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BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN / COMPTES RENDUS

ON THE METHOD OF INTERPRETING PHILOSOPHICAL SANSKRIT TEXTS:

CLAUS OETKE: *Zur Methode der Analyse Philosophischer Sūtratexte. Die pramāna Passagen der Nyāyasūtren.* Reinbek: Inge Wezler, 1991. (Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik, Monographie 11.) 86 pp.

ANDREW P. TUCK: *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship, On the Western interpretation of Nāgārjuna.* Oxford University Press, 1990. x, 127 pp.

Much is being written about hermeneutics these days. Yet few books come out that deal with the specific questions of interpretation that confront the Indologist who studies philosophical Sanskrit texts. The two books under review, however, do deal with these questions, even though it is from altogether different points of view and with completely different results.¹ It will be interesting to study them side by side.

A.P. Tuck's *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship* presents a survey of modern Nāgārjuna studies. The titles of three of the four chapters of the book leave no doubt as to the point its author wants to make. They are: "Nineteenth-century German idealism and its effect on second-century Indian Buddhism"; "Analytic India"; "Buddhism after Wittgenstein". If these titles - as well as some of the contents of these chapters - sound somewhat ironic, they do draw attention to the prejudices and presuppositions that have always influenced scholars in their work and are likely to continue doing so in the future. Tuck speaks in this connection of isogesis, which he defines as "a 'reading into' the text that often reveals as much about the interpreter as it does about the text being interpreted" (p. 9-10). Isogesis, Tuck further explains, is an unconscious phenomenon that is to be distinguished from exegesis, which is conscious intent. All this is very interesting, not only for the philosopher but also for the philologist who studies Indian texts. The latter in particular

1 For some earlier reflections on the methodology of interpreting technical Sanskrit texts, I refer to the Introduction of my *Tradition and Argument in Classical Indian Linguistics* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986).

will wish to know how he can avoid repeating the mistakes of his predecessors. Tuck describes this aspiration in the following passage (p. 13):

... scholars for the past two centuries have defied the isogetical nature of their work by attempting to put aside their own prejudices and presuppositions. By attending as carefully as possible to lexical questions, historical detail, and the accumulation of more and yet more texts to translate and interpret, they have created for themselves as well as for their readers, an illusion of a progressive increase in knowledge about Indian philosophy and of a steady accumulation of better readings of Indian philosophical texts. The standard belief has been that there are more or less correct interpretations of texts and that the meaning of a text is recoverable if all of the necessary philological and historical research is carried out. Concomitant with this belief is the view that disputes between interpreters can be adjudicated, and that there are ways of finding 'correct' readings that are not dependent on the assumptions of the interpreter. Deficiencies in textual interpretation are understood to be a result of 'an imperfect acquaintance with primary source materials' and it is assumed that greater familiarity with original texts and the restriction of the scholar's modern Western biases will give us 'accuracy' and greater understanding of Indian thought.

As is clear from this passage, Tuck finds this position problematic. As he points out on p. 15, "for contemporary Indologists to naively accept nineteenth-century objectivist principles betrays an ignorance of the methodological debates that have been taking place throughout the twentieth century in the closely related fields of literary criticism and post-positivistic European/American philosophy".

Tuck knows, then, that many contemporary Indologists - who form at least part of his intended readership - are ignorant of these recent debates which could yet seriously affect their way of working, or even convince them of the utter futility of their efforts. One expects therefore some arguments that support these claims, and that might induce the uninformed philologist to mend his ways. But no such arguments are given. It is true that Tuck presents some observations that are no doubt correct and valuable, but they in no way support his conclusions. We have seen, for example, that scholars "have defied the isogetical nature of their work", which seems indeed true for many of them. A particularly important observation is that "[t]here are no interpretations that are not the result of some creative effort on the part of the interpreter" (p. 15); it is this creative aspect of interpretation that Tuck refers to as isogetical. But from this observation to "the fact that knowledge can be understood only in

specific, culturally embedded forms" (p. 13) is more than an inference; it is an unsupported claim, and an incorrect one at that.

It is clear that Tuck underestimates our possibilities of understanding. We can, and we actually do, refine our understanding of a text by confronting it again and again with the principal evidence we have, viz., its exact wording. In this way we can discard false interpretations, which are not simply outdated with reference to the latest philosophical theory in vogue in the West, but really false because in contradiction with the exact wording of the text. By eliminating one false interpretation after the other, we can be sure to get ever closer to the correct interpretation of the text, even if we are to believe that that correct interpretation can never be fully reached.

Another point that has not been sufficiently appreciated by Tuck is the following: Scholarship is a collective enterprise, in which mutual criticism plays a vital role. If one scholar is unable to break away from the patterns of thought provided by his culture, someone else may point out the shortcomings of his interpretation.

It is no coincidence that Tuck has chosen, in order to illustrate his point of view, the Western interpretation of Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna's works do not state in general terms what they are up to, thus leaving the interpreter the freedom to think more or less what he likes without running too great a risk of colliding with them.² This does not necessarily imply that confrontation with the texts will never allow us to make a choice between these various "interpretations". In fact, Stcherbatsky and Schayer's idea that the Madhyamaka absolute exists, and is constituted by the whole of all there is, is an example to the contrary: some Madhyamaka texts say quite clearly that the absolute does not exist.³ Yet it should be stated that the problems connected with the "interpretation" of Nāgārjuna do not so much illustrate the difficulty of crossing a cultural boundary, but the difficulty of finding the opinion of an author on a subject about which he does not express himself.

2 Compare Richard Hayes' recent observation about Nāgārjuna (e-mail Buddhism Discussion Group, 16th July 1992): "Not many Indian thinkers have been capable of so many radically different styles of interpretation." He then wonders "what features of Nāgārjuna's presentation make it so difficult to interpret definitively and so easy to interpret in whatever way one wants. He's a bit like an oracle in whose words one can hear any message that one wants to hear."

3 See Bronkhorst 1992:71 f.

It would have been much fairer on the part of our author to study, say, the Western interpretation of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, whose texts offer, by and large, fewer fundamental difficulties of interpretation than Nāgārjuna. Tuck does mention the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school in his first chapter, where he points out that this school drew little attention during the days of European idealism, whereas it did evoke interest during the analytic period. But interest, or lack of it, is not the same as misinterpretation, and Tuck's description of the fluctuating preferences for different schools of thought in India under the influence of changing philosophical fashions in Europe do nothing to support his claims. Systems like Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika have offered relatively little resistance to interpretation, not because there are no cultural barriers here, but simply because the texts express themselves rather clearly about most of the points that interest the Western interpreter.

At this point I will briefly discuss an example of a text whose interpretation has been improved by moving *away* from the model suggested by modern Western thought. This text is the *Nirukta*. It deals with etymologies, according to its standard interpretation dating from Max Müller in the middle of the nineteenth century. No need to add that these etymologies were looked upon, by Max Müller as well as by his successors, as historical etymologies, of the same type as those provided by historical linguistics, and meant to throw light on the historical development of the word concerned. The etymologies of the *Nirukta* were thus criticized for being "incorrect", or occasionally praised for being "correct". In reality these etymologies were never meant to elucidate the historical development of words. This becomes clear from a precise study of the wording of the text.⁴ It is confirmed by the circumstance that Indian culture tended to look upon its holy languages as stable, not subject to change in the course of time.⁵ Here, then, it is possible to arrive at a more *correct* (without quotation marks) interpretation of the *Nirukta*, which yet does not correspond to anything in modern Western thought. The idea of non-historical etymologies, though not unknown to an earlier phase of Western culture (cp. Plato's *Cratylus*), is completely foreign to modern linguistics and to any other modern school of thought. This means that this more correct interpretation of the *Nirukta* is arrived at by confronting an

4 Bronkhorst 1981; Kahrs 1983; 1984.

5 Bronkhorst, forthcoming.

initial interpretation that was provided by Western culture, with the letter of the text. This procedure requires, not that the scholar is aware of all his presuppositions or the like, but that he is willing to put question marks behind all his interpretations, especially there where a passage of the text does not appear to agree well with them. In the case of the *Nirukta* we have not, of course, reached *the* finally correct interpretation, or the original intentions - all of them - of its author. But only a philosophical nitpicker could deny that we have come a great deal closer to them.

If the value of this example is accepted, it is clear (i) that at least in some cases it is possible to get closer to the "real" meaning of a text, and (ii) that such an improved interpretation does not have to be inspired by ideas current in Western thought. But once these possibilities are admitted in principle, it becomes imperative to look for really better - i.e., objectively better - interpretations elsewhere, too.

In the Afterword to his book (p. 96 f.) Tuck warns against the extreme of "relativism" - the view that we are irrevocably confined to linguistic and cultural communities, and that real understanding cannot exist among cultures, historical periods, or even individuals. But "[j]ust as extreme as the relativists ... are the ordinary scholars who believe in unconditioned facts and objective readings of texts: the unwillingness to question presuppositions is as much a failure of moderation as ... the paralysis ... that can come from too much self-consciousness" (p. 97).

I must admit that I am perplexed by this passage. It obviously means that Tuck does not consider himself a relativist, and that he considers willingness to question presuppositions a requirement of good scholarship. Does this imply that Tuck, after all he has said, now joins the scholars of the past two centuries in "defy[ing] the isogetical nature of [his] work by attempting to put aside [his] own prejudices and presuppositions"? Or do we witness here a feeble attempt to "rescue" scholarship whose very reason of existence had been rejected in the preceding pages? It is a fact that, when it comes to giving practical advice to scholars in the field, Tuck recommends them to continue as before. They should not however believe that they will ever find "knowledge" in the sense of a correct "representation of reality", that they are pursuing objective truth. Yet Tuck's book "is not intended to suggest that every previous attempt at cross-cultural philosophical study has failed" (p. 99). Unfortunately it does not tell us what it means for a cross-cultural study to be successful.

All in all, the impression created by this book is that its author is carried away by some fashionable ideas of which he does not dare, when it comes to it, to draw the consequences.

What we must retain from *Comparative Philosophy* ... is the observation that a creative effort is involved in reading a text. This important insight seems to be lacking in C. Oetke's *Zur Methode der Analyse philosophischer Sūtratexte*.⁶ Oetke is clearly not interested in the hermeneutical questions that occupy Tuck; there is not a single reference in his book to the methodological debates that form the basis of Tuck's study. His problem is that of the practical philologist who is confronted with the obscurity of philosophical Sūtra texts. There is no doubt that what he wants from these texts is their "real meaning" (even though he is aware of the fact that this may mean different things in different circumstances). Tuck's qualms about the possibility of there being a real meaning are not entertained.

The interpretation of Sūtra texts, never easy, is particularly difficult in cases where sūtras may have been added, or removed, in the course of time. This last hypothesis seems the most plausible way to account for the form in which some of these Sūtra texts have reached us. Note that this type of internal evidence is as a rule the only justification we have to conclude that a certain Sūtra text is not the unitary creation of a single author. Where there are no special reasons to doubt the unitary creation of a Sūtra text - as in the case of Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* as understood by most scholars - single authorship is taken for granted. This is hardly surprising: it is logically possible to doubt the single authorship of each and every piece of writing. Logically it is hard to exclude the possibility that every sentence of Oetke's book has a different author. In practice most readers will accept single authorship of a text that is presented to us as a unit, until and unless this view presents us with difficulties which an hypothesis of multiple authorship can more easily explain.

Oetke is clearly of a different opinion. The sūtras which engage his attention in this book - *Nyāya Sūtra* (NS) 2.1.8-2.1.19 - allow of a consistent interpretation, as he argues esp. on p. 34-35. Yet later in the book a long discussion is dedicated to the possible original meanings of these sūtras, and to their relative chronology with regard to each other. In

6 The following observations on Oetke's book are presented with a certain reserve: Oetke's style is so difficult for me to read that, even after several rereadings, I am still not sure that I have correctly understood him.

a more general way - and here we come to the *method* announced in the title - Oetke presents the view (p. 63) that, at least in principle, first all possible meanings of individual sūtras should be traced and examined. Subsequently one should search for plausible combinations: *Das Ziel wäre die Auffindung von Kombinationen von Interpretationsalternativen einzelner Sūtras, die nach verschiedenen "Bewertungsparametern" gemessen insgesamt günstige Wahrscheinlichkeitswerte ergeben.*

It must be admitted that Oetke's proposal constitutes a complete novelty, and one can only hope that it will not be followed by other workers in the field, at least not in this extreme form. Not only is Oetke's "atomistic" approach to the sūtras of dubious value. The very idea of enumerating all possible meanings of individual sūtras, which must then be combined, overlooks the creative element in interpreting texts: one cannot reduce the interpretation of a text to a mechanical enumeration of possibilities.

It is typical for Oetke's approach that he says a great deal about logical possibilities, and little about what we actually know about the history of Sūtra texts. As noted above, we only know about modifications in Sūtra texts in cases where these modifications have left their traces. This, together with the fact that the earliest commentators already choose rather to present a forced interpretation than to change the wording of a sūtra, suggests that sūtras were not easily changed, i.e., adjusted to a different situation. When, in these circumstances, Oetke enumerates on p. 47 ways in which older sūtras may have been incorporated satisfactorily into later works, we are in a realm of pure speculation, which does not become any the less speculative by the fact that the speculations represent logical possibilities.

Oetke's approach is further characterized by the extent to which he holds that texts should not be interpreted in the light of other texts (*dass man Texte nicht im Lichte anderer Texte interpretieren darf/soll*; p. 46). This position gives rise to a long discussion about the meaning of *pradīpaprakāśavat* 'like the light of a lamp' in sūtra 2.1.19.

This comparison occurs a number of times in Indian philosophical literature of the period. Oetke refers, besides to NS 2.1.19, to NS 5.1.10 with Bhāṣya, *Vigrahavyāvartanī* under v. 33, and *Vaidīyaprakaraṇa* sūtra 5. One could add Bhartṛhari's *Mahābhāṣya Dīpikā* I p. 3 l. 20, Praśastapāda's *Padārthadharmasaṅgraha*, alias *Praśastapādabhāṣya*, vol. II p. 284 (ed. Gaurinath Sastri), and Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 7.8 and 12. Let us look at these passages one by one.

Bhartr̥hari introduces the comparison of the lamp in the following words: *dviśaktiḥ śabda ātmaprakāśane 'rthaparakāśane ca samarthaḥ / yathā pradīpaḥ ātmānam prakāśayan nidhyarthān prakāśayati/* "The word has two powers: it is capable of illuminating itself and its meaning; like a lamp which, while illuminating itself, illuminates the wealth in a treasury." Praśastapāda states: *yathā ghaṭādiṣu pradīpāt [pratyayo bhavati], na tu pradīpe pradīpāntarāt* "E.g., the lamp brings about the cognition of the jar etc.; but no other lamp brings about the cognition of the lamp." *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 7.8 reads: *pradīpaḥ svaparātmānau samprakāśayate yathā* "Just as a lamp which illuminates itself and something else ..." The *Vigrahavyāvartanī* has: *dyotayati svātmānam yathā hutāśas tathā parātmānam / svaparātmānāv evaṁ prasādhayanti pramāṇānīti //* "Just as a fire brightens itself and something else, so the means of knowledge make known themselves and other things." And the *Vaidalyaprakarana*: *tshad ma rnams la ni tshad ma med do / ḥdir mar me bṣin tshad ma ni raṅ daṅ gṣan sgrub par byed pa yin no / ji ltar mar me ni raṅ daṅ gṣan gsal bar byed pa mthoṅ ba de bṣin du tshad ma rnams kyaṅ raṅ daṅ gṣan sgrub par byed pa yin no //* "(sūtra:) Means of knowledge have no means of knowledge (by which they are known). In this respect a means of knowledge is like a lamp: it establishes itself as well as other things. (Comm. :) Just as a lamp is seen to light up itself as well as other things, so do also means of knowledge establish themselves as well as other things." The *Nyāya Bhāṣya* on sūtra 5.1.10 presents the same image: *atha pradīpaṁ didr̥kṣamāṇāḥ pradīpāntaram kasmān nopādadate / antareṇāpi pradīpāntaram dr̥śyate pradīpaḥ / tatra pradīpadarśanārtham pradīpopādānam nirarthakam /* "But why don't those who wish to see a lamp fetch another lamp? [Because] the lamp is seen even without another lamp. Here it is useless to fetch a lamp in order to see another lamp." The *Nyāya Bhāṣya* on sūtra 2.1.19, too, knows an interpretation of that sūtra that uses the same image: *yathā pradīpaprakāśaḥ pradīpāntaraprakāśam antareṇa gr̥hyate tathā pramāṇāni pramāṇāntaram antareṇa gr̥hyant[e].* "Just as the light of a lamp is grasped without the light of another lamp, so the means of knowledge are grasped without another means of knowledge."⁷

7 Note that the author of the *Nyāya Bhāṣya* prefers another interpretation of sūtra 2.1.19. Oetke is however right in pointing out (p. 33) that this interpretation has little to recommend itself.

NS 2.1.19, then, allows of an interpretation that uses an image known from a variety of texts. But here Oetke's principle that texts should not be interpreted in the light of other texts comes in. Oetke warns against a "gleichmacherische Tendenz" (p. 33) and observes that "mit Verweisen auf Parallelen in anderen Texten ... sehr bedachtsam umgegangen werden sollte, weil damit meist nur Unterschiede verwischt werden und dies der ... Tendenz zur Gleichmacherei dienlich ist" (p. 40). In five pages (36-40) he shows that other interpretations of sūtra 2.1.19 are imaginable. Unfortunately no independent evidence is provided to support these other interpretations (not even from parallel texts). As so often, all these pages of heavy prose show no more than that other interpretations are logically possible. But who ever doubted this? Oetke's principle would obviously have been served better with one single example where he could show that non-observance of his principle leads (or has lead) to an incorrect interpretation. But clinching examples (or counter-examples) are obviously not his strong side.

Mention was made above of the principle that a text be accepted as a single whole unless there are compelling reasons to doubt this. It was also pointed out that Oetke does not accept this principle, at least not where Sūtra texts are concerned. This leads to amazing pronouncements, such as the following. On p. 47 Oetke refers to the suspicion of Ruben and others, according to which books 2 to 4 of the *Nyāya Sūtra* have been inserted later into the text. He observes that the fact that all of the *Nyāya Sūtra*, including chapters 2-4, constitutes a systematic whole, is no valid argument (his words are: *völlig unbrauchbar*) against this suspicion. One wonders, of course, what kind of argument Oetke would consider useful to support the unitary nature and origin of a text. Do we have to conclude that for Oetke the non-unitary nature of, at any rate, Indian Sūtra texts is axiomatic?

Oetke's methodological reflections constitute something like an appendix to a detailed study of Nyāya sūtras 2.1.8 - 2.1.19. He criticizes at length another interpretation of these sūtras, and then presents one of his own (p. 34-35). Here Oetke makes a remark with which one cannot but agree, and which one wishes he had heeded himself. This remark shows that he is, to at least some extent, aware that finding the meaning of a text is not a purely mechanical affair, the sole requirement for which is, supposedly, applying the correct method. For here he admits that in comparing interpretations of a text, it is the *relative* superiority of one over the other that counts (p. 35: *Die relative Überlegenheit ist es aber, auf die*

es in diesem Zusammenhang allein ankommt). In other words, it is always possible that someone else will, in spite of one's best efforts, find an even better interpretation. Presenting an interpretation that can be corrected by others is not in itself a sign of methodological shortcomings; bad methodology is not responsible for Newton's failure to discover the theory of relativity.

Comparing interpretations is of the essence of textual scholarship. It is useless to criticize an interpretation if one has nothing better (or at least equivalent) to offer. Oetke does not seem to realize this: at the very least he would have eased the task of his readers considerably if he had made clear at every step that he criticizes other interpretations *because* he thinks he can offer a better one. Simply criticizing other interpretations not only makes for tedious reading, it is even methodologically indefensible.

It is not possible to discuss Oetke's ideas here in further detail. One general observation must however be made. Whereas most philologists will see it as their task to interpret texts in their historical and cultural context, Oetke has the tendency to abstract the statements he seeks to interpret from any context whatsoever. He is primarily interested in logically possible interpretations, much less in interpretations that fit best the cultural and historical context. Such a procedure may perhaps occasionally rectify interpretations that have been too heavily influenced by contextual, at the expense of textual considerations. Unfortunately Oetke presents no example where this can be shown to be the case.

This takes us to the contrast that exists between the two books here reviewed. In an important sense they represent two opposite extremes. For Tuck, there is no way to break away from one's own cultural universe and enter into that of the Indian authors whose texts we study; not even detailed textual scholarship can help us cross the barrier. Oetke, on the other hand, comes close to denying the very existence of such a barrier. Accordingly, he seeks to provide a mechanical method to get at the meaning of the text. In reality there is no justification, neither for Tuck's hopelessness nor for Oetke's methodological optimism. We *can* in many cases get close to the intended meaning of a text, yet success is not guaranteed by simply applying a supposedly right method. There is a creative element in reading any text, even, or especially, a *sūtra*. But our creativity is not limited, it is no prison. It can get us closer to the meaning of a text if we confront it, as strictly as we can, with the letter of the text concerned.

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TURFAN AND TUN-HUANG: THE TEXTS. ENCOUNTER OF CIVILIZATIONS ON THE SILK ROUTE. Edited by Alfredo Cadonna. Firenze, Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1992. *Orientalia Venetiana*, IV. 245 p. + XIX p.

Cet ouvrage collectif sur l'étude des textes de l'Asie centrale chinoise préislamique réunit les contributions présentées lors de la conférence internationale dont le sujet coïncide avec le titre du livre, conférence qui s'est tenue à Venise les 15 et 16 janvier 1990. Organisés par la Fondazione Cini, Istituto «Venezia e l'Oriente», en collaboration avec l'Istituto Italiano per il Medio e l'Estremo Oriente et l'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, les travaux de ces journées s'associent au projet décennal (1990-2000), promu par l'Unesco comme «Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue».

Luciano Petech («The Silk Road, Turfan and Tun-huang in the first millenium A.D.», pp. 1-13) situe les oasis de Turfan et Tun-huang et celles du bassin du Tarim en retraçant les faits essentiels qui ont marqué cette partie de la route de la soie, des derniers siècles av. J.- C. au XI^e siècle ap. J.- C.

La dépression du bassin du Tarim, ou désert du Taklamakan, aujourd'hui Région autonome des Ouïgours, est serrée au nord par la chaîne des T'ien-shan et au sud par celle des K'un-lun. Aux pieds de ces chaînes montagneuses couraient les routes commerciales, reliant la Chine

au monde iranien et à l'Inde. Aux premiers siècles de notre ère, les marchands indiens s'installent un peu partout sur les pourtours du désert du Taklamakan, privilégiant toutefois la route du sud, alors que les caravaniers sogdiens, dès le IIe siècle, contrôlent le commerce sur la route du nord. Les missionnaires suivent ces mouvements: les Iraniens et les Indiens introduisent le bouddhisme. Les Sogdiens, le zoroastrisme, le christianisme nestorien et le manichéisme. Diversité de cultures, apportant à ces régions une variété de langues et d'écritures, dont témoigne la richesse des textes découverts au début de notre siècle dans les oasis du Taklamakan et dans les régions limitrophes de Tun-huang et de Turfan.

Petech souligne l'un des traits essentiels de la politique des villes du Tarim, celui d'avoir eu un rôle passif face aux invasions et aux dominations étrangères. Ces villes se trouvèrent le plus souvent sous domination chinoise ou tibétaine jusque vers le IXe siècle lorsque, ces deux puissances affaiblies, les Ouigours, venant du nord-est, et les Turcs Qarakhanides, venant de l'ouest, entrent en jeu. Alors, les langues indo-européennes parlées dans les oasis furent progressivement remplacées par les langues turques et les diverses religions furent supplantées par l'islam.

Les luttes d'ingérence entre Chinois et Tibétains sont vives aux VIIe et au VIIIe siècle. Dans la deuxième moitié du VIIe siècle les Tibétains occupent les villes de Khotan, Kashgar, Kucha et Seyab. Les Chinois cependant reprennent vite leurs garnisons qui, à la fin du VIIe s., sont de nouveau contrôlées par les T'ang. Au siècle suivant la lutte s'étend aux régions avoisinantes et Turfan qui se trouvait aussi sous commandement chinois sera, aux VIII-IXe siècles, au pouvoir des Ouigours et des Tibétains. Enfin, en 866/67, les Ouigours s'emparent définitivement de Turfan qui deviendra la capitale de leur état sous le nom de Qaraqocho.

La région de Tun-huang (Sha-Chou, «Préfecture des sables») de son côté tombe aux mains des Tibétains en 781. Nous connaissons beaucoup de cette période (781-848) et de l'intense activité des communautés bouddhiques chinoises et tibétaines de la région grâce aux documents trouvés au début du siècle dans les temples rupestres des Mo-kao-k'ou et conservés aujourd'hui à Londres, Paris et St. Pétersbourg, pour ne citer que les collections les plus importantes.

Parmi les documents trouvés à Tun-huang se trouvaient deux manuscrits (conservés à Paris, Pélliot tibétain Nos 1286 et 1287), connus

sous le nom de «Old Tibetan Chronicle»¹ et qui semblent avoir été rédigés entre 838 et 842. Le regretté Géza Uray nous laisse une étude sur la succession chronologique des paragraphes («The structure and genesis of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle of Dunhuang*», p. 123-143), outil indispensable pour une relecture de ces manuscrits.

Il suggère tout d'abord de distinguer le «Genealogy-manuscript» du «Chronicle-manuscript», en insistant par ailleurs sur le caractère unitaire de ces documents, l'unité étant prouvée à la fois par des critères formels et internes. Il dresse un tableau analytique des «chroniques» (p. 125-127), en respectant les divisions du texte original, contrairement à BTT qui avaient opté pour une division «arbitraire et fourvoyante». Comme l'avaient déjà noté BTT, la succession des paragraphes ne respecte pas l'ordre chronologique des événements. La question est compliquée. Uray donne une lecture critique des diverses hypothèses des historiens (p. 127-130), dont celle d'un collage erroné (p. 130-133). Un tableau résume les diverses interprétations de la séquence des paragraphes en ordre chronologique.

Victor H. Mair («Chinese popular literature from Tun-huang. The state of the field (1980-1990), p. 171-240) a le mérite de présenter une véritable petite monographie - un peu touffue peut être, de l'état des travaux sur la littérature populaire de Tun-huang qui offre un choix de l'immense et inégale production chinoise «post révolution culturelle». M. Mair définit ainsi ce genre littéraire: «By «popular literature» (*t'ung-su wen hsüeh*) I intend literature that includes a sizable proportion of vernacular (*pai-hua*) elements». Ce genre était écrit en vers, en prose ou en un mélange des deux et arriva en Chine en provenance d'Inde et d'Asie centrale, véhiculé par le bouddhisme. Pour se rendre compte de la richesse de ce genre littéraire, il suffit de consulter la liste de ses diverses formes (p. 174-175) et son commentaire détaillé (p. 175-179), où l'auteur relève entre autre l'abus consistant en le fait de désigner toute la variété des subdivisions du genre par le terme «*pien-wen*» qui n'est en fait que le nom d'une de ses formes (p. 174). L'auteur rédige un précis en six points (p. 177-178), sorte de garde-fou à l'usage des recherches futures. Au cours d'un survol des travaux publiés jusqu'ici, ou en voie de publication (p. 184-185), Mair se félicite de la parution d'un choix de manuscrits chinois de Tun-huang, reproduits d'après les originaux conservés à la British

1 Les «vieilles chroniques tibétaines de Touen-houang», éditées et traduites par J. Bacot, F.W. Thomas et Ch. Toussaint, Documents de Touen-houang relatifs à l'histoire du Tibet. Paris, Geuthner, 1940. Abrégé par la suite «BTT».

British Library de Londres (fonds Stein), à la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris (fonds Pelliot chinois) et à la Bibliothèque nationale de Pékin². En revanche, il regrette l'état peu avancé des répertoires terminologiques (p. 185-188) - un regret, celui-ci, que l'on peut étendre à d'autres «provinces» des études de Tun-huang, la tibétologie par exemple.

Reprenant le sujet «*pien-wen*», Mair note le lien existant entre les antécédants du «*pien-wen*» dans la tradition orale et les récits des tableaux sur rouleau, ou encore la présence de motifs indiens dans les récits chinois. Enfin, après un aperçu critique des bibliographies et catalogues sur le sujet (p. 197-204), l'auteur souhaite la publication prochaine d'un catalogue cumulatif et exhaustif des manuscrits chinois de Tun-huang, dispersés au quatre coins de la République populaire.

Margaret T. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya («The Leningrad Collection of the Sakish business documents and the problem of the investigation of Central Asian texts», p. 85-95) traite des documents commerciaux et autres témoignages de la vie laïque en langue khotanaise, datant des VIII-IXe siècles de notre ère, conservés à St. Pétersbourg. Pour ce qui est des documents khotanais appartenant aux collections «hors Russie», l'auteur signale l'existence d'une reproduction en facsimile de 200 manuscrits, connue sous le nom de *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* (v. p. 94, s.v.). L'une des caractéristiques des documents laïques, intéressant aussi bien les villes du Tarim que les oasis de Turfan et de Tun-huang, est leur variété: des documents de ce type existent en tibétain, en chinois, en khotanais et en sogdien pour ne citer que les mieux connus. Cependant, l'auteur pense (p. 87) que ces documents s'inspirent essentiellement du modèle administratif perse et chinois, ce qui à notre avis serait à voir de plus près. L'auteur relève trois clichés qui apparaissent dans les documents khotanais: la méthode de datation, l'utilisation de formules stéréotypées et enfin la présence du nom du témoin instrumentaire, nom suivi de l'empreinte digitale (en khotanais *hamgušte*), en guise de sceau.

Nombreux sont les reçus de paiements de redevances diverses, dont le prix est stipulé en argent (*mūri*), en tissu ou plus précisément en pièces de tissu (*thaunaka*). Ces actes qui proviennent en grande partie des archives du village de Gaysata sont soigneusement rédigés, portent le nom des partis au contrat et sont munis de leurs signatures. Leur étude apporte des données précieuses servant à la chronologie des rois khotanais du VIIIe

² Huang, Yung-Wu [et al., éditeurs]. Tun-huang pao-tsang. 140 vol. Taipei, Hsin we-feng, 1981-1986.

au Xe siècle de notre ère, mais encore à l'anthroponymie, à la toponymie et à la géographie de la région.

Quelques réserves quant à la terminologie. Par exemple à la page 87 où l'utilisation du terme «hieroglyphs» nous a plongée dans l'embarras. Mais encore. Ici, comme ailleurs, n'y aurait-il pas avantage à ajouter au terme traduit, et entre parenthèses, le mot correspondant dans la langue originale ? Hélas! la terminologie et la phraséologie servant à traduire les documents administratifs, commerciaux ou militaires n'échappent pas, elles non plus, au piège de la connotation.

Une autre étude (Ronald E. Emmerick, «The Dunhuang ms Ch. 00120: its importance for reconstructing the phonological system of Khotanese», p. 145-170) porte sur la langue khotanaise, plus précisément sur sa phonologie, et intéresse donc aussi les linguistes. Le manuscrit chinois sur lequel l'auteur fonde ses réflexions est conservé à l'India Office de Londres. Amputé en son coin gauche supérieur, il est aujourd'hui intégralement reconstitué: M. Emmerick a en effet trouvé le fragment manquant dans le fonds des mss chinois de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris. Ce manuscrit en écriture *brāhmī* d'Asie centrale transcrit la traduction chinoise du début de la *Vajracchedikā-prajñāparamitā*, précédée de 24 lignes d'«introductory prayers» (p. 148 et p. 150). L'étude combinée de cette transcription et d'autres textes a abouti à toute une série de notes de phonologie khotanaise, parmi lesquelles on retiendra le cas intéressant du «subscript hook» (p. 158-169). Enfin, en rapprochant le «crochet souscrit» khotanais du «petit a» tibétain (*'a chuñ*)³, l'auteur conclut ainsi: «The subscript hook on the other hand as a sign of voicedness/aspiration/breathiness could well have seemed ideal to represent the various functions of the Tibetan *ha-chuñ*».

Janos Harmatta «Origin of the name Tun-huang», p. 15-20) suit quelques mentions du toponyme, à commencer par le premier témoignage, celui de l'histoire des Han où le nom de Tun-huang apparaît dès le IIe s. avant notre ère. Ce serait aussi le *Θράνα* que l'on trouve chez Ptolémé au IIe s. après J.-C. A la même époque un document sogdien, connu comme «Ancient letters», que l'auteur discute et date du IIe siècle (p. 18-20) cite le toponyme. Selon l'auteur les deux formes, apparaissant dans la source grecque et dans la lettre sogdienne, dérivent toutes deux d'une forme

3 En fonction de suffixe et de préfixe (*rjes 'jug* et *snon 'jug*). Le *'a chuñ* souscrit sert surtout à transcrire les voyelles longues du sanscrit.

iranienne *Øruvan- (p. 16) qui serait du reste aussi à l'origine du nom de Turfan (p. 17 et n. 8).

Quatre contributions concernent les Ouigours. Werner Sundermann analyse quelques documents manichéens («Iranian Manichaeen Turfan texts concerning the Turfan regions», p. 63-84). Pour de multiples raisons le manichéisme devint religion d'état du royaume Ouigour en 762/3 (p. 72), rien d'étonnant donc à ce que la plupart des documents manichéens proviennent de la région de Turfan. Sundermann glâne des données servant à l'histoire et à la géographie de la région dans les hymnes à la gloire de la «hiérarchie» religieuse et séculière et dans les colophons. Grâce à la pratique de copie des textes sacrés - pratique que la communauté manichéenne partage avec bien d'autres courants monastiques, le bouddhisme par exemple - l'on connaît le nom des donateurs, d'origine très diverses (p. 73-74). Enfin, des lettres en sogdien (p. 74-81) témoignent de l'animosité, sinon d'une franche hostilité des communautés manichéennes d'Asie centrale envers les communautés «soeurs» de Mésopotamie (p. 75). Citons une brève remarque de l'auteur d'où transparaît un certain réductionnisme. En faisant allusion à l'absence de documents sur l'histoire de l'église manichéenne, l'auteur dit: «Their Buddhist environment did not stimulate their sense of history either». A quoi nous répliquons: quel «Buddhist environment»? Les bouddhistes chinois et tibétains? mais alors le propos de M. Sundermann devient extravagant.

Si les Ouigours embrassent la religion manichéenne et la maintiennent du VIII^e au XIII^e s. de notre ère, ils connurent aussi le bouddhisme. Peter Zieme («Probleme alttürkischer Vajracchedikā-Übersetzungen», p. 21-42) compare les versions fragmentaires du fameux *sūtra* en vieux turc (ouigour) avec la première traduction chinoise de la *Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā* par le grand traducteur Kumārajīva qui, il faut le souligner, fut capturé en sa ville natale de Kucha en 383 et «emmené de force à Leang-tcheou, dans le Kan-sou», où il «devait s'y morfondre durant 19 ans (383-401) et tint pour lui-même sa profonde doctrine, sans prêcher ni convertir», comme nous le dit Etienne Lamotte avec beaucoup d'humour⁴.

4 Voir Lamotte, Etienne. Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra). Volume V, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1980, p. 2271.

De la comparaison minutieuse des diverses traditions, l'auteur dégage entre autre l'insertion d'éléments nouveaux et l'adjonction de strophes. Ainsi, des liens de ce texte avec le milieu Chan (noter la mention du Maître-dhyāna Zhigong, p. 32-34) ou alors la mise en parallèle avec l'épisode de la vie de Xuanzang, où celui-ci discute avec l'Empereur de la nécessité et des raisons de retraduire la *Vajracchedikā* (p. 34-35).

Remarquable, l'étude d'une lettre ouigoure d'«un bouddhiste de l'époque mongole» (environ du XIV^e s.), traduite et savamment commentée par James Hamilton («Etude nouvelle de la lettre *Pelliot ouigour 16 BIS...*», p. 97-121). L'auteur de la lettre s'enquiert du travail accompli par «son frère en religion» Alp Qaya, travail difficile qui consiste en un ouvrage de taille ou de sculpture sur bois. M. Hamilton pense qu'il puisse s'agir soit de la gravure en relief de planches xylographiques (que l'on trouva effectivement à Tun-huang dans la grotte 181, p. 99), soit de la sculpture d'objets de bois ou de pierre. Enfin un petit glossaire avec des équivalents chinois ou sanscrits vient parfaire un exposé limpide qui intéressera aussi les non spécialistes.

On peut en dire autant de «Sogdian and Turkish Christians in the Turfan and Tunhuang manuscripts» (p. 43-61), où M. Sims-Williams brosse un tableau très riche des communautés chrétiennes d'Asie centrale. La plupart des manuscrits chrétiens de la région de Turfan sont en langue sogdienne et syriaque, mais il existe aussi des fragments en ouigour et en d'autres langues. Bien que les églises melkites et nestorienne étaient établies en Sogdiane, en tout cas dès le VIII^e siècle de notre ère, aucun texte chrétien n'a jusqu'ici été mis au jour dans cette région, si ce n'est de minces témoignages épigraphiques.

L'auteur donne un historique des églises melkites et nestorienne de Sogdiane, en parcourant d'autres sources, l'arménienne notamment. Parmi les documents de la bibliothèque nestorienne de Bulayïq il en existe un qui témoigne de contacts avec les melkites (p. 46-47). M. Sims-Williams relève aussi que le moyen-iranien semble, à un moment donné, avoir été utilisé en tant que langue liturgique par les chrétiens du Turkestan chinois (p. 50). Les manuscrits sogdiens de la région de Turfan comptent un grand nombre de textes portant sur l'ascétisme et sur la vie religieuse et il semble donc difficile «to avoid the conclusion that the settlement was a monastery» (p. 51). Et la nature de certains textes retrouvés laisse penser que «the monks of Bulayïk regarded the monks and solitaries of the Egyptian desert as their spiritual ancestors». En revanche, aucun document «profane», sauf quelques minimes fragments, n'a été retrouvé.

La communauté chrétienne de la région de Turfan semble avoir été de langue turque. Alors que, d'après les documents chrétiens de Tun-huang, datant des IXe-Xe siècles, on pourrait conclure que la communauté de cette région parlait sogdien, turc mais aussi chinois (p. 54-55). Cependant, à l'analyse, les documents de Tun-huang montrent que cette communauté tendait progressivement à devenir, elle-aussi, turcophone (p. 56-58).

Ce livre ne s'adresse pas uniquement aux spécialistes des études de Turfan et de Tunhuang. Linguistes, historiens des religions et historiens tout court pourront glâner des renseignements intéressants. Dommage que l'éditeur n'ait pas soigné l'unification des systèmes de transcription.

Cristina Anna Scherrer-Schaub

JOHN POWERS: *The Yogācāra School of Buddhism: A Bibliography*. ATLA Bibliography Series, No. 27. Metuchen, N.J. and London: The American Theological Library Association and The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1991. 257 p.

This bibliographical work seeks to present primary and secondary materials in Western and Asian languages on a key tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Yogācāra, a school which is usually considered as having an idealist orientation. Powers, besides giving information on publications in English, French, German and Russian, also performs a very valuable service by giving detailed references to numerous Japanese publications in this field. The only reservation which I would have is that when Powers gives translated titles of Japanese publications, it is frequently not clear at all whether the publication was itself written in Japanese or in English.

The book is divided into two parts. The first, entitled "Scriptural Sources (Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese)", gives the bibliographical details on *sūtras* and their commentaries, philosophical and historical texts, works by Tibetan authors and Indian philosophical texts. Part two, entitled "Secondary Sources", gives us information on studies by modern scholars, as well as on general works on Buddhism. The work is completed by five indexes, enabling the reader to look up authors and titles and technical terms. Powers has made a laudable effort to include as much cross-referencing and information as possible in order to facilitate the reader's task in approaching the enormously rich literature of the Yogācāra school. This type of bibliography was sorely needed, and Powers deserves our

thanks for having painstakingly compiled a book which will be of use to all who are interested in the Yogācāra school.

Tom J.F. Tillemans

TIBETAN BUDDHISM. REASON AND REVELATION. Steven D. Goodman and Ronald M. Davidson (editors). SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies. Albany N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992. xi + 215 p.

The present collection of papers on Tibetan Buddhism stems from a conference of the North American Tibetological Society held in 1980. The proceedings of the previous conference of this society, held in 1979, were published as *Wind Horse, Proceedings of the North American Tibetological Society*, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1981.

The contributions include those of H.V. Guenther, "Some Aspects of *rDzogs-chen* Thought", Kennard Lipman, "What is Buddhist Logic? Some Tibetan Developments of *Pramāṇa* Theory", Karen Lang, "A Dialogue on Death: Tibetan Commentators on the First Chapter of Āryadeva's *Catuhśataka*", Kenneth K. Tanaka and Raymond E. Robertson, "A Ch'an Text from Tun-huang: Implications for Ch'an Influence on Tibetan Buddhism", Matthew Kapstein, "Remarks on the *Maṇi bKa'-'bum* and the Cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet", Janet Gyatso, "Genre, Authorship, and Transmission in Visionary Buddhism: The Literary Traditions of Thang-stong rGyal-po", Ronald M. Davidson, "Preliminary Studies on Hevajra's *Abhisamaya* and the *Lam-'bras Tshogs-bshad*", and Steven D. Goodman, "Rig-'dzin 'Jigs-med gling-pa and the *kLong-Chen sNying-Thig*". We should stress that the articles in the volume deserve the serious attention of Tibetologists and interested laymen alike - many provide very worthwhile new contributions to our knowledge.

Particularly impressive to the present reviewer is the fine scholarly article by Matthew Kapstein on the *Maṇi bKa' 'bum*, a collection of "treasure texts" (*gter ma*) dating from the middle of the XIIth century. Kapstein seeks to trace the role played by this collection in forming the Tibetan view that the king Srong btsan sgam po (died 649/650) was the incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and thus more generally, the role of the *Maṇi bKa' 'bum* in the formation of the Tibetan world-view

of a land specially connected with this patron deity who incarnates regularly, most significantly in the form of the Dalai Lamas. I quote (p. 88):

"There can be little doubt that the myth of the religious king did much to support the notion that worldly affairs might best be placed in the hands of essentially spiritual leaders. And it is possible, too, that the Tibetan people came to expect their temporal woes to be set aright as before, by the timely intercession of the great Bodhisattva. Can it be any wonder, then, that when Tibet finally achieved a measure of real unity during the XVIIth century - after some seven centuries of strife - it did so under the leadership of a latter day emanation of Mahākāraṇika [= Avalokiteśvara] residing in the ancient capital of Lhasa, and constructing for himself a palace on a hill named after the divine Mount Potalaka? It seems we are in the presence of a Tibetan twist on the Arthurian legend, whereby the once and future king becomes at long last the king, once and present."

Let me offer a few critical remarks, which should not, however, be taken as putting into question the value of the book as a whole. The time elapsed between the 1980 conference and the publication of its presentations is considerable¹, and the field is certainly no longer "in its infancy", as the editors maintained (p. 1). Indeed the advancement since 1980 in almost all aspects of Tibetology has been remarkable. One of the many developments in the last few years has been an increasingly detailed and informed discussion on questions of methodology - witness the work of David Seyfort Rugg, Paul Williams, C.W. Huntingdon, José Cabezón et al. In *Tibetan Buddhism. Reason and Revelation*, however, this discussion often seems somewhat embryonic and vague, although periodically one comes across some surprising pronouncements. On page 1 we find:

"While the historical-critical methodology remains the great mainstay of Tibetan studies, it is not clear that access to all types of material are best served by the exclusive emphasis on this approach."

I, for one, would have sincerely liked to have known precisely what the editors were thinking of. What serious scientific alternatives *are* there to an intelligent and broad-minded historical-critical methodology? I presume that the editors were also thinking of alternatives to philology.

1 It is unclear to what degree the articles have been updated. In the editor's preface (p. ix) we are told: "These contributions have been expanded and edited so as to present a sourcebook of original research. The editors and authors have come together to submit a far more unified approach to the material they initially treated, and we are confident that the lengthy time required to actually make the material available has been justified in an improved offering."

In this connection, one cannot help but notice the heavily philosophically charged language used in the article of H.V. Guenther - and, to a much lesser degree, in that of K. Lipman - to translate key Tibetan terms of rDzogs chen philosophy. Is *this* an alternative to historical-critical methodology? The problems in understanding Prof. Guenther's "rDzogs chen system" will be obvious from the following sample, taken from his article, of his translations of some of the key Tibetan terms: *rdzogs chen* ("great perfection") is rendered by "holistic thinking", *sku* (= *kāya*, "body") becomes "gestalt", *chos can* (= *dharmin*; *dharmaka* "property bearer") becomes "level of interpretability"; *rig pa* (= *vidyā*; "knowledge") becomes "excitatoriness", *thabs* (= *upaya* "means") becomes "[Being's] operational mode", while *shes rab* (= *prajñā* "wisdom"; "insight") becomes "[its] appreciatively discriminative modes"; *stong pa* (= *sūnya* "void"; "empty") becomes "open-dimensional". This is an extreme case of the sort of thing which happens when the usual historical-critical and philologically grounded approach to translating Buddhist terms is abandoned in favour of ideological considerations. Guenther's translations may very well only lead the reader to wonder if anything *can* be understood in this system at all, and that suggests that something has gone very, very wrong.

Lipman, in what is a stimulating article, is certainly much more comprehensible than Prof. Guenther. However, he does have a number of debatable philosophically charged translations for rDzogs chen terms - sometimes this is simply a matter of learning a new code, as with Lipman's "thematized entities" for *chos can* (= *dharmin*; *dharmaka*). At other times, as we shall see below, there is a genuine problem in abandoning the more neutral philological standpoint in favour of a system whose appropriateness is far from clear.²

When Lipman writes of "the openness of Being (*sūnyatā*), to use the language of Heidegger" (p. 32), is he in fact giving us anything that is significantly clearer and more accurate than the usual, and philologically sound, translation "voidness"? Arguably, the Heideggerian philosophical schema which he is invoking to translate a key Buddhist term is as

2 As with Guenther, the cause of clarity was also ill-served by the author's failing to present any of the Tibetan of the passages which he translates. Note that Lipman, when he does give Tibetan terms, is often rather inconsistent: *bden grub*, for example, is rendered as "essence or existence in truth" (p. 35), "something ontically ultimate" (p. 36), "something validated absolutely" (p. 39).

obscure, if not more so, than the Indo-Tibetan notion itself.³ But more importantly, the connection between the Heideggerian schema and the Buddhist notions remains sufficiently vague that while we may certainly try to compare the two philosophies, it is dangerous to incorporate Heidegger's thought into our very translations of Buddhist terms. Using a phrase like "the openness of Being" for *śūnyatā* or the "ontic mode of things" for *snang tshul* (literally "way something appears", p. 30) raises the serious question as to whether, or how far, the Buddhist problem of entity versus voidness coincides with the Heideggerian dichotomy of the ontic versus the ontological. Do we really want to say that the Heideggerian understanding of Being - which is couched in views on the history of Western philosophy, notably on the Pre-Socratics, as well as in Heidegger's reposing of the Leibnizian question "Why is there anything at all rather than nothing?" - is also somehow close to the Indian idea of *śūnyatā* and *paramārthasatya* ("ultimate truth")? Or was there a fundamental shift in understanding in the rDzogs chen school, so that the Indian schema were reinterpreted in a way in which the Heideggerian parallels would become more appropriate? All these questions, and they are interesting questions, remain insufficiently answered by those who would existentialize Buddhist notions.

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3 I certainly don't wish to suggest that all interpretations using Western notions or conceptual tools are to be banished. Far from it. It seems to me obvious, however, that the key question which ought to be asked constantly is whether the Western notion being used is clearer or more rigorous than the Indo-Tibetan notion being explained. Thus, in this light, symbolic logic or Venn diagrams, for example, *can* be profitably used to interpret a Buddhist notion like *vyāpti* ("implication" lit. "pervasion"): even though symbolic logic may seem arduous, it is without doubt a clear, rigorous and understandable medium. Interpreting "pervasion" between F and G as meaning "for all x, if x is F then x is G" does give a gain in clarity, which we would not have if we confined ourselves to speaking only in terms of the Indo-Tibetan idiom of "pervasion". The question: Can we really claim anything at all like a similar increase in clarity when we opt for Heideggerian notions to interpret *śūnyatā*?

MICHELLE YEH: *Modern Chinese Poetry: Theory and Practice since 1917*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991.

Die moderne chinesische Dichtung hatte von Anfang an keinen leichten Stand: Im Schatten einer übermächtigen Tradition stehend, bei den ersten Gehversuchen aus diesem Schatten heraus bisweilen noch reichlich unbeholfen wirkend und schliesslich im Laufe der Jahre gar zu oft in eklatanter Weise für krude Propagandazwecke missbraucht, wurde sie gerade bei westlichen Rezipienten oft kaum wahr-, geschweige denn ernst genommen. Auch die Forschung auf diesem Gebiet fristete lange Zeit eher ein Mauerblümchendasein und wurde erst in letzter Zeit, vor allem mit dem Erscheinen einiger junger, unabhängiger und experimentierfreudiger Talente in der Nach-Mao Aera, wieder etwas belebt. Eine aktuelle, Autoren vom Festland und aus Taiwan gleichermassen berücksichtigende und vor allem bis in die Gegenwart hineinreichende Gesamtdarstellung zur modernen Dichtung Chinas, wie sie Michelle Yeh hier vorlegt, fehlte jedoch bis anhin. Insbesondere dadurch, dass ihr Werk sich nicht in reiner Kompilationsarbeit erschöpft und übers Anthologische oder einen herkömmlichen literaturgeschichtlichen Abriss hinausgeht, schliesst die Autorin mit dem vorliegenden Band eine Lücke.

Yehs Zugang zum Thema hebt sich vom Gängigen reizvoll ab: Er wird vom Anspruch bestimmt, eine Studie zum Wesen der modernen chinesischen Lyrik zu liefern, wenn auch nicht ohne Berücksichtigung des literarischen und historischen Kontextes, in dem sie entstand. Statt einzelne Schriftsteller nach zeitlichen und politisch-geographischen Kriterien oder aber nach Zugehörigkeit zu bestimmten Strömungen und Schulen zu klassifizieren, sollten vornehmlich die verbindenden Elemente in der modernen chinesischen Dichtkunst aufgezeigt und grundsätzliche Fragen nach deren Eigenart insbesondere in Abgrenzung zur traditionellen Lyrik gestellt werden.

Um zu eruieren, wo die fundamentalen Neuerungen liegen, welche die Revolte gegen althergebrachte literarische Normen im Umfeld der 4.Mai-Bewegung mit sich brachte, und inwiefern nach 1917 von einer Neudefinition von Wesen und Funktion der Dichtung gesprochen werden kann, nimmt die Autorin in den ersten beiden Kapiteln die Frage als Ausgangspunkt, worin die geistigen und sozialen Prämissen zu suchen seien, die zu einer solchen Neuorientierung geführt haben, und wie sich das veränderte Selbstverständnis der DichterInnen konkret in der poetischen Umsetzung äussert. So spürt sie etwa in einem längeren Exkurs

der seit den Anfängen moderner chinesischer Dichtung in unzähligen Varianten auftauchenden Sternmetaphorik nach und macht den Stern als zentrales Symbol für den nach einer neuen Identität ringenden Poeten, ja für den modernen Geist schlechthin aus.

Der mittlere Teil des Buches ist sodann vorwiegend formalen Aspekten gewidmet, nicht jedoch den sonst oft mit Vorliebe diskutierten prosodischen Problemen. Das vierte Kapitel greift exemplarisch die in der modernen chinesischen Dichtung im Gegensatz zur traditionellen Lyrik auffällig häufig benutzte Kreisform auf, welche sich dadurch auszeichnet, dass das selbe Bild oder Motiv in symmetrischer Konfiguration sowohl zu Beginn wie auch wiederum am Ende des jeweiligen Gedichtes erscheint. Anhand einer ganzen Reihe von extensiv bearbeiteten Beispielen wird aufgezeigt, wie auf der Suche nach neuen signifikanten Ausdrucksformen schon in den Zwanzigerjahren unter dem Einfluss der westlichen Romantik und des französischen Symbolismus mit der Zirkularform experimentiert wurde (mit unterschiedlichem Erfolg, wie hierzu anzumerken bleibt), und welcher Popularität sich kreisförmige Strukturen auch danach noch bis in die heutige Zeit hinein erfreuten.

Im vorangehenden Kapitel geht die Autorin auf die Frage nach dem Stellenwert von Bildsprache und Metaphorik ein, um dann zu einer Diskussion von Stilmitteln wie Fragmentarisierung und disjunktive Juxtaposition überzuleiten. Das starke Gewicht, welches letztere in der modernen Dichtkunst Chinas erhalten, lassen ihrer Ansicht nach auf eine besondere Affinität zu modernistischen Vorbildern des Westens schliessen. Damit bezieht sie in der Debatte, ob die neuen Ausdrucksformen gänzlich auf Anleihen bei westlicher Poetik zurückzuführen seien, oder ob seitens der chinesischen Dichter der Neuzeit nicht doch auch aus dem Fundus traditioneller Dichtersprache geschöpft werde - diese zeichnet sich notabene ebenfalls durch Stilelemente wie Nondiskursivität, Bildorientiertheit und Tendenz zur Fragmentarisierung aus -, eindeutig Stellung. Grundsätzlich aber wehrt sich M.Yeh zu Recht gegen die allzu simple, strikt dichotomische Aufteilung in eine "authentische" chinesische Dichtung einerseits und eine reine Imitation westlicher Vorlagen andererseits. Vielmehr betont sie an verschiedener Stelle die dialektische Verbindung von chinesischer Tradition und Moderne, von westlichen Einflüssen und nationaler Eigenheit, welche die chinesische Lyrik im Zeichen der Erneuerung eingegangen ist, wenn auch insgesamt die prägende Wirkung westlicher modernistischer Theorien und Techniken kaum ernsthaft von der Hand zu weisen ist.

In extenso wird das eben angesprochene Thema Tradition versus Moderne im letzten Kapitel abgehandelt. Die entsprechende Kontroverse ist so alt wie die moderne Dichtung selber und zieht sich von Hu Shis Manifest "Einige Überlegungen zur Reform der Literatur" von 1917 bis in die heutigen Tage hinein: Dabei oszillierte die theoretische Diskussion, inwieweit die eigene dichterische Tradition kategorisch abzulehnen sei und wie absolut westliche poetische Richtlinien zum Modell deklariert werden sollten, stets stark zwischen den beiden Extrempositionen. Die These von Michelle Yeh lautet nun dahingehend, dass ungeachtet der zweifellos bestehenden kulturfremden Einflüsse die eigene Tradition in der Praxis für manchen Dichter eine wichtige, wenn auch nicht unbesehen übernommene Quelle der Inspiration geblieben, der Bruch kein so absoluter und abrupter gewesen sei wie oft behauptet. Offen lässt die Autorin hier allerdings die Frage, wie weit die von ihr zitierten Beispiele, in denen etwa traditionelle Themata oder Personae aufgegriffen und ironisch verfremdet werden, repräsentativ sind, und ob etwa der Fall des in seinem Frühwerk daoistisch-buddhistisches Gedankengut mit modernistischen westlichen Techniken synthetisierenden Bian Zhilin eine Ausnahmeerscheinung oder eher die Regel darstellt. Hier wie übrigens ganz allgemein hätte man sich doch eine näher begründete Auswahl der vorgestellten Autoren gewünscht. Auffällig ist jedenfalls im gesamten Buch die - nicht deklarierte - Konzentration auf Werke der zwanziger und dreissiger Jahre einerseits sowie jüngerer taiwanesischer Autoren andererseits. Zeitgenössische Dichter vom Festland finden zwar auch Erwähnung, das Schwergewicht liegt aber klar andernorts, ein Umstand, der den Anspruch auf eine ausgewogene Gesamtschau moderner chinesischer Lyrik stark relativiert.

Während die im vorliegenden Band aufgeworfenen Fragen insgesamt also durchaus von Relevanz sind, stellt sich jedoch die Art, wie diese beantwortet werden, als keineswegs geradlinig heraus. Charakteristisch für das gesamte Werk ist etwa, dass die Darlegungen der Autorin stets mit einer Fülle von konkreten Beispielen untermauert werden, zum Teil in vollständiger Erstübersetzung und mit Detailinterpretation sowie ergänzt durch gelegentliche Verweise auf die Interpretationen anderer Autoren, Bezugnahme auf allenfalls vorhandene Anspielungen oder Parallelen zu traditionellen Gedichten, eher selten auch durch nähere Angaben zum Autor und dessen literaturtheoretischem Hintergrund. Diese Vorgehensweise ist an sich begrüssenswert, führt sie doch zu einer wesentlich erhöhten Anschaulichkeit und Differenziertheit des vorgetragenen Materials. Gelegentlich stört die Detailfülle und die mangelnde Stringenz der

Argumentation aber den Lesefluss und den Überblick empfindlich. Alles in allem wirkt denn das Ganze eher unsystematisch, selbst die einzelnen, thematisch unabhängigen Kapitel entbehren zumindest auf den ersten Blick eines erkennbaren inneren Zusammenhanges.

Erklärbar wird das etwas heterogene Gesamtbild möglicherweise durch die Tatsache, dass für das vorliegende Buch Teile bereits anderweitig publizierter Artikel adaptiert, diese dann aber nicht immer sehr sorgfältig integriert wurden. Als Beispiel hierfür könnte die an sich sehr gelungene Analyse des 1974 veröffentlichten Gedichtes "Notizen aus Los Angeles" (Luocheng cao) des taiwanesischen Dichters Zhang Cuo (Dominic Cheung) dienen (S.105-109). Die darin aufgezeigten Aspekte sind nach wie vor auf die Thematik des ursprünglichen Aufsatzes¹, nämlich daoistische Anklänge in der modernen chinesischen Poesie, zugeschnitten, während auf die an dieser Stelle eigentlich interessierende Frage der Verwendung des Kreises als formales Prinzip nur eher beiläufig eingegangen wird. Insbesondere erstaunt, dass M.Yeh, ausgehend von ihrem ursprünglichen Interpretationsansatz, den inneren Zusammenhang zwischen Inhalt und Form nicht voll auslotet und nicht auf den Kreis als primären Topos daoistischer Schriften verweist. In dem stark daoistischem Seinsverständnis verpflichteten Gedicht, das eine spirituelle Reise, ein Eintauchen des Selbst in den Kreislauf der Natur darstellt (versinnbildlicht durch das Eintauchen in Wasser eines an Qu Yuan gemahnenden Beinahe-Selbstmörders), begegnen wir nämlich immer wieder dem Wort "Kreis" sowie Bildern kreisförmiger oder runder Gegenstände. Dadurch, dass Anfangs- und Schlussvers beinahe identisch sind, findet der zur zentralen Metapher des Gedichtes erhobene Kreis als bekanntes daoistisches Symbol für den Kreislauf des Lebens und das Prinzip des Dao schlechthin schliesslich seine Entsprechung in der Struktur des Gedichtes und unterstützt dessen Botschaft auf formaler Ebene.

Leider enthält der Band auch einige Unschönheiten wie Druckfehler in der Reproduktion der chinesischen Texte (S.160, 188) oder gar sinnverzerrende Übersetzungen, wie in einem Gedicht von Shang Qin: Die Übertragung von "Fliehender Himmel" (Taowang de tiankong, S.103), lehnt sich stark an diejenige von Wai-lim Yip an, auf welchen sich die Autorin in ihren Ausführungen auch bezieht, deren Fehler sie aber offenbar unbesehen übernahm, von der Ungenauigkeit bei einzelnen Ausdrücken bis hin zur Verschiebung dreier halber Verszeilen. So entsteht der Eindruck, der Band sei wohl etwas in Eile zusammengestellt und mangelhaft redigiert worden. Umso erfreulicher zu vermerken ist der sehr

leserfreundliche Appendix mit sämtlichen im Text länger zitierten chinesischen Originaltexten, einem konsequent in Umschrift und chinesischen Zeichen gehaltenen Namens- und Titelverzeichnis sowie einer umfassenden Bibliographie.

Christine Kühne

- 1 Yeh, Michelle. "Taoism and Modern Chinese Poetry". *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 15 (1988): 173-97

BUCHANZEIGEN / NOTICES

SARAH ALLAN: *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991. xi + 230 pp.

Mit diesem Buch ist wieder einmal ein äusserst lesenswertes Buch auf den Markt gekommen. Es richtet sich an ein interessiertes, aber nicht unbedingt spezialisiertes Lesepublikum. Allan legt darin ihre Forschungsergebnisse in einer nachvollziehbaren Weise dar, ohne dass sich der Leser oder die Leserin bald im Dickicht der verschiedenen Mythen und Namen vollständig verloren sieht. Ein ausgezeichneter Anmerkungsapparat und eine ebensolche Bibliographie lassen jedoch auch jedes wissenschaftliche Herz höher schlagen. Es ist das erste Buch einer Serie, die sich mit der Entwicklung des frühen chinesischen Denkens befassen soll. Allan konzentriert sich hier auf das der späten Shang-Dynastie (ca. 1700-1100 v.Chr.), welches sie als "mythisches Denken", ein Denken in Mythen, bezeichnet.

Nach einer allgemeinen Einführung in die Zeit der Shang entwickelt Allan ihre Theorie, dass die Shang einen Mythos über zehn Sonnen gehabt haben. Allan identifiziert diese mit dreibeinigen Raben (auf Grund von verschiedenen Abbildungen) und mit dem Schwarzen Vogel, durch dessen Ei *Jian Di* laut einem Ursprungsmythos den Shang-Ahnen empfangen haben soll.

In der Zhou-Zeit unterlagen die Mythen u.a. aufgrund einer einsetzenden Literaturtradition einem grundlegenden Wandel. Neun der