
The modest title rather conceals the extraordinary richness of this book, which deals with the fate and development of texts and their manuscripts in course of time: “Talking texts, about texts, around texts” as the introduction aptly states.

The 31 participants of the colloquium, who are enumerated at the end of the book, contributed in various ways to the wide range of means and methods of sound philology to retrieve as far as possible the position of a text in its original form and context or in the context of different interpretations in course of its transmission. Consequently, the much neglected study of commentaries figures prominently in some the contributions.

After a brief general introduction by F. Gros, the series of articles starts with a survey of Śaivism, Pañcarātra and Buddhist Yoginī tantras by A. Sanderson, which seems to comprise all that is known (and much more) about this particular kind of literature. If the reader does not feel disencouraged by the awe inspiring scholarship of this comprehensive introduction to and presentation of the present state of research on this topic and continues, he will be richly rewarded.

The following article by M. Hahn is an exercise in editing texts from a single surviving manuscript, in this particular case Candragomin’s Śiṣyalekha, by the help of secondary sources such as translations etc. R. Steiner provides those, who do not read German, with a translation of a chapter of the introduction to his thesis on the thorny problems faced when editing Prakrit passages in Indian dramas.1 The next two contributions by F. Grimal and D. Goodall deal with commentaries on Kāvyā. While F. Grimal discusses the aims of commentaries on more general lines,2 and thus drawing attention to a much neglected field of

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2 The topic of commentaries has been taken up again by a second symposium of the Institut Français at Pondichéry in February 2005 to mark the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

After one contribution on Tamil and two in Sanskrit: T. V. Gopal Iyer: Naccinärkkäniyär’s interpretations on Kalittokai; A. Sarma: neranausttāravyākhyānasamāikṣā and N. S. Ramanuja Tatacharya: vākyavākyārthaśicāraḥ, the latter with an English summary: “An inquiry into sentence and sentence-meaning,” two further articles are devoted to various problems of translating texts: S. H. Phillips on “ellipsis and propositional anaphora in Gaṅgeśa’s Tattvacintāmani” and G. Bailey on “translating from Sanskrit and translation of culture,” who makes his point by the help of well chosen examples from Purāṇas and Kāvyas. Another pair of articles is united by a common topic: S. Subrahmanyam and D. Shulman discuss various aspects of the legend of Raja Desingu, the hero connected to the fortress of Gengji, who also figures in another recent publication of the Institut Français de Pondichéry: Jean Deloche, Sinji (Gingi). Ville fortifiée du pays tamoul. Pondichéry 2000 [rev.: IIJ 47, 2004, p. 135–137].

Lastly, H. Bakker demonstrates how certain aspects of Śiva worship can only be understood by interpreting textual and visual sources, emphasizing the necessity to adduce primarily sources, which are contemporary to each other, an advice much needed given the situation that visual material is not rarely interpreted by texts, which are separated by centuries from sculptures or reliefs, which they are supposed to explain.


Seven abstracts of contributions to the conference, which on account of various circumstances could not be included in the present volume, are collected at the end.

It is a pity that the concluding address by Michel Zink, holder of the chair of mediaeval literature of France at the Collège de France, winding up the conference and “widening the horizon” by comparing the commentarial tradition of mediaeval Europe (p. III), has not been included into their present volume. To a certain extent this gap might be filled by