil, the placement of particular texts and authors in the broader sweep of South Indian intellectual history, and "the larger environment in which [such] cultural-historical changes were occurring" (p. 405).

The next ten essays, on the theme of "Studies in History, Epigraphy, and Archaeology," cover an even wider range of materials, with a number of compelling inscriptional studies, from Sascha Ebeling's report on the progress of DASI (the Digital Archive of South Indian Inscriptions) to Leslie Orr's consideration of Cōḷa temple processions and G. Vijayavenugopal's contention that newly uncovered inscriptions from Kūvaṇūr reveal evidence of tenth-century tantric practice among Tamil-speaking Jains. One hopes, of course, that at some future point the clear lines drawn here separating literary texts, language, archaeological remains, and epigraphy will blur, and the textual and material record will together yield a more richly woven tapestry of historical understanding.

The final section of miscellaneous essays includes a number of fascinating studies, among them Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmaniam's examination of the sixteenth-century Vijayanagara emperor, Krishnadevaraya, and his Telugu *Āmukta-mālyada*, and U. Niklas' work on the ancient Tamil rite of bull-baiting as a modern Christian practice.

Taken together, the essays in *South-Indian Horizons* show the field of Tamil studies to be alive and well, taking steps in new directions (even outside the Tamil-speaking region proper), exploring new genres (such as the modern novel), and reflecting self-consciously and theoretically on the areas of study yet to be explored (particularly in the case of Shulman and Pollock).

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Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures. Edited by PETERI KOSKIKALLIO. Zagreb: CROATIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS, 2005. Pp. xxviii + 683.

In 2002, the same year in which the proceedings of the second Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas were published, the DICSEP group met for the third time

in Dubrovnik. The group was larger than in 1999—there were now twenty-three contributors; the text of the resulting volume is longer—sixty-seven percent longer, to be precise.

In some ways this volume continues the tradition established by the two earlier ones. The general editor—Mislav Ježić replacing Radoslav Katičić—sets the stage with a preface that comments on every article in greater detail than is possible in this review. For the third time Greg Bailey writes the introductory chapter. There are again two exhaustive indexes, one of all passages cited (pp. 611–34), and one general index (pp. 635–60). Finally, Croatian summaries of all papers—except Bailey’s initial one—prepared by Mislav Ježić, complete the volume (pp. 661–79).

New is the extension of research on the epics and *purāṇas* far into the past. In the longest essay of the volume (pp. 21–80), Michael Witzel examines in detail “The Vedas and the Epics: Some Comparative Notes on Persons, Lineages, Geography, and Grammar.”

The most striking novelty of DICSEP 3, no doubt, is that, “due to the impulse given by the work of Horst Brinkhaus” (p. xi; Brinkhaus was the sole contributor on the *Harivaṃśa* in DICSEP 2, pp. 157–76; in DICSEP 1 the *Harivaṃśa* was hardly mentioned), in between nine articles on the epics (only one of these on the *Rāmāyaṇa*) and eight on the *purāṇas*, there are now six contributions under the heading “*Harivaṃśa*, the *Khila*,” which “attracted the contributions of the most prominent *Rāmāyaṇa* scholars at DICSEP 3” (p. xiv): Mary Brockington (on the absent presence of Rāma Dāśarathi), Peter Schreiner (on Śiva in the *Khila*), John Brockington (on Jarāsaṃdha; cf. his article in DICSEP 2, pp. 73–88), Horst Brinkhaus (on duplicates in the Somavaṃśa account), André Couture (on the words *yoga* and *yogin*), and Christopher Minkowski (on Nilakaṇṭha’s *Harivaṃśa* commentary). For a team of scholars so far mainly concerned with the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* on the one hand, and the *purāṇas* on the other, no text could better serve the theme of their third conference, “Continuities and Ruptures,” than the *Harivaṃśa*.

One continuing concern about the vast body of texts discussed at the DICSEP meetings is that of tracing both the origin of the texts and their subsequent evolution into their present form. In connection with the *Mahābhārata*, for example, Witzel illustrates evolution by distinguishing seven successive layers, from “the initial, Ṛgvedic Bharata battle” to “the final redaction under the Guptas, or rather under King Harṣa, at the beginning of the 7th century CE” (pp. 68–70). Others look for original texts—or “the” original text—mainly of the *purāṇas*. Christophe Vielle’s study of the *Vāyu-* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas* (pp. 535–60) is subtitled “Preliminary Remarks towards a Critical Edition of the [lost original] *vāyuprokta Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*.” Peter Bisschop’s “The *Nirukti* of Kārohaṇa in the *Skandapurāṇa*” (pp. 561–74) deals with a textcritical problem he encountered while participating in the edition of “the original *Skandapurāṇa*” of the Groningen project.

Another yet unresolved problem is one that Alf Hiltebeitel addresses directly in “Weighting Orality and Writing in the Sanskrit Epics” (pp. 81–111). Hiltebeitel’s views in favor of an original written *Mahābhārata* are not new: “My cards have . . . been on the DICSEP table since at least . . . my 1997 paper” (“Reconsidering Bhṛguization,” DICSEP 1, pp. 155–68), “and they are now declared all the more so since my more recent book, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata* (2001), makes further arguments in favor of writing” (p. 82). He acknowledges, though, that his paper at the first DICSEP—he did not contribute to DICSEP 2—met with “sympathy for my views only from a small number of participants” (p. 81). Even now, when in accordance with the editorial review policy of DICSEP 3, his manuscript was sent to Yaroslav Vassilkov, “long an advocate of archaic oral epic behind the *Mahābhārata*,” he received a five-page single-spaced commentary (p. 81 n. 1). The result, in this volume, is a lively dialogue between Hiltebeitel and Vassilkov and other advocates of applying oral theory to the Sanskrit epics (starting, according to Vassilkov, but downplayed by Hiltebeitel, with Murray Emeneau’s 1958 article, “Oral Poets of South India—The Todas,” *Journal of American Folklore* 71: 312–24). Equally instructive is Hiltebeitel’s extensive bibliography on the oral-versus-written controversy (pp. 107–11). Hiltebeitel’s plea in favor of a written original does not, however, prevent other contributors to this volume from taking the oral origin of the epics as a fact that needs no justification: Klara Gönc Moaçanin, for example, remarks without further comment: “The *Mahābhārata*, as we have it, is a written epic, a literary work, but it has been developed out of an oral tradition, which at least in its kernel was a heroic epic” (p. 162).

In addition to Hiltebeitel, other contributors, too, argue against ideas put forth by earlier or more recent predecessors. To quote Klara Gönc Moaçanin again, in her study of *dyūta* in the *Sabhāparvan*

(pp. 149–67) she argues mainly with Hans van Buitenen and Jan Held, to acknowledge in the end that “no final solution for the problem of the *dyūta* is presently possible” (p. 162). Muneo Tokunaga, “an analyst, but not without conditions” (p. 169), enters into the controversy regarding the didactic portions of the *Mahābhārata*, between the “analysts” represented almost solely by Joseph Dahlmann, and the “synthesists” or “excavationists” such as E. W. Hopkins and Moriz Winternitz. And Yaroslav Vassilkov (pp. 221–54) intervenes in the opposing views of Arvind Sharma and Madhav Deshpande on the mutual relation of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Anugītā*.

As he did in DICSEP 2 (p. 202), Bailey again raises the question of the audience the texts scrutinized at the Dubrovnik meetings were meant to reach. He notes that “Indologists themselves have assumed the role of the missing link, the reader/hearer” (p. 3). One might even go farther, and say that “Western” Indologists (in this volume, seventeen Europeans, four North Americans, one Australian, and one Japanese) have taken over the role of the Indian clientele. When the general editor, with justifiable pride, describes DICSEP 3 as a meeting of “scholars from all over the world” (p. xi), I cannot help reflecting that scholars from one relevant part of the world are indeed missing. To be sure, contributions by Indian scholars are quoted in the text, but, even then, far less often than those of their Western counterparts: except as editors of the critical editions (V. S. Sukthankar et al., P. L. Vaidya, and G. H. Bhatt et al.), no Indian scholars are included in the “Frequently-cited works” (p. xxv). As for the background and techniques of the numerous Indians who, for centuries, have transmitted—and shaped—epic and puranic stories, and the reactions of the even larger audiences, the study of the role these two classes of participants have played in the history of the two major epics, the *Harivaṃśa*, and the *purāṇas* appears to be left in the domain of historians, anthropologists, and folklorists.

Databases play an ever increasing role as tools in the study of Sanskrit texts. The General Editor notes that, “[a]s a side product of the focus on the *Harivaṃśa*, a group of participants coordinated by Peter Schreiner has produced an electronic edition of the text based on the Pune Critical Edition” (p. xi). Also, James Fitzgerald presents an outline and a specimen of a new database that is in the process of development: a database for mapping and studying the non-*anuṣṭubh* portions of the *Mahābhārata* (pp. 137–48).

The contributors I have had no occasion to mention so far are Georg von Simson (on the *Nalopākhyāna* as a calendar myth), Przemyslaw Szczurek (on *bhakti* additions to the *Bhagavadgītā*), Mislav Ježić (whose article complements, for the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Witzel’s notes on the structure of the *Mahābhārata*), Renate Söhnen-Thieme (on frame stories and layers of interlocation in the *purāṇas*), Angelika Malinar (on king Parikṣit, to illustrate the relationship between the *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas*), Greg Bailey (on the *pravṛtti-nivṛtti* chapters in the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*), Sandra Smets (on the story of Kauśika in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*), Paolo Magnone (with a survey of the *Śivadharmottarapurāṇa*, which indeed, for some unknown reason, never reached the printed version of my *The Purāṇas*), and Eva De Clercq (with the sole contribution on the Jaina *purāṇas*).

The editing—and general presentation—of the volume, as of the previous ones, is superb. One misprint may be noted here: in the General Index Ernst Leumann appears as “Laumann,” an is alphabetized accordingly.

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Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture. By RONALD M. DAVIDSON.
New York: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2005. Pp. xvi + 596. \$75. (cloth), \$32.50 (paper).

Everything you know is wrong. That phrase, a section heading for Ronald Davidson’s previous book *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, could be an alternative subtitle for this new study. In the most striking iconoclastic moment in the book, Davidson brings to light a previously neglected document that casts doubt upon the great translator Marpa’s relationship with the Indian siddha Nāropā. This relationship is fundamental to the Kagyü lineages, and Davidson’s challenge to the traditional accounts feels like a