ACTA ORIENTALIA

EDIDERUNT

SOCIETATES
ORIENTALES DANICA FENNICA
NORVEGIA SVECIA

CURANTIBUS
LEIF LITTRUP, HAVNIÆ
HEIKKI PALVA, HELSINGIÆ
ASKO PARPOLA, HELSINGIÆ
TORBJÖRN LODÉN, HOLMIÆ
SAPHINAZ AMAL NAGUIB, OSLO
PER KVÆRNE, OSLO
WOLFGANG-E. SCHARLIPP, HAVNIÆ

REDIGENDA CURAVIT
CLAUS PETER ZOLLER

LXXIX

Contents

ARTICLES

- STEFAN BOJOWALD: Zu einigen Beispielen für den Wegfall von „H“
in der ägyptischen Sprache 1
- STEFAN BOJOWALD: Zu den Schreibungen des ägyptischen Wortes
„ꜥwH . t“ „Ei“ 15
- ILIJ ČAŠULE: New Burushaski etymologies and the origin of the
ethnonym Burúšo, Burúśaski, Brugaski and Miśáski 27
- HONG LUO: Whence the Five Fingers? A philological investigation
of *Laghukālacakratāntra* 5.171–173ab as quoted in sMan bla don
grub's *Yid bzhin nor bu* 73
- MICHAEL KNÜPPEL: Zwei Briefe Philipp Johann von Strahlenbergs
an Curt Friedrich aus den Jahren 1723 und 1724 111
- RAJU KALIDOS: Caturviṃśati-Mūrti forms of Viṣṇu Additional
notes on Daśāvatāra and Dvādaśa 133

REVIEW ARTICLE

- CLAUS PETER ZOLLER: “Pagan Christmas: Winter feast of the Kalasha
of the Hindu Kush” and the true frontiers of ‘Greater Peristan’ 163

BOOK REVIEWS

- KNUTSON, JESSE ROSS. *Into the twilight of Sanskrit Court Poetry. The
Sena Salon of Bengal and Beyond*, reviewed by Stella Sandahl 379

BOOK REVIEWS

Knutson, Jesse Ross. *Into the twilight of Sanskrit Court Poetry. The Sena Salon of Bengal and Beyond.* University of California Press, Berkeley 2014, 212 p.

The origin of this book is Knutson’s Columbia thesis. Apart from the Introduction and Conclusion there are three chapters treating three poets: Govardhana and Jayadeva, both writing in Sanskrit, and Baḍu Candidās who writes in Old or Middle Bengali, total text 124 pages plus 37 pages of notes, and bibliography and index (pp.195-210).

There are four valuable appendixes. Appendix A: “The Complete Verses Attributed to the Sena Kings”, 20 taken from the *Saduktikarṇāmṛita* and 2 from the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* (pp. 125-131). 12 of these are attributed to Lakṣmanasena, the most famous of the Sena kings. It would have been helpful if dates had been provided for the five Sena kings, or has chronology gone out of fashion? Appendix B: “The Complete Verses Attributed to Govardhana (not found in the *Āryāsaptaśatī*)”, a total of seven verses, six of them from the *Saduktikarṇāmṛita* (pp.133-135). Appendix C is the most interesting: “The Complete Verses Attributed to Jayadeva (Not Found in the *Gītagovinda*)”, 29 verses, 26 from the *Saduktikarṇāmṛita* (pp.137-145) and, finally, Appendix D: “*Gītagovinda*-Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana Correspondences” (pp.147-151).

It may seem odd to highlight the appendixes first in a review, but this is where Knutson excels: finding, transliterating and translating Sanskrit and middle Bengali texts. His translations are very good, although sometimes a bit contrived. But why Eros for Kāma?

However, the rest of the book presents several problems. Starting with the subtitle “*The Sena Salon of Bengal and Beyond*”. It seems anachronistic to talk about a Sena ‘salon’. The word ‘salon’ evokes literary gatherings prevalent among the upper classes in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. It seems both inadequate and pretentious to apply the word to medieval India. And in what urban centre in Bengal was this ‘salon’ located? All this seems based upon one single verse by Jayadeva, enumerating four other contemporary poets, viz. Umāpati, Śaraṇa, Govardhana, and Dhoyin (Gīt. I.4). All of them, along with Jayadeva, seem to have been patronized by Lakṣmaṇasena and could have known each other, but did they ever meet as a ‘salon’?

There are some 21 references – along with lengthy quotations – to Sheldon Pollock in this rather slim volume. This is of course understandable, since Pollock was the supervisor of this thesis. Otherwise Knutson is not very generous with acknowledging sources he has drawn on. Chapter 3 is devoted to Jayadeva, primarily to his poem the *Gītagovinda* (pp. 72-88, notes pp.180-184). In a long footnote Knutson enumerates several scholars who have discussed the *Gīt.* (p.180, note 1) without mentioning the only existing monograph of the *Gītagovinda*, namely mine, published 1977: Stella Sandahl-Forgue: *Le Gītagovinda. Tradition et innovation dans le kāvya*, henceforth referred to as SS-F. Knutson refers to it once – and rather dismissively – in one brief footnote: “Stella Sandahl-Forgue scanned all the meters, noting that one of them corresponds to the Bengali *payar*.” (p.182, note 18), reducing 30 pages of comprehensive metrical analysis to one single observation (see SS-F *La Métrique*, pp. 91-121 – twice the length of Knutson’s entire Jayadeva chapter). Knutson even misquotes the title of the book, and misspells the name of the publisher (it is Wiksell, not Wiskell).

In this 16 pages long Jayadeva chapter Knutson presents several ‘discoveries’: He affirms that “The songs ... can be easily understood by someone who knows virtually no Sanskrit ... some Sanskrit vocabulary would have been well within the grasp of someone who was completely illiterate or unlearned in eastern India or Bengal about eight hundred years ago. ” (Knutson p. 80, cf. p.82) One would have expected a reference here to SS-F pp. 17-18 “Le Sanskrit du Gīt., tout au moins celui des chansons, était sans doute facilement compréhensible même par ceux qui n’étaient pas instruits” and SS-F.

p. 156 "...Jayadeva a écrit pour être compris, même par ceux qui n'étaient peu, ou n'étaient pas du tout, versés dans la langue sanskrite."

Knutson discusses the influence of vernacular poetry on Jayadeva's Sanskrit. In particular the so-called '*bhaṇita*' which means that the poets "sign" their compositions by inserting their own names, usually in the last stanza. This was indeed something new in Sanskrit literature. It was most likely taken over from the vernacular poetry where it was the norm. The word *bhaṇita* itself appears in 13 of the 24 *Gīt.* songs, but Jayadeva mentions his own name in all the 24 songs, and also in a few of the traditional *kāvya* stanzas (see my Index Verborum, SS-F pp.209-268). This novelty in Sanskrit poetry was already pointed out by me (see SSF p, 128-9), something Knutson has chosen not to mention.

Knutson seems to have been rather bewildered by the *Gīt.* – the word 'peculiar' appears several times applied to Jayadeva's poem. Knutson's judgement of Jayadeva's Sanskrit is rather contradictory: on p. 110 he talks about "the quasi-high Sanskrit represented by the *Gītagovinda*" and fourteen lines later "high literature intertext (*Gītagovinda*)..." How can "quasi-high Sanskrit" become "high literature" (presumably in classical Sanskrit) fourteen lines later?

There is nothing peculiar whatsoever in Jayadeva's songs or in the *kāvya* verses, unless Knutson believes that innovation is something peculiar.

Since Knutson has taken most his information about the *Gīt.* from me without proper references, one is tempted to suspect he has also pillaged other authors for the remaining chapters.

All through the book Knutson tries to oppose high vs. low, urban-cosmopolitan vs. rustic, vulgar vs. sophisticated, all this is a twisted language deploying all the trendy verbiage one expects from a 2nd year undergraduate in literary studies (metapoetics, intertextuality, inflectional elaborateness, etc. etc.). To give some examples: "The juxtaposition of incongruous registers likewise enables reflexion on the structure and composition of incongruity itself..." (p.49); or "The literary cultural present from which we look on this reflected past is unthinkable without this very past..." (p.2) – who would have suspected that the present is connected with the past?

Or statements like this: "Pollock's own account, in its depth and subtlety, itself more than adequately reveals the very contradictoriness

I am trying to point out, but accounts of the life of Sanskrit poetry smaller in scale may hold the strongest potentials for penetrating the veil of surface homogeneity, showing how the “world within a world” was never really closed to the world without. A reduced scale, or even microhistorical inquiry, can allow us to more closely define particular state forms as they interacted dialectically with literary forms, to address an array of details of political history that pertain to the study of Sanskrit literature.” (p. 46).

Knutson unnecessarily makes his sentences and utterances much more elaborate than they need to be for what he wants to say. Curiously, the footnotes, which contain factual information, are much better reading than the actual text.

However, Knutson’s excellent command of Sanskrit deserves praise, and he is obviously a hard worker.

Stella Sandahl
University of Toronto