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**Schneider J. *Eine buddhistische Kritik der indischen Götter. Śaṃkarasvāmins Devātīśayastotra mit Prajñāvarmans Kommentar.*** Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, 2014 (*Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde*). ISBN 13: 978-3-902501-19-6.

Dr. Johannes Schneider is well known for his works on the Indo-Tibetan poetry contained in the Tibetan Buddhist Canon. His special academic interest lies in the reflection of Indian literary and religious heritage in Buddhist poetic texts. His new monograph concludes a series of his works on three famous Buddhist apologetic hymns composed by the brothers Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin (the author of two of them) and Śaṃkarasvāmin. These hymns, along with two commentaries by Prajñāvarman on the longest of them, open the one-volume section *Collected Hymns* of the Tengyur and are supposed to be the earliest Buddhist hymns written in Sanskrit. However, both of Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin's texts are only known in Tibetan translation, while a rather late Sanskrit manuscript copy of Śaṃkarasvāmin's hymn was found not long ago and edited by Losang Norbu Shastri (1990) and M. Hahn (2000).

The hymns are characterized as apologetic on account of their stark criticism of Hindu gods in contrast to the Buddha. He is depicted as totally peaceful and helpful to all beings while Śiva, Brahma, Viṣṇu Indra and other gods are depicted as harmful and full of bad characteristics. A large number of quotations from Vedic and later Hindu literature are presented in the brothers' hymns and Prajñāvarman's commentaries. These texts, therefore, served as a very important source of information on Indian mythology for later Tibetan scholars.

It is quite understandable why they have attracted interest from a few eminent European scholars, such as C. Kőrösi, D. Schlingloff, B. Kuznetsov and M. Hahn. But it is thanks to J. Schneider that we have acquired detailed studies and complete translations of all five texts into a European language, in this case German. His first monograph, *Der Lobpreis der Vorzüglichkeit des Buddha. Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmins*

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*Viṣeṣastava mit Prajñāvarman's Kommentar. Nach dem tibetischen Tanjur herausgegeben und übersetzt*, was published in the famous *Indica et Tibetica* series, in 1993. It presented a critical edition of the Tibetan texts of the longer hymn by Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin and the commentary on it by Prajñāvarman, along with translations of these, while the introduction provided a detailed analysis of the history of the texts, their stylistics, structure, etc. The other hymn by Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin was scrutinized in the same manner in a separate paper, *Der Buddha als der wahre Śiva. Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmins Sarvajñamaheśvarastotra* in *Berliner Indologische Studien* (1996).

The monograph on Śamkarasvāmin's hymn and the commentary on it follows the same pattern. The introduction contains information on the various editions of the Tibetan translation of the hymn and their relationship as well as the relationship between the hymn itself and its presentation in the text of the commentary; on the author, translators, poetics and contents of the hymn and, separately, on the author, translators, and structure of the commentary. Of special value is the final section of the introduction that presents a list of Indian myths and legends grouped around the figures of the main Indian gods and epic heroes. There follows a critical edition of the Tibetan text of the hymn along with an annotated German translation, for which the Sanskrit text edited by M. Hahn was used, and afterwards the Tibetan text and annotated German translation of the commentary. Several useful lexicographic indices are provided, including the vocabulary of the hymn with German and Sanskrit equivalents. The bibliography on the subject is close to comprehensive, although a Russian paper by B. Kuznetsov (1985) on the two hymns by the brothers quite expectedly proved to be unknown to the author.

The monograph has numerous academic and probably literary merits (the latter in respect of the German translation of the hymn) and is certainly an important contribution to the study of Indo-Tibetan religious poetry. But I would like to make two critical remarks concerning the introduction as a part of academic discussion.

First, the author did not touch on the subject of the Buddha as an avatar of Viṣṇu as used in the hymn while analyzing the dating problem. This creates a rather complicated situation, since for many reasons it would be more appropriate to consider the brothers' hymns among the earliest examples of Buddhist literature in Sanskrit while the avatar theme must refer to a much later period (fortunately, we know for sure that the author of the commentaries, Prajñāvarman, lived between the late 8th c. and early 9th c., hence the hymns must have been composed before this time). The author is going to publish a special paper on this issue to appear in *Berliner Indologische Studien* (2015) but it would have been much better if at least a very brief mention of the issue could be found in the monograph, too. My own point of view is that the entire passage consisting of at least three stanzas (14–16) and probably the next (17) as well, is a later interpolation since they seem to violate the logical order of the text. It is also notable that a very long hymn by Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin, so abundant in different myths and legends, never mentions

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the Buddha as an avatar of Viṣṇu, which would have been rather strange for a contemporary of Śaṅkarasvāmin (and while on the question of their close family relation we follow the Tibetan tradition, there are no independent facts that could prove it). I must also point out that, if there was an interpolation, its author was careful enough to try to follow the metrical pattern of the preceding stanzas, although his part is not identical in this.

Second, one might probably expect more attention to the issue of relationships between the Tibetan text of the hymn, the version of it found in the commentary, and the Sanskrit text. In his illuminating paper, M. Hahn noted that the commentarial version of the Tibetan text is closer to the Sanskrit one and some variations in the canonical Tibetan text of the hymn may be due to later revision(s). It is clear that the main Tibetan text was revised, but it does not seem that the extant Sanskrit text represents the original version from which the Tibetan translation could have been made, and there are some occasions when the commentarial version supports the main Tibetan text in contrast to the Sanskrit one and, moreover, a couple of places where it seems to contradict both of them. J. Schneider presents a list of the most important differences between the three texts but does not supplement it with any hypotheses that might contribute to a better understanding of the textual history of the hymn.

Of course, neither of these things could eclipse the scholarly delight I felt when reading this monograph. They rather indicate that the subject has not been exhausted and no doubt holds more pleasures still to be discovered.

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