Orality and Textuality in the Indian Context

by
Ludo Rocher

Orality and Textuality in the Indian Context
Ludo Rocher
University of Pennsylvania

I would like to preface this paper with a personal experience. One day, many years ago, my wife and I were invited for lunch at the home of an Indian friend, in Poona. I hardly recall the meal, but I clearly remember that, after lunch, we were introduced to our friend's son, a boy of five or six years old. The father was obviously proud of his son, and, to show that his pride was justified, he told the boy, in Marathi, to honor the guests by reciting the famous *Bhagavadgītā*, in Sanskrit. The boy positioned himself in front of us, and started his recitation:

> *dharmakṣetre kurukṣetre samavetā yuyutsavaḥ*
> *māmakāḥ pāṇḍavāś caiva; kim akurvata, Saṃjaya?*[1]

On and on he went, stanza after stanza, until his father signaled him to stop. The boy's Sanskrit was perfect. It was as clear as that of any Indian grown-up I ever heard, pronounced without any effort, with the right intonations, even with the appropriate facial expressions whenever they were required.

While this recitation was going on I could not help making a number of reflections. First, the boy had not yet learned to read. He had learned the text of the *Gītā* from his father's mouth, even as his father must have learned it from his father when he was five years old. There

---

[1] "On the field of Righteousness, the field of Kuru, my sons and Pāṇḍu's were gathered, ready for battle; what did they do, Saṃjaya?" (*Mahābhārata* 6.23.1 Poona crit. ed.). On the meter of this verse, see below pp. 16-17.

may, or there may not, have been a printed copy of the *Bhagavadgītā* in that house in Poona City. That was irrelevant. When one recites the *Bhagavadgītā* in my friend's house, one recites it from memory.

Second, not only had the boy not learned to read; he also did not know Sanskrit. When I asked the father whether his son understood what he had been saying, the answer was an emphatic "no": "the meaning of the text I will explain to him later," he said. What that meant was that the young Indian boy was being trained to memorize endless series of what, for him, were nothing more than nonsense syllables.

The *Bhagavadgītā* obviously was the first and only Sanskrit text the boy had been taught to recite. I regret now that I did not ask my friend many more questions. I might have asked him about other Sanskrit texts he was going to teach his son, how many, and in what order. I might have inquired about his teaching method. It might have been interesting to see the father teach his son a Sanskrit stanza in our presence. However, at that very moment I did not think of asking these questions. I was not even supposed to think of them. I was only supposed to be in admiration at the boy's oral recitation of a famous Sanskrit text.

To be sure, I was in admiration, I was in awe, as I had been in awe before and as I have been in awe since, whenever I was faced with the extraordinary capacity of Indians not only to memorize endless Sanskrit texts, but also to keep that memory securely stored and be able to call it up without the slightest effort whenever recitation is called for. I am also not the only Western Sanskritist to have been in awe before this phenomenon. Friedrich Max Müller noted: "We can form no opinion of the power of memory in a state of society so different from ours as the Indian Parishads are from our universities. Feats of memory, such as we hear of now and then, show that our notions of the limits of that faculty are quite arbitrary. Our own memory has been systematically

undermined for many generations."[2] More succinctly, the German indologist Heinrich Lüders described some Indian pandits as "nothing but walking, living text books."[3]

But Western scholars went further than being amazed. They also raised the question why Indians resort to memorization "even at the present day when manuscripts are neither scarce nor expensive."[4]. Memorization is something one expects in illiterate societies, and that includes India before the introduction of script. But why did Indians continue to memorize so much, even after the time when script came to India?

The age of the introduction of script in India -- rather its reintroduction after it disappeared with the Indus Valley Civilization -- is still debated, and I will not touch on that problem since it is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that there are inscriptions, all over the subcontinent, as early as the third century B.C.E., which means that Indians still resort to oral transmission more than two thousand years after they could have resorted to written transmission.

I will argue in this paper that the question of oral transmission *versus* written transmission in India is far more complex than it has often been presented. There are a number of factors at work, and these factors are different for different branches of the extensive literary

----

[2] Quoted by Radha Kumud Mookerji: *Ancient Indian Education (Brahmanical and Buddhist)*. 4th ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969, p. 212.

[3] "Sie sind eben nichts weiter als wandelnde, lebende Textbücher" ("Philologie, Geschichte und Archäologie in Indien," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 83, 1929, 1-20 at p. 4).

[4] Max Müller at Mookerji: *Ancient Indian Education*, p. 212.

legacy of classical India.

The Vedas

When one speaks of orality and oral transmission in India, one thinks in the first place of the Veda. In fact, many discussions on orality in India bore solely on the transmission of the Vedic texts.[5]

To account for the fact that the transmission of the Vedas has been largely oral, much emphasis has been put on the secrecy argument: the Indian brahmans did not want their Vedas to be written down for fear that they might fall into the wrong hands.

This argument relies heavily on the well documented disappointment on the part of Europeans, mostly in the 17th and 18th centuries, when they tried hard to learn something about the nature and content of the mysterious Indian Veda. The brahmans failed to comply. The French physician and traveler, François Bernier, for example, was faced with the argument that the Vedas are kept secret for fear that the Muslims get hold of them and destroy them.[6] A pandit in Banaras told lieutenant-colonel Alexander Dow that the four Vedas are so sacred that no brahman is allowed to divulge their contents to any other sect; doing

----

[5] On Vedic recitation, see e.g. Frits Staal's *Nambudiri Veda Recitation*. Dissertationes Rheno-Trajectinae, 5. The Hague: Mouton, 1961, and his "The Fidelity of Oral Tradition and the Origin of Science," *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Afd. Letterkunde, n.s. 49.8, 1986 (reviewed by David Pingree, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, 1988, 637-638). Also Michael Witzel: "Die mündliche Tradition der Paippalādins von Orissa," *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 14, 1985, 259-289.

[6] *Voyages de François Bernier, contenant la description des Etats du Grand Mogol...* Amsterdam, 1699, vol. I, p. 148.

so would result in excommunication.[7]

As far as the Vedas are concerned, I do not wish to deny that a certain degree of secrecy policy was at work. Many ancient texts make it clear that *śūdras*, the lowest of the four social classes, must be excluded from any knowledge of the Veda. No Vedic text should even be recited in the presence of a *śūdra*. And, if a *śūdra* "intentionally listens to a recitation of the Veda, his ears shall be filled with molten tin or lac."[8] If the Vedas, therefore, are not to be shared with *śūdras* who are members of the caste system, and also not with women[9] who are the brahmans' own wives and daughters -- *śūdras* and women have their own Veda, to which I will return --, it goes without saying that, strictly speaking, the Vedas are not supposed to fall into the hands of people who are totally outside the caste system, and that includes all *mlecchas* "foreigners".

Yet I have reservations concerning the weight that has been given to the secrecy argument. In the first place, I do not think that it is the sole explanation for the disappointment on the part of so many

----

[7] *The History of Hindostan, translated from the Persian, a new edition*, London 1803 (1st ed. 1763). Quoted by Caland (see note 10), p. 285.

[8] *Gautamadharmasūtra* 12.4, transl. Georg Bühler, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. II (1st ed. 1879), p. 236.

[9] In his commentary on the *Ṛgveda* Sāyaṇa says that, even though *śūdras* and women are in need of knowledge, since they are excluded from the initiation ceremony (*upanayana*) they do not deserve to learn to recite the Veda, and they should not have access to it" (1966 ed. Banaras: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, vol. 1, p. 18: *strīśūdrayos tu satyām api jñānāpekṣāyām upanayanābhāvenādhyayanarāhityād vede 'dhikāraḥ pratibaddhaḥ*).

Europeans who were looking for the Veda. I rather tend to agree with the former professor of Sanskrit at the University of Utrecht, Willem Caland who, in a most interesting study on the history of the discovery of the Veda by Westerners, came to the conclusion that they came away disappointed, less because of the brahmans' unwillingness to share the Veda with them, than because they were often knocking at the wrong doors.[10]

When the Discalced Carmelite Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo inquired about the Veda from a brahman, he received the evasive answer: "Veda is anything that relates to religion; Veda does not refer to books."[11] This kind of answer most probably reflected more the man's ignorance about the Veda than his unwillingness to share it with the missionary. As the French indologist, Louis Renou, put it:

> When examined from the perspective of Indian history, the Veda presents a striking paradox. On the one hand, one reveres it, one recognizes it as an omniscient, infallible, eternal principle -- something like God in the form of 'Knowledge', God made into a Book (the Bible), the Indian logos --, one refers to it as the very source of *dharma*, as the authority from which the totality of brahmanic disciplines derives. On the other hand, what we may call the philological traditions relating to the Vedas, the very substance of the texts that compose it,

----

[10] "De ontdekkingsgeschiedenis van den Veda," *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam*, Afd. Letterkunde, 5e Reeks 3, 1918, 261-334 at p. 303. Caland's article was reviewed in detail by Theodor Zachariae, *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 183, 1921, 148-65. Zachariae's review was translated and annotated by Henry Hosten, *Journal of Indian History* 3, 1923, 127-57.

[11] "Vedam est, quidquid ad religionem pertinet, Vedam non sunt libri" (*Examen historico-criticum Codicum Indicorum Bibliothecae Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide*, Rome 1792, p. 50).

all that was from early onward weakened, if not altered or or lost.[12]

My second reservation against the secrecy argument is more serious in that it is more directly related to the topic of this paper: even as the secrecy argument is not the sole explanation for the disappointment of Europeans, it is also not the sole reason why, in traditional circles, the Vedas were and continued to be transmitted orally.

There was a time, I admit, when oral transmission was the only possible way to preserve the Vedas. Whatever date one puts on the introduction -- or reintroduction -- of script in India, at the time when the oldest Vedic hymns were composed -- circa 1200 B.C.E. -- there was no script on the subcontinent.

But, even after the Vedas could have been written down, there are indications that this was not done nevertheless, because that would not have been the right way of transmitting them from generation to generation. The famous eighth century philosopher Kumārilabhaṭṭa says that knowledge of the Veda is useless, if it has been acquired from writing.[13] And, according to a more effusive statement in the great epic,

---

[12] *Le destin du Véda en Inde*, in *Etudes védiques et pāṇinéennes*, Paris: de Boccard, vol. 6, p. 1 (translation mine).

[13] According to Mookerji: *Ancient Indian Education*, p. 27. I have not been able to verify this citation. In one passage from the *Ślokavārttika* (on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.29) Kumārila clearly states that every individual who recites the Veda is able to do so because someone else recited it before him (*sarvapuṃsām adhyayanam adhyayanāntara-pūrvakam*), and uses this argument to prove that the Vedas have no "author," i.e. a first reciter who did so on his own (*na punaḥ svātantryeṇa kaścid api prathamo 'dhyetā yaḥ kartā syāt*) (ed. Ānadāśrama Sanskrit Series 97.1, 3rd ed., 1953, p. 101).

the *Mahābhārata*, those who commit the Veda to writing are condemned to hell.[14]

The idea that knowledge of the Veda is *useless* if it is acquired from a book, is particularly significant. To understand its full import, we must keep in mind that the sole purpose of the Vedic *mantras* is to be recited, by a variety of priests, in the course of the numerous types of *yajñas* "sacrifices, rituals."[15] More important, the *mantras* are not only to be recited; they are to be recited absolutely correctly. Not only should the words or the order of words not be changed; even a single syllable wrongly pronounced or a single accent wrongly placed might bring ruin on the sacrificer and make his sacrifice futile.[16]

Correct pronunciation of the Vedic *mantras*, of course, cannot be

----

[14] Quoted Mookerji: *Ancient Indian Education*, p. 27.

[15] A *prima facie* view in the *Mīmāṃsāsūtras* (1.2.1) goes as far as to say that, "since the purpose of the Veda is to perform sacrifices, those parts of it that do not serve that purpose are useless" (*āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānarthakyam atadarthānām*). The final view (1.2.7) rejects the idea that any part of the Veda is useless; the parts which the opponent called useless serve to underscore the other parts that relate directly to the performance of ritual acts.

[16] E.g., *Pāṇinīyaśikṣā* verse 52:

> *mantro hīnaḥ svarato varṇato vā*
> *mithyāprayukto na tam artham āha;*
> *sa vāgvajro yajamānaṃ hinasti*
> *yathendraśatruḥ svarato 'parādhāt.*

"A *mantra* with a wrong accent or a wrong phoneme is pronounced in vain and does not convey the right sense; it is a *vajra* (Indra's weapon) in the form of words, and it destroys the patron of the sacrifice, even as the word *indra-śatru* when the accent is placed on the wrong syllable." This alludes to the fact that *indra-śatru* is a *bahuvrīhi* compound

acquired from books; it can be acquired solely through oral instruction. As a result, the brahmans have developed a variety of detailed mnemotechnic devices, all of which were designed to insure correct pronunciation and avoid corruption of the texts.[17] The *mantras* are taught not only as they occur in the Vedic *saṃhitās*, but also according to the *padapāṭha*, i.e. word by word without the euphonic combinations (*saṃdhi*). And, to make Vedic recitation absolutely flawless, the *mantras* are taught according to the progressive recitation (*kramapāṭha*), again with eight different and gradually more complex word combinations: 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, etc.; 1-2, 1-2-3, 2-3, 2-3-4; etc.[18]

Anyone who has seen Frits Staal's film, *Altar of Fire*, will have noticed how the Vedic texts are nothing less than physically shaken into the heads of the young apprentices, forward, backward, and sideways. The boys who feature in Staal's film are not older than my young *Bhagavadgītā* friend in Poona. What they too, learn first is the *śabda* "sound" of the Vedic *mantras*, not their meaning. To be sure, some later treatises do proclaim that understanding the meaning of the *mantras* is

----

meaning "having Indra as one's destroyer," whereas *indra-śatrú* is a *tatpuruṣa* meaning "the destroyer of Indra." For the same verse with a minor variant, see Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* (ed. Kielhorn, I p. 2). The story in which this confusion became fateful is told at *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 2.4.12.1 and *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 1.6.3.8.

[17] Cf. K. Parameswara Aital: *Veda-lakṣaṇa. Vedic Ancillary Literature. A Descriptive Bibliography*. Beiträge zur Südasianforschung, Südasian-Institut, Universität Heidelberg, vol. 143. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991, pp. 6-9 (with bibliography).

[18] For a description of these combinations, see, e.g., K.V. Abhyankar: *Veda-padapāṭha-carcā*. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974, pp. 37-40.

as important as or more important than learning their sound.[19] I would submit, though, that many of the boys in Staal's film -- and numerous boys who are taught in the same way all over India -- probably never learn to understand the meaning of the *mantras*, even later in life when they join the ranks of older Vedic priests, many of whom do not know the meaning of the *mantras* they recite either. I referred earlier to Caland's view that Europeans often knocked at the wrong doors, i.e. they approached brahmans who had no knowledge of the Veda whatever. To this category of brahmans who did not know the Veda, Max Müller juxtaposes a second group of brahmans: "There were many who knew it or large portions of it by heart, and could recite the hymns at sacrifices and public or private gatherings, but they did not even profess that they understood it. They were proud to know it by heart and by sound, and there were some who actually thought that the hymns would lose their magic power, if recited by one who understood their meaning."[20]

---

[19] E.g., Yāska's *Nirukta* 1.18: "He is the bearer of a burden only, -- the blockhead who, having studied, does not understand the meaning of the Veda. But he who knows the meaning obtains all good fortune and, with his sins purged off by knowledge, attains heaven. Whatever is learnt without its being understood is called mere cramming; like dry logs of wood on an extinguished fire, it can never illuminate" (transl. Lakshman Sarup, *The Nighaṇṭu and the Nirukta*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint 1967, p. 18). For other examples, see Mookerji: *Ancient Indian Education*, pp. 29-31.

[20] *Auld Lang Syne*. Second Series. *My Indian Friends*. New York: Scribner's, 1899, p. 189. Also Müller's *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*. London: Williams and Margate, 2nd ed., 1860, p. 4. Cf. Lüders, immediately before the sentence quoted earlier (note 3): "Freilich darf man, um die Gedächtnisleistung der sogenannten Vedis, der

Belles-lettres

The reason why I put so much emphasis on sound -- correct sound which can only be taught orally -- is that the role of sound has been vastly underrated as a major contributing factor to oral transmission in India, especially but not only in the area of the sacred Vedic *mantras*. The fact is that sound plays an important role in the orality of Sanskrit belles-lettres as well.

For many Indians Sanskrit is not just a language, not even merely a *saṃskṛta* "ornate" language. To them Sanskrit is different from any other language because it is the one and only *gīrvāṇavāk/devavāṇī* "language of the gods."[21] The mere sound of Sanskrit is something absolutely special, something out of this world, both for the speaker and the listener. I am sure that this idea was present at the after-lunch *Bhagavadgītā* recitation in Poona. While the boy was reciting, his audience of three were merely to sit back, enjoy, and feel blissed.

Perhaps to a lesser extent, but not unlike the Vedas, the works of the great Sanskrit poets are first memorized by the students. Only after that has been accomplished does the teacher go on to the next step, and does he explain the text word by word. Later in life Indians who read some of the master pieces of Sanskrit literature in their school days may forget the explanations of the commentators, but they continue to be able to recite some of their favorite stanzas. Western Sanskritists can

----

'Vedawisser', richtig zu beurteilen, nicht ausser acht lassen , dass sie die Texte wohl bis auf den letzten Akzent zu rezitieren wissen, aber von dem Inhalt so gut wie nichts verstehen."

[21] Robert P. Goldman and Sally S. Sutherland called their Sanskrit primer *Devavāṇīpraveśikā: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Language.* Berkeley: University of California. Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, 2nd printing, 1992.

be put in embarrassing situations in India, when they are faced with the
question: which Sanskrit texts have you read? or, have you read this or
that book? Indeed, when one has "read" a Sanskrit book, one is supposed
to be able to recite from it, i.e. recite from it without a written text
in hand.[22] The difference between the Indian and Western appreciation of
Sanskrit literature may be illustrated by the fact that the Sanskrit
equivalent of English "well read" is *bahuśruta* "well heard, having heard
much."

Grammatical Texts

So far for the role of sound in oral transmission, either the right
sound to recite Vedic *mantras* correctly and prevent that the sacrifice
be ruined, or the beautiful sound of classical Sanskrit literature as a
source of pleasure and bliss. But there are other reasons why Sanskrit
text are memorized rather than consulted from books. I am thinking here
of a number of texts that are memorized, not to be recited and not for
their sound, but because they were composed to be memorized, and because
they can be put to use only if properly memorized. I am referring to
some aspects of technical literature in Sanskrit.

One of the Sanskrit texts my friend in Poona must have taught his
son soon after the *Bhagavadgītā* is Pāṇini's grammar, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, or,
if not the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* itself, at least one of its later rearrangements
such as Bhaṭṭojī Dīkṣita's *Siddhāntakaumudī*.

Pāṇini's grammar consists of some 4000 *sūtras*. *Sūtras* are short,
aphoristic statements in prose. There is at least one advantage to
memorizing Pāṇini's grammar: it is a brief text. In fact, every effort
has been made to keep it as brief as possible. For instance, rather than

---

[22] Cf. Jack Goody: "Books serve as a mnemonic and have themselves to
be committed to memory before they are considered as 'read'" (*Literacy
in Traditional Societies*. Cambridge UP, 1975, p. 14).

using long grammatical terms, Pāṇini resorts to all kinds of brief sigla, symbols which, even for someone who knows Sanskrit, are true nonsense syllables. But, as I showed earlier, Indians are accustomed from early on to memorize nonsense syllables.

A text on grammar can be shortened considerably if, instead of using a phrase such as "the short and long vowels", one uses the symbol *ak*, or instead of "the vowels and diphthongs", the symbol *ac*.[23] The high degree of sophistication displayed in the paninian symbols may be illustrated by the example of "the present tense" the symbol of which is *laṭ*, as against "the imperfect tense" the symbol of which is *laṅ*. *Laṭ* and *laṅ* show that these word formations are both *l*, i.e. verbal forms, that they are both *a*, i.e. that the verbal root has to be changed in the same way to form the stems of both tenses, but that the present tense is *ṭ*, i.e. that it has primary endings just like the subjunctive (*leṭ*), the periphrastic future (*luṭ*), etc., whereas the imperfect is *ṅ*, i.e. that it has secondary endings just like the optative (*liṅ*), the aorist (*luṅ*), etc.

To be sure, Pāṇini explains these and many other devices, although he also uses devices which one must look for elsewhere.[24] But even when

----

[23] This is a reference to the *Śivasūtras*, a list of all the phonemes of Sanskrit, separated by fourteen metalinguistic markers (here printed in bold type): *a i u* **ṇ** / *ṛ ḷ* **k** / *e o* **ṅ** / *ai au* **c** / etc. To make a grammatical rule applicable to a particular group of phonemes Pāṇini joins together the first phoneme in the intended group with the metalinguistic marker following the last: *ik* = *i u ṛ ḷ*, etc. Cf. George Cardona: *Studies in Indian Grammarians. I: The Method of Description Reflected in the Śivasūtras. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* n.s. 59.1, 1969.

[24] The *Śivasūtras* mentioned earlier are a case in point, and so are

Pāṇini himself provides the explanation, he never does so, as a Western user of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* would expect, in a general introduction or just before or after using the symbol for the first time. On the contrary, these explanations are spread all over the text. For instance, the fact that the symbol *āt* in the very first *sūtra* stands for *long ā only* becomes clear only if one already knows the 70th sūtra.[25]

Faced with this situation, in order to make use of Pāṇini's grammar to construct or to analyze a Sanskrit word correctly, there are two possible approaches. Either one goes the Western way, and gratefully turns to Otto Böhtlingk's edition of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*,[26] accompanied by the *Śivasūtras*, the *Dhātupāṭha*, the *Gaṇapāṭha*, and a set of different, alphabetically arranged indices. Even then the search process can be time consuming, if not occasionally frustrating. Or one goes the Indian way, learns the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* by rote, and calls up whatever information

----

the *Dhātupāṭha* "list of verbal roots" and the *Gaṇapāṭha* "list of word groups" (which allows the Indian grammarians to make a rule bear on a whole group of words by quoting the first only, followed by *ādi* "etc."). On the question whether these devices were composed by Pāṇini himself or by his predecessors, see Cardona: *Pāṇini. A Survey of Research*. The Hague: Mouton, 1976, pp. 160-165.

[25] In the first *sūtra* Pāṇini defines the strongest vowel increase (*vṛddhi*) as *ādaic*. According to the *Śivasūtras* *aic* stands for the diphthongs *ai* and *au* (see note 23). *Sūtra* 1.1.70 states that a vowel followed by *t* or *d* (depending on the phoneme that follows) refers to the vowel with that length only: *at* = *a*, *āt* = *ā* (whereas *a* without the dental = *a* + *ā*, according to *sūtra* 1.1.69).

[26] *Pāṇinis Grammatik*. Leipzig: Haessel, 1887. Reprinted Hildesheim: Olms, 1964.

one needs, immediately, from one's memory bank.[27] The latter is undoubtedly the easiest and the most efficient way.

When I said earlier that, if there was a secrecy factor at work on the part of the pandits vis-a-vis the Europeans, it only applied to the Vedas, I was thinking of the Sanskrit grammatical texts and, in particular, of a statement made as early as 1778 by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed. Halhed reports that his pandit "invariably refused to develope a single article of his religion," and that "while he readily displayed the principles of his grammar."[28]

Lexicography

The grammatical treatises are probably the best known example of Sanskrit texts that are memorized for practical purposes, texts that are unusable unless one either indexes them or memorizes them. But there are similar, less well-known cases.

It did not take Sir William Jones and other early Western students of Sanskrit long to realize that the vocabulary of Sanskrit is extremely rich,[29] and that the great Sanskrit poets love to use that vocabulary to

---

[27] Cf. Daniel H. H. Ingalls's description of students of Sanskrit grammar in Bengali *ṭols* (traditional schools): "The Brahman Tradition," in Milton Singer (ed.): *Traditional India: Structure and Change.* Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1959, pp. 3-9 at p. 5.

[28] *A Grammar of the Bengal Language.* Hoogly, 1778, Preface p. 11. A facsimile edition of the *Grammar* was published by Anand Publishers, Calcutta 1980.

[29] "Wherever we direct our attention to *Hindu* literature, the notion of *infinity* presents itself" (W. Jones, "On the Literature of the Hindus," *Asiatick Researches* 1, 1788, reprint New Delhi: Cosmo, 286-296 at p. 296).

the fullest possible extent, introducing words which one would not normally encounter in less elevated Sanskrit texts, or using words with some of their rather unusual meanings. I remember a day in India when I was puzzled by one word in a complicated stanza. I took the sentence to my pandit. He was silent for a while, but, all of a sudden, he recited a verse in which the problematic word not only occurred but which also provided the meaning we were looking for.

The verse which the pandit recited came from one of the Sanskrit *koṣas*, lexica, which he had memorized as a student. We have, indeed, a number of Sanskrit lexica, either synonymous -- similar to Roget's *Thesaurus*, but without the index -- or homonymous, but arranged by topic rather than alphabetically.[30]

Again, such texts are unusable, unless, as Henry Thomas Colebrooke did for the most famous of them as early as 1808,[31] one provides them with alphabetical indices, or, as my pandit did, one memorizes them.

Prosody

In connection with the *koṣas*, I might mention here something which, though not a mnemonic device in itself, decidedly ends up as an important facilitator for memorization. The *koṣas*, like numerous other Sanskrit texts, including most of the text of the *Bhagavadgītā*, are composed in a particular type of verse. Each stanza contains four groups of eight syllables; it is a kind of quatrain, in an easy and rather free meter, but with just enough restrictions to give each stanza the same

---

[30] For the most recent survey of Sanskrit lexicographical literature, see Madhukar M. Patkar: *History of Sanskrit Lexicography*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981.

[31] *Cósha, or Dictionary of the Sanscrit Language by Amera Sinha. With an English Interpretation and Annotations.* Serampore 1808.

basic and steady cadence. This is the Sanskrit *anuṣṭubh*, more commonly called the *śloka*.[32] I realized how Indians resort to it to make texts fit for memorization, when in the library of Calcutta Sanskrit College I found a manuscript in which a complex prose text on the order in which people inherit -- which is easily confused in prose -- had been summarized in *ślokas* where the cadence prevented much of the potential confusion.

Ślokas and poetic meter generally lead me to one last aspect of Sanskrit technical literature which I wish to mention. Not all Sanskrit poetry is in easy *anuṣṭubh*. On the contrary, there are numerous other meters, from very short ones to very long ones. As a result we have treatises on prosody. Not unlike the grammarians, the prosodists avoid terms such as iamb, throchee, dactyl, anapaest, and so on. They use eight brief symbols instead: *ya, ra, ta, bha, ja, sa, ma, na.* If one works with metrical feet of three syllables as the Indians do, these eight symbols cover all possible combinations of long and short syllables.[33] Of course, one has to add to these eight the symbols *ga* (for a single long syllable, *guru*) and *la* (for a short syllable, *laghu*),

---

[32] In each of the four quarters (*pāda*) of the *anuṣṭubh* (see the specimen from the *Bhagavadgītā* at the beginning of this paper) the meter of the first halves is free; the second halves of the first and third quarters are short-long-long-either (although there are variants), those of the second and fourth quarters are invariably short-long-short-long.

[33] Here again a *śloka* is memorized to distinguish the eight symbols:

ādimadhyāvasāneṣu yaratā yānti lāghavam,

bhajasā gauravaṃ yānti manau gauravalāghavam.

"*Ya, ra,* and *ta* are short at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, respectively; *bha, ja,* and *sa* are long in the same places; *ma* and *na* are fully long and short, respectively."

because not all meters are divisible by three.

These ten symbols are, in turn, used to formulate the definitions of each and every individual meter, as in this definition of the 14-syllable quarter of the *vasantatilakā*:

uktā vasantatilakā tabhajā jagau gaḥ.
"The *vasantatilakā* consists of *ta, bha, ja, ja, ga, ga.*"

Remarkably, if one recites this and many other similar definitions, one not only knows the definition of the meter; at the same time one is reciting a sample, and one interiorizes the cadence, of the meter in question. The definition of the *vasantatilakā* above is in *vasantatilakā* meter.

When I need to identify one of the more complex meters of a verse, I have to count the syllables, and consult a reference book in which all meters are listed in increasing number of syllables.[34] When I do not have a reference book ready at hand, I am often at a loss. An Indian who has been taught prosody and who has memorized the definitions of the various meters is able, merely by reading any verse aloud, to recognize the meter at once.

The Purāṇas

Finally, I would like to introduce two genres of Sanskrit literature which present problems *sui generis* when one looks at them from the angle of orality and textuality.

Of the first of these I became acutely aware some years ago, when I was writing the volume on the *Purāṇas* for a new multi-volume *History of*

---

[34] E.g., Vaman Shivram Apte's *Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*, 3rd ed., Bombay: Gopal Narayen, 1924, pp. 1035-42: Appendix I "Sanskrit Prosody."

Indian Literature.[35] I soon realized that I was faced with a situation in which the relation between orality and textuality in India has led modern scholarship, by non-Indians first and by Indians later, to a regretful misrepresentation of an important aspect of India's literary legacy.

The *Purāṇas*, as we have them on the shelves of our libraries, can best be described as encyclopedias, texts that deal with any topic one can imagine. Some of the *Purāṇas* are so encyclopedic that they include chapters on Sanskrit grammar, on prosody, on poetics, on architecture, on precious stones, etc. etc. But, more than anything else, the printed *Purāṇas* are filled with ancient stories -- the Sanskrit term *purāṇa*, as an adjective, means "ancient". The more I read through the endless printed *Purāṇa* texts -- there are said to be eighteen major *Purāṇas* and 18 minor ones, but, in reality, there are many more --, and, even more so, the more I studied what modern scholars have written about the *Purāṇas*, the more I realized that there were problems. There are many problems, but I will restrict myself here to one major problem that bears directly on orality and textuality, be it in a totally different form from anything I have discussed so far.

It is often said that, as compared to other genres of Sanskrit literature, scholars have neglected the *Purāṇas*. That may have been true for a while. After all, they are the Vedas for *śūdras* and women, which I alluded to earlier.[36] Also, when Horace Hayman Wilson translated the

---

[35] *A History of Indian Literature* (general editor J. Gonda), vol. 2.3 *The Purāṇas*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986.

[36] The text of Sāyaṇa quoted at note 9 continues: "they (i.e. *śūdras* and women) get their knowledge of righteousness (*dharma*) and vedic matters (*brahma*) from *Purāṇas* and the like" (*dharmabrahmajñānaṃ tu purāṇādimukhenotpadyate*).

Viṣṇupurāṇa in 1840, he included detailed summaries of all the major *Purāṇas* in his introduction and added extensive comparative notes to his translation, "so as to render the present publication a sort of concordance to the whole, as it is not very probable that many of them will be published or translated."[37]

Wilson was wrong. All *Purāṇas* of which manuscripts were found have been published, often more than once. Many *Purāṇas* have been translated; at the moment the publishers Motilal Banarsidass in Delhi are in the process of bringing out a series, *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology*, with the intent of providing more or less uniform translations of all major *Purāṇas*, similar to but larger than Max Müller's fifty-volume *Sacred Books of the East*. Finally, based solely on these editions and translations, there has sprung up an enormous scholarly literature on the *Purāṇas*. I stress, solely based on editions and translations, i.e. on a textual form of tradition.

These scholarly books and articles are often interesting. They may tell us a lot about the contents of printed *Purāṇa* X, Y, or Z, but I submit that it is misleading to represent and to read these books and articles as studies of the *Purāṇa* X, Y, or Z. That is where orality comes in.

The fact is that the stories written down in *Purāṇa* manuscripts and, from there, eventually, printed in *Purāṇa* editions, are, in real life, the exclusive property of the Indian bards, the Indian story-tellers, the tellers of ancient (*purāṇa*) stories, the Paurāṇikas. These Paurāṇikas travel from village to village, all over India. They have done so for centuries, and they still do so today. They basically tell the same stories, but each of them -- and there must have been thousands

---

[37] I quote from the reprint of the 3rd ed. (1961), Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1972, p. lxxii. The subtitle of Wilson's translation is equally revealing: *A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition.*

and thousands -- does so in his own way. In addition, each of them tells the same story differently at different performances, depending on a variety of circumstances, including -- as documented in a detailed description of a bardic performance[38] -- the audience's response to the bard's question, right in the middle of his first recital, how many days they are prepared to feed him.[39]

As a result, there must have been numerous living and real versions of each story. The fact that someone, at a certain moment, decided to write one version of the story down and insert it in a *Purāṇa* manuscript, hardly justifies the view that this is *the* text of the story. Yet, that is the impression created by most of modern scholarly publications on the *Purāṇas*.

Some puranic scholarship did not even stop there, and went one step further. Several of the stories, the same stories but with variants, appear in more than one printed *Purāṇa*. This soon drew the attention of European, especially German, philologists, trained in the strict discipline of critical editing of texts. To them the differing printed versions of the puranic stories were exactly "like different manuscripts of the same text."[40] As they did for the critical editions of Plato or Virgil, they copied the different versions of the puranic stories on collation sheets, they worked out a *stemma codicum*, and they

----

[38] K.M. Munshi: *Gujarāt and Its Literature*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 3rd ed., 1967, pp. 166-67.

[39] Cf. Albert B. Lord: "Leaving out of consideration for a moment the question of the talent of the singer, one can say that the length of the song depends upon the audience" (*The Singer of Tales*. Harvard UP, 1960, p. 17).

[40] Willibald Kirfel: *Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa. Versuch einer Text-geschichte*. Bonn: Schroeder, 1927, p. XIV.

reconstructed the archetype of the puranic story.

These are reputable scholars, and their books have been widely used, including by me in my contribution the new *History of Indian Literature*. Yet, different from most scholars writing on the *Purāṇas*, I have made an effort to make my readers aware of how much is lost, when an immensely varied oral tradition is reduced to just a few or, even worse, one single textual tradition.

The Law Books

I will conclude with a brief discussion of the second genre of Sanskrit literature that poses problems *sui generis* with regard to orality and textuality. These are the Sanskrit texts to the study of which I have spent more time and effort than on any others, the texts of the Indian legal tradition.[41]

One of the successors of Alexander the Great, Seleucus Nicator, sent an ambassador, Megasthenes, to the court of the Indian king Candragupta Maurya, ca. 300 B.C.E. Megasthenes wrote a book on India, the *Indica*. The *Indica* itself is lost, but several fragments of it have been preserved in the writings of later Greek and Roman writers.[42] One fragment, as recorded in Strabo's *Geography*, speaks of the ambassador's surprise that there was so little crime among the Indians "and that too, among a people who have unwritten laws only. For, he [= Megasthenes]

----

[41] I have dealt with this topic in greater detail in "Law Books in an Oral Culture: The Indian *Dharmaśāstras*," in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 137, 1993, 254-267.

[42] Cf. E.A. Schwanbeck: *Megasthenis Indica. Fragmenta collegit commentationem et indices addidit*. Bonn: Pleimes, 1846. More recently, B.C.J. Timmer: *Megasthenes en de Indische maatschappij* [= *Megasthenes and Indian Society*], Amsterdam 1930.

continues, they have no knowledge of written letters, and regulate every single thing from memory."[43]

This statement again raises the question whether or not the Indians had script in Megasthenes's days. If Alexander's friend and companion, Nearchos, who was in India earlier than Megasthenes, again as reported by Strabo,[44] is right, they did. Also, the emperor Aśoka, who had his inscriptions engraved all over India, was the grandson of Candragupta and, therefore, ruled just a few decades after Megasthenes's visit.

Be that as it may. More intriguing is Megasthenes's statement that the Indians had no written laws. It is intriguing because we know, today, that some of the *dharmasūtras*, texts which, among other things, contain the rules on ancient Indian law, go back as far as 500 B.C.E.[45] Unless we accept the opinion of an Indian scholar, and dismiss Megasthenes's remark as one of the many instances "in which the ignorance of the classical writers is difficult to explain,"[46] the fact is that, according to the Greek ambassador, Indian judges, around 300 B.C.E., did not use written law texts in the law courts.

Megasthenes leaves many questions unanswered. We don't know whether the judges actually confirmed to him that they had no law books, or whether as a Greek, he drew the logical conclusion, which any educated Greek would have drawn: if a judge decides, i.e. is forced to decide,

----

[43] *The Geography of Strabo*. Ed. transl. Horace Leonard Jones. Loeb Classical Library, vol. 7, 1930 (reprinted), 15.1.53, pp. 86-89.

[44] 15.1.67, *ibid*. pp. 116-17.

[45] P.V. Kane: *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 2nd ed., vol. 1.1 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1968), p. 36 dates the most ancient *dharmasūtra*, Gautama's, between 600 and 400 B.C.E.

[46] R.C. Majumdar: *The Classical Accounts of India*. Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960, p. xix.

cases without any reference to law books, he cannot have written law texts.

Fortunately, the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, a vast collection of letters sent home from Jesuit missions all over the world, provided me with some of the information that was lacking in Megasthenes's report. One letter in the collection was sent to a prominent jurist in Paris, by a French Jesuit missionary, from Pondicherry in South India, in 1714. The writer of the letter is Father Jean Venant Bouchet; except for an introductory paragraph, the long letter is entirely devoted to the administration of justice as Bouchet saw it in India, early in the 18th century.[47] This is Bouchet's first sentence:

> They have neither codes or digests, nor do they have any
> books in which are written down the laws to which they
> have to conform to solve the disputes that arise in their
> families.[48]

In other words, two thousand years after Megasthenes, as astute and inquisitive an observer as Father Bouchet did not see any written law books, either. But, differently from Megasthenes, Bouchet informs us on what the Indians used instead of written law books. Echoing Megasthenes's brief remark that the absence of written laws did not in any way imply absence of justice, he continues:

> The equity of all their verdicts is entirely founded on a
> number of customs which they consider inviolable, and on
> certain usages which are handed down from father to son.
> They regard these usages as definite and infallible
> rules, to maintain peace in the family and to end the

----

[47] Cf. Ludo Rocher: "Father Bouchet's Letter on the Administration of Hindu Law," in Richard W. Lariviere (ed.): *Studies in Dharmaśāstra*. Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1984, pp. 15-48.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

suits that arise, not only among private individuals,
but also among royal princes.[49]

Bouchet makes it clear that some of these customs were "accepted by
all castes," such as the belief that children of two brothers and of two
sisters are brothers or sisters, whereas children of a brother and a
sister are cousins, with the result that the latter can intermarry, they
former cannot. But other customs, he says, are valid within a particular
caste only, and customs vary from caste to caste.

Finally, Bouchet informs us on the form in which the customs are
memorized and transmitted from generation to generation. He uses,
interchangeably, the terms "maxims", "proverbs," and ... "quatrains",
which seems to indicate that they were in verse. In fact, he compares
them with the very popular quatrains of Pibrac, the 16th century
Frenchman Gui du Faur, Seigneur de Pibrac.[50]

Bouchet provides several examples of these "maxims," unfortunately
in French only. Even then, though, one cannot fail being struck by the
close resemblance between some of them and a number of verses,
quatrains, *slokas* in the written Sanskrit law books, to which I now
turn: where were they? what were they? and how did these written law
books relate to oral law practice?

As to the first question, a few passages in the ancient Sanskrit
law books themselves contain clear indications that they existed in
written form at an early date, at least two or three centuries after the
beginning of the Common Era. Bouchet too, was told about the existence
of laws inscribed on copper plates, and guarded by learned brahmans in
the city of Conjeeveram. However, he was told,

---

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

since the Moors have nearly entirely destroyed this large and famous town, no one has been able to find out what happened to these plates; the only thing we know is that they contained everything that relates to any caste in particular and the relations which different castes should observe among one another.[51]

In other words, law books were the exclusive preserve of the learned. They were totally divorced from ordinary legal practice which was conducted with the help of detached, unconnected legal maxims.

As to the nature of the written law books, that has been the object of endless debates in recent scholarly literature. These books are, after all, if not the only, at least the major sources for our reconstruction of classical Indian law. The question whether they are reliable sources has been answered absolutely positively by some, absolutely negatively by others. According to some the written law books faithfully reflect the law of the land. According to others, they were "never more than a pious wish of its metaphysically-minded, ceremonial-ridden priestly promulgators, and but seldom a stern reality."[52]

I have wavered between these two mutually exclusive views for a long time. It was Bouchet's letter on legal practice and its insistence on different laws for different castes that drew my attention to one prominent feature of the law books: they abound in contradictions, not only from one law book to another, but within the same law books as well.

For instance, a verse in the section on inheritance in *The Laws of*

---

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[52] Govinda Das: "The Real Character of Hindu Law," an introduction to the edition of Bālambhaṭṭa Pāyaguṇde's *Vyavahāra-bālambhaṭṭī*, Banaras: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Book-depot, 1914, p. 8.

Manu (9.104) prescribes that, when both parents are deceased, the sons divide the inheritance equally. According to the immediately following verse (9.105), after the death of their father and mother, the eldest son takes everything and the younger sons continue to live under him as they did under their father. After a couple of verses devoted to the greatness of an eldest son, Manu goes on to say (9.112) that, when both parents are deceased, the eldest son takes a little more than the second, the second a little more than the third, etc. One thing is clear: a law book that divides the paternal property in three different ways, a text that prescibes and proscribes levirate marriage -- as Manu also does --, is of little use in a court of law. The British judges in India realized that immediately, when Sir William Jones offered them his translation of *Manu* in 1794.

All kinds of scholarly interpretations have been offered for these contradictions, as usual by Westerners first, later by Western-educated Indians as well: options, interpolations, etc. Yet, they all overlooked one basic premise of Hinduism, namely that what is law (*dharma*) for one is different, has to be different, from what is *dharma* for another. *Dharma* is the particular set of customs accepted and applied in a region, in a village, in a caste, in a sub-caste, in a guild, in a clan, etc. But all these different, even contradictory, customs are *dharma* in their own right; they are all part of the Hindu *dharma*.

My conclusion on what must have been the true relation between the written law books and oral legal practice is as follows. In actual dispute settlement each region or each group knew exactly the set of customs that applied to them, and they applied them consistently. Members of one group always divided paternal property equally. Among others the eldest son always took everything. Others again reserved an additional share for the eldest. These specific rules were transmitted, within the area or within the group, from father to son, in the form of "maxims", "proverbs", "quatrains", in the vernacular, and unwritten. The

dharmaśāstras, the law books, on the other hand, were the receptacles of THE Hindu *dharma*, of anything that was accepted as *dharma* by some Hindus, somewhere in India. They were guarded by the learned, and preserved in the language of the learned, Sanskrit. The fact that these books were not present in the law courts did not prevent them from being books of law, rather books of laws which were real laws of real people somewhere in India.

I mentioned earlier that most discussions on orality in India are restricted to the transmission of the Vedic texts. Even though this essay too, had to address some aspects of Vedic transmission, it demonstrates that there are many other, different ways in which orality and textuality interrelate in the Indian context.

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
12	Aug. 1989	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	The Contributions of T'ang and Five Dynasties Transformation Texts (*pien-wen*) to Later Chinese Popular Literature	71
13	Oct. 1989	Jiaosheng Wang *Shanghai*	The Complete *Ci*-Poems of Li Qingzhao: A New English Translation	xii, 122
14	Dec. 1989	various	Reviews (II)	69
15	Jan. 1990	George Cardona *University of Pennsylvania*	On Attitudes Toward Language in Ancient India	19
16	March 1990	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Three Brief Essays Concerning Chinese Tocharistan	16
17	April 1990	Heather Peters *University Museum of Philadelphia*	Tattooed Faces and Stilt Houses: Who Were the Ancient Yue?	28
18	May 1990	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	a. Two Non-Tetragraphic Northern Sinitic Languages b. Implications of the Soviet Dungan Script for Chinese Language Reform c. Who Were the Gyámi?	28
19	June 1990	Bosat Man *Nalanda*	Backhill/Peking/Beijing	6
20	Oct. 1990	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Introduction and Notes for a Translation of the Ma-wang-tui MSS of the *Lao Tzu*	68

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
21	Dec. 1990	Philippa Jane Benson *Carnegie Mellon University*	Two Cross-Cultural Studies on Reading Theory	9, 13
22	March 1991	David Moser *University of Michigan*	Slips of the Tongue and Pen in Chinese	45
23	April 1991	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Tracks of the Tao, Semantics of Zen	10
24	Aug. 1991	David A. Utz *University of Pennsylvania*	Language, Writing, and Tradition in Iran	24
25	Aug. 1991	Jean DeBernardi *University of Alberta*	Linguistic Nationalism: The Case of Southern Min	22 + 3 figs.
26	Sept. 1991	JAO Tsung-i *Chinese University of Hong Kong*	Questions on the Origins of Writing Raised by the Silk Road	10
27	Aug. 1991	Victor H. Mair, ed. *University of Pennsylvania*	*Schriftfestschrift: Essays in Honor of John DeFrancis on His Eightieth Birthday*	ix, 245
28	Sept. 1991	ZHOU Youguang *State Language Commission, Peking*	The Family of Chinese Character-Type Scripts (*Twenty Members and Four Stages of Development*)	11
29	Sept. 1991	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	What Is a Chinese "Dialect/Topolect"? Reflections on Some Key Sino-English Linguistic Terms	31
30	Oct. 1991	M. V. Sofronov *Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Academy of Sciences, Moscow*	Chinese Philology and the Scripts of Central Asia	10
31	Oct. 1991	various	Reviews (III)	68

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
32	Aug. 1992	David McCraw *University of Hawaii*	How the Chinawoman Lost Her Voice	27
33	Sept. 1992	FENG Lide and Kevin Stuart *Chuankou No. 1 Middle School and Qinghai Education College*	Interethnic Contact on the Inner Asian Frontier: The Gangou People of Minhe County, Qinghai	34
34	Oct. 1992	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	1. Two Papers on Sinolinguistics 2. A Hypothesis Concerning the Origin of the Term *fanqie* ("Countertomy") 3. East Asian Round-Trip Words	13
35	Nov. 1992	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania* with an added note by Edwin G. Pulleyblank	Reviews (IV)	37
36	Feb. 1993	XU Wenkan *Hanyu Da Cidian editorial offices, Shanghai*	Hanyu Wailaici de Yuyuan Kaozheng he Cidian Bianzuan (Philological Research on the Etymology of Loanwords in Sinitic and Dictionary Compilation)	13
37	March 1993	Tanya Storch *University of New Mexico*	Chinese Buddhist Historiography and Orality	16
38	April 1993	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	The Linguistic and Textual Antecedents of *The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish*	95
39	Aug. 1993	Jordan Paper *York University*	A Material Case for a Late Bering Strait Crossing Coincident with Pre-Columbian Trans-Pacific Crossings	17

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
40	Sept. 1993	Michael Carr *Center for Language Studies, Otaru University of Commerce*	*Tiao*-Fish through Chinese Dictionaries	68
41	Oct. 1993	Paul Goldin *Harvard University*	Miching Mallecho: The *Zhanguo ce* and Classical Rhetoric	27
42	Nov. 1993	Renchin-Jashe Yulshul *Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Kokonor (Qinghai)* and Kevin Stuart *Institute of Foreign Languages, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia*	Kham Tibetan Language Materials	39
43	Dec. 1993	MA Quanlin, MA Wanxiang, and MA Zhicheng *Xining* Edited by Kevin Stuart *Kokonor*	Salar Language Materials	72
44	Jan. 1994	Dolkun Kamberi *Columbia University*	The Three Thousand Year Old Charchan Man Preserved at Zaghunluq	15
45	May 1994	Mark Hansell *Carleton College*	The Sino-Alphabet: The Assimilation of Roman Letters into the Chinese Writing System	28
46	July 1994	various	Reviews (V)	2, 155
47	Aug. 1994	Robert S. Bauer *Mahidol University Salaya Nakornpathom, Thailand*	Sino-Tibetan *kolo "Wheel"	11
48	Sept. 1994	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Introduction and Notes for a Complete Translation of the *Chuang Tzu*	xxxiv, 110

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
49	Oct. 1994	Ludo Rocher *University of Pennsylvania*	Orality and Textuality in the Indian Context	28
50	Nov. 1994	YIN Binyong *State Language Commission and Institute for Applied Linguistics (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences)*	Diyi ge Lading Zimu de Hanyu Pinyin Fang'an Shi Zenyang Chansheng de? [How Was the First Romanized Spelling System for Sinitic Produced?]	7
51	Nov. 1994	HAN Kangxin *Institute of Archeology Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*	The Study of Ancient Human Skeletons from Xinjiang, China	9 + 4 figs.
52	Nov. 1994	Warren A. Shibles *University of Wisconsin Whitewater*	Chinese Romanization Systems: IPA Transliteration	20
53	Nov. 1994	XU Wenkan *Editorial Offices of the Hanyu Da Cidian Shanghai*	Guanyu Tuhuoluoren de Qiyuan he Qianxi Wenti [On the Problem of the Origins and Migrations of the Tocharians]	11
54	Nov. 1994	Üjiyediin Chuluu (Chaolu Wu) *University of Toronto*	Introduction, Grammar, and Sample Sentences for Jegün Yogur	34
55	Nov. 1994	Üjiyediin Chuluu (Chaolu Wu) *University of Toronto*	Introduction, Grammar, and Sample Sentences for Dongxiang	34
56	Nov. 1994	Üjiyediin Chuluu (Chaolu Wu) *University of Toronto*	Introduction, Grammar, and Sample Sentences for Dagur	36
57	Nov. 1994	Üjiyediin Chuluu (Chaolu Wu) *University of Toronto*	Introduction, Grammar, and Sample Sentences for Monguor	31

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
58	Nov. 1994	Üjiyediin Chuluu (Chaolu Wu) *University of Toronto*	Introduction, Grammar, and Sample Sentences for Baoan	28
59	Dec. 1994	Kevin Stuart *Qinghai Junior Teachers College;* Limusishiden *Qinghai Medical College Attached Hospital, Xining, Kokonor (Qinghai)*	China's Monguor Minority: Ethnography and Folktales	i, I, 193
60	Dec. 1994	Kevin Stuart, Li Xuewei, and Shelear *Qinghai Junior Teachers College, Xining, Kokonor (Qinghai)*	China's Dagur Minority: Society, Shamanism, and Folklore	vii, 167
61	Dec. 1994	Kevin Stuart and Li Xuewei *Qinghai Junior Teachers College, Xining, Kokonor (Qinghai)*	Tales from China's Forest Hunters: Oroqen Folktales	iv, 59
62	Dec. 1994	William C. Hannas *Georgetown University*	Reflections on the "Unity" of Spoken and Written Chinese and Academic Learning in China	5
63	Dec. 1994	Sarah M. Nelson *University of Denver*	The Development of Complexity in Prehistoric North China	17
64	Jan. 1995	Arne Østmoe *Bangkok, Thailand, and Drøbak, Norway*	A Germanic-Tai Linguistic Puzzle	81, 6
65	Feb. 1995	Penglin Wang *Chinese University of Hong Kong*	Indo-European Loanwords in Altaic	28
66	March 1995	ZHU Qingzhi *Sichuan University and Peking University*	Some Linguistic Evidence for Early Cultural Exchange Between China and India	7

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
67	April 1995	David McCraw *University of Hawaii*	Pursuing Zhuangzi as a Rhymemaster: A Snark-Hunt in Eight Fits	38
68	May 1995	Ke Peng, Yanshi Zhu *University of Chicago and Tokyo, Japan*	New Research on the Origin of Cowries Used in Ancient China	i, 26
69	Jan. 1996	Dpal-ldan-bkra-shis, Keith Slater, *et al.* *Qinghai, Santa Barbara, etc.*	Language Materials of China's Monguor Minority: Huzhu Mongghul and Minhe Mangghuer	xi, 266
70	Feb. 1996	David Utz, Xinru Liu, *Taylor Carman, Bryan Van Norden, and the Editor Philadelphia, Vassar, etc.*	Reviews VI	93
71	March 1996	Erik Zürcher *Leiden University* Seishi Karashima *Soka University* Huanming Qin *Tang Studies Hotline*	Vernacularisms in Medieval Chinese Texts	31 + 11 + 8
72	May 1996	E. Bruce Brooks *University of Massachusetts*	The Life and Mentorship of Confucius	44
73	June 1996	ZHANG Juan, et al., and Kevin Stuart *Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Henan, Liaoning*	Blue Cloth and Pearl Deer; Yogur Folklore	iii, 76
74	Jan. 1997	David Moser *University of Michigan & Beijing Foreign Studies University*	Covert Sexism in Mandarin Chinese	23
75	Feb. 1997	Haun Saussy *Stanford University*	The Prestige of Writing: Wen^2, Letter, Picture, Image, Ideography	40

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
76	Feb. 1997	Patricia Eichenbaum Karetzky *Bard College*	The Evolution of the Symbolism of the Paradise of the Buddha of Infinite Life and Its Western Origins	28
77	Jan. 1998	Daniel Hsieh *Purdue University*	The Origin and Nature of the "Nineteen Old Poems"	49
78	Feb. 1998	Narsu *Inner Mongolia College of Agriculture & Animal Husbandry* Kevin Stuart *Qinghai Junior Teachers' College*	Practical Mongolian Sentences (With English Translation)	iii + 49 + ii + 66
79	March 1998	Dennis Grafflin *Bates College*	A Southeast Asian Voice in the Daodejing?	8
80	July 1998	Taishan Yu *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*	A Study of Saka History	ii + 225
81	Sept. 1998	Hera S. Walker *Ursinus College (Philadelphia)*	Indigenous or Foreign?: A Look at the Origins of the Monkey Hero Sun Wukong	iv + 110
82	Sept. 1998	I. S. Gurevich *Russian Academy of Sciences*	A Fragment of a pien-wen(?) Related to the Cycle "On Buddha's Life"	15
83	Oct. 1998	Minglang Zhou *University of Colorado at Boulder*	Tense/Aspect markers in Mandarin and Xiang dialects, and their contact	20
84	Oct. 1998	Ulf Jäger *Gronau/Westfalen, Germany*	The New Old Mummies from Eastern Central Asia: Ancestors of the Tocharian Knights Depicted on the Buddhist Wallpaintings of Kucha and Turfan? Some Circumstantial Evidence	9

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
85	Oct. 1998	Mariko Namba Walter *University of New England*	Tokharian Buddhism in Kucha: Buddhism of Indo-European Centum Speakers in Chinese Turkestan before the 10th Century C.E.	30
86	Oct. 1998	Jidong Yang *University of Pennsylvania*	Siba: Bronze Age Culture of the Gansu Corridor	18
87	Nov. 1998	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Canine Conundrums: Eurasian Dog Ancestor Myths in Historical and Ethnic Perspective	74
88	Dec. 1998	Saroj Kumar Chaudhuri *Aichi Gakusen University*	Siddham in China and Japan	9, 124
89	Jan. 1999	Alvin Lin *Yale University*	Writing Taiwanese: The Development of Modern Written Taiwanese	4 + 41 + 4
90	Jan. 1999	Victor H. Mair et al	Reviews VII [including review of The Original Analects]	2, 38
91	Jan. 1999	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Phonosymbolism or Etymology: The Case of the Verb "Cop"	28
92	Jan. 1999	Christine Louise Lin *Dartmouth College*	The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and the Advocacy of Local Autonomy	xiii + 136
93	Jan. 1999	David S. Nivison *Stanford University*	The Key to the Chronology of the Three Dynasties: The "Modern Text" Bamboo Annals	iv + 68
94	March 1999	Julie Lee Wei *Hoover Institute*	Correspondence Between the Chinese Calendar Signs and the Phoenician Alphabet	65 + 6

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
95	May 1999	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	A Medieval, Central Asian Buddhist Theme in a Late Ming Taoist Tale by Feng Meng-lung	27
96	June 1999	E. Bruce Brooks *University of Massachusetts*	Alexandrian Motifs in Chinese Texts	14
97	Dec. 1999	LI Shuicheng *Peking University*	Sino-Western Contact in the Second Millennium BC	iv, 29
98	Jan. 2000	Peter Daniels, Daniel Boucher, and other authors	Reviews VIII	108
99	Feb. 2000	Anthony Barbieri-Low *Princeton University*	Wheeled Vehicles in the Chinese Bronze Age (c. 2000-741 BC)	v, 98 + 5 color plates
100	Feb. 2000	Wayne Alt *Community College of Baltimore County (Essex)*	Zhuangzi, Mysticism, and the Rejection of Distinctions	29
101	March 2000	C. Michele Thompson *South Connecticut State University*	The Viêt Peoples and the Origins of Nom	71, 1
102	March 2000	Theresa Jen *Bryn Mawr College* Ping Xu *Baruch College*	[Penless Chinese Character Reproduction](#)	15
103	June 2000	Carrie E. Reid *Middlebury College*	Early Chinese Tattoo	52
104	July 2000	David W. Pankenier *Lehigh University*	Popular Astrology and Border Affairs in Early China	19 + 1 color plate
105	Aug. 2000	Anne Birrell *Cambridge University*	Postmodernist Theory in Recent Studies of Chinese Literature	31

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
106	Sept. 2000	Yu Taishan *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*	A Hypothesis about the Sources of the Sai Tribes	i, 3, 200
107	Sept. 2000	Jacques deLisle, Adelheid E. Krohne, and the editor	Reviews IX	148 + map
108	Sept. 2000	Ruth H. Chang *University of Pennsylvania*	Understanding *Di* and *Tian*: Deity and Heaven From Shang to Tang	vii, 54
109	Oct. 2000	Conán Dean Carey *Stanford University*	In Hell the One without Sin is Lord	ii, 60
110	Oct. 2000	Toh Hoong Teik *Harvard University*	Shaykh 'Alam: The Emperor of Early Sixteenth-Century China	20
111	Nov. 2000	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	The Need for a New Era	10
112	July 2001	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Notes on the Anau Inscription	xi, 93
113	Aug. 2001	Ray Collins *Chepachet, RI* David Kerr *Melbourne, FL*	Etymology of the Word "Macrobiotic:s" and Its Use in Modern Chinese Scholarship	18
114	March 2002	Ramnath Subbaraman *University of Chicago*	Beyond the Question of the Monkey Imposter: Indian Influence on the Chinese Novel, *The Journey to the West*	35
115	April 2002	ZHOU Jixu *Sichuan Normal University*	Correspondences of Basic Words Between Old Chinese and Proto-Indo-European	8

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
116	May 2002	LIU Yongquan *Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*	On the Problem of Chinese Lettered Words	13
117	May 2002	SHANG Wei *Columbia University*	*Baihua, Guanhua, Fangyan* and the May Fourth Reading of *Rulin Waishi*	10
118	June 2002	Justine T. Snow *Port Townsend, WA*	Evidence for the Indo-European Origin of Two Ancient Chinese Deities	ii, 75, 1 color, 1 b-w print
119	July 2002	WU Zhen *Xinjiang Museum, Ürümchi*	"Hu" Non-Chinese as They Appear in the Materials from the Astana Graveyard at Turfan	21, 5 figs.
120	July 2002	Anne Birrell *University of Cambridge, Clare Hall*	Female-Gendered Myth in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*	47
121	July 2002	Mark Edward Lewis *Stanford University*	Dicing and Divination in Early China	22, 7 figs.
122	July 2002	Julie Wilensky *Yale Univesity*	The Magical *Kunlun* and "Devil Slaves": Chinese Perceptions of Dark-skinned People and Africa before 1500	51, 3 figs.
123	Aug. 2002	Paul R. Goldin and the editor	Reviews X	30
124	August 2002	Fredrik T. Hiebert *University of Pennsylvania* John Colarusso *McMaster University*	The Context of the Anau Seal Remarks on the Anau and Niyä Seals	1-34 35-47

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
125	July 2003	ZHOU Jixu *Sichuan Normal University* *Shanghai Normal University*	Correspondences of Cultural Words between Old Chinese and Proto-Indo-European	19
126	Aug. 2003	Tim Miller *University of Washington*	A Southern Min Word in the *Tsu-t'ang chi*	14
127	Oct. 2003	Sundeep S. Jhutti *Petaluma, California*	The Getes	125, 8 color plates
128	Nov. 2003	Yinpo Tschang *New York City*	On Proto-Shang	18
129	Dec. 2003	Michael Witzel *Harvard University*	Linguistic Evidence for Cultural Exchange in Prehistoric Western Central Asia	70
130	Feb. 2004	Bede Fahey *Fort St. John, British Columbia*	Mayan: A Sino-Tibetan Language? A Comparative Study	61
131	March 2004	Taishan Yu *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*	A History of the Relationship between the Western and Eastern Han, Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Western Regions	1, 3, 352
132	April 2004	Kim Hayes *Sydney*	On the Presence of Non-Chinese at Anyang	11
133	April 2004	John L. Sorenson *Brigham Young University* Carl L. Johannessen *University of Oregon*	*Scientific Evidence for Pre-Columbian Transoceanic Voyages* CD-ROM	48, 166, 19, 15 plates
134	May 2004	Xieyan Hincha *Neumädewitz, Germany*	Two Steps Toward Digraphia in China	i, 22

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
135	May 2004	John J. Emerson *Portland, Oregon*	*The Secret History of the Mongols* and Western Literature	21
136	May 2004	Serge Papillon *Mouvaux, France and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia*	Influences tokhariennes sur la mythologie chinoise	47
137	June 2004	Hoong Teik Toh *Harvard University*	Some Classical Malay Materials for the Study of the Chinese Novel *Journey to the West*	64
138	June 2004	Julie Lee Wei *San Jose and London*	Dogs and Cats: Lessons from Learning Chinese	17
139	June 2004	Taishan Yu *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*	A Hypothesis on the Origin of the Yu State	20
140	June 2004	Yinpo Tschang *New York City*	Shih and Zong: Social Organization in Bronze Age China	28
141	July 2004	Yinpo Tschang *New York City*	Chaos in Heaven: On the Calendars of Preclassical China	30
142	July 2004	Katheryn Linduff, ed. *University of Pittsburgh*	*Silk Road Exchange in China*	64
143	July 2004	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Sleep in *Dream*: Soporific Responses to Depression in *Story of the Stone*	99
144	July 2004	RONG Xinjiang *Peking University*	Land Route or Sea Route? Commentary on the Study of the Paths of Transmission and Areas in which Buddhism Was Disseminated during the Han Period	32
145	Aug. 2004	the editor	Reviews XI	2, 41

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
146	Feb. 2005	Hoong Teik Toh *Academia Sinica*	The *-yu* Ending in Xiongnu, Xianbei, and Gaoju Onomastica	24
147	March 2005	Hoong Teik Toh *Academia Sinica*	Ch. *Qiong* ~ Tib. Khyung; Taoism ~ Bonpo -- Some Questions Related to Early Ethno-Religious History in Sichuan	18
148	April 2005	Lucas Christopoulos *Beijing Sports University*	Le gréco-bouddhisme et l'art du poing en Chine	52
149	May 2005	Kimberly S. Te Winkle *University College, London*	A Sacred Trinity: God, Mountain, and Bird: Cultic Practices of the Bronze Age Chengdu Plain	ii, 103 (41 in color)
150	May 2005	Dolkun Kamberi *Washington, DC*	Uyghurs and Uyghur Identity	44
151	June 2005	Jane Jia SI *University of Pennsylvania*	The Genealogy of Dictionaries: Producers, Literary Audience, and the Circulation of English Texts in the Treaty Port of Shanghai	44, 4 tables
152	June 2005	Denis Mair *Seattle*	The Dance of Qian and Kun in the *Zhouyi*	13, 2 figs.
153	July 2005	Alan Piper *London (UK)*	The Mysterious Origins of the Word "Marihuana"	17
154	July 2005	Serge Papillon *Belfort, France*	*Mythologie sino-européenne*	174, 1 plate
155	July 2005	Denis Mair *Seattle*	Janus-Like Concepts in the *Li* and *Kun* Trigrams	8
156	July 2005	Abolqasem Esmailpour *Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran*	*Manichean Gnosis and Creation*	157
157	Aug. 2005	Ralph D. Sawyer *Independent Scholar*	Paradoxical Coexistence of Prognostication and Warfare	13

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
158	Aug. 2005	Mark Edward Lewis *Stanford University*	Writings on Warfare Found in Ancient Chinese Tombs	15
159	Aug. 2005	Jens Østergaard Petersen *University of Copenhagen*	The *Zuozhuan* Account of the Death of King Zhao of Chu and Its Sources	47
160	Sept. 2005	Matteo Compareti *Venice*	Literary Evidence for the Identification of Some Common Scenes in Han Funerary Art	14
161	Sept. 2005	Julie Lee Wei *London*	The Names of the *Yi Jing* Trigrams: An Inquiry into Their Linguistic Origins	18
162	Sept. 2005	Julie Lee Wei *London*	Counting and Knotting: Correspondences between Old Chinese and Indo-European	71, map
163	Oct. 2005	Julie Lee Wei *London*	Huangdi and Huntun (the Yellow Emperor and Wonton): A New Hypothesis on Some Figures in Chinese Mythology	44
164	Oct. 2005	Julie Lee Wei *London*	Shang and Zhou: An Inquiry into the Linguistic Origins of Two Dynastic Names	62
165	Oct. 2005	Julie Lee Wei *London*	DAO and DE: An Inquiry into the Linguistic Origins of Some Terms in Chinese Philosophy and Morality	51
166	Nov. 2005	Julie Lee Wei *London* Hodong Kim *Seoul National University* and David Selvia and the Editor *both of the University of Pennsylvania*	Reviews XII	i, 63

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
167	Dec. 2005	ZHOU Jixu *Sichuan Normal University*	Old Chinese '帝*tees' and Proto-Indo-European "*deus": Similarity in Religious Ideas and a Common Source in Linguistics	17
168	Dec. 2005	Judith A. Lerner *New York City*	Aspects of Assimilation: the Funerary Practices and Furnishings of Central Asians in China	51, v, 9 plates
169	Jan. 2006	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	Conversion Tables for the Three-Volume Edition of the *Hanyu Da Cidian*	i, 284
170	Feb. 2006	Amber R. Woodward *University of Pennsylvania*	Learning English, Losing Face, and Taking Over: The Method (or Madness) of Li Yang and His Crazy English	18

Beginning with issue no. 171, *Sino-Platonic Papers* will be published electronically on the Web.
Issues from no. 1 to no. 170, however, will continue to be sold as paper copies until our stock runs out,
after which they too will be made available on the Web. For prices of paper copies, see the catalog at
www.sino-platonic.org

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
171	June 2006	John DeFrancis *University of Hawaii*	[The Prospects for Chinese Writing Reform](#)	26, 3 figs.
172	Aug. 2006	Deborah Beaser	[The Outlook for Taiwanese Language Preservation](#)	18
173	Oct. 2006	Taishan Yu *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*	[A Study of the History of the Relationship Between the Western and Eastern Han, Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Western Regions](#)	167
174	Nov. 2006	Mariko Namba Walter	[Sogdians and Buddhism](#)	65

Previous Issues, *cont.*

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
175	Dec. 2006	Zhou Jixu *Center for East Asian Studies, University of Pennsylvania; Chinese Department, Sichuan Normal University*	The Rise of Agricultural Civilization in China: The Disparity between Archeological Discovery and the Documentary Record and Its Explanation	38
176	May 2007	Eric Henry *University of North Carolina*	The Submerged History of Yuè	36
177	Aug. 2007	Beverley Davis	Timeline of the Development of the Horse	186

Previous Issues

Number	Date	Author	Title	Pages
1	Nov. 1986	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	[The Need for an Alphabetically Arranged General Usage Dictionary of Mandarin Chinese: A Review Article of Some Recent Dictionaries and Current Lexicographical Projects](#)	31
2	Dec. 1986	Andrew Jones *Hiroshima*	The Poetics of Uncertainty in Early Chinese Literature	45
3	March 1987	Victor H. Mair *University of Pennsylvania*	[A Partial Bibliography for the Study of Indian Influence on Chinese Popular Literature](#)	iv, 214
4	Nov. 1987	Robert M. Sanders *University of Hawaii*	[The Four Languages of "Mandarin"](#)	14
5	Dec. 1987	Eric A. Havelock *Vassar College*	[Chinese Characters and the Greek Alphabet](#)	4
6	Jan. 1988	J. Marshall Unger *University of Hawaii*	[Computers and Japanese Literacy: Nihonzin no Yomikaki Nôryoku to Konpyuta](#)	13
7	Jan. 1988	Chang Tsung-tung *Goethe-Universität*	[Indo-European Vocabulary in Old Chinese](#)	i, 56
8	Feb. 1988	various	[Reviews (I)](#)	ii, 39
9	Dec. 1988	Soho Machida *Daitoku-ji, Kyoto*	[Life and Light, the Infinite: A Historical and Philological Analysis of the Amida Cult](#)	46
10	June 1989	Pratoom Angurarohita *Chulalongkorn University Bangkok*	[Buddhist Influence on the Neo-Confucian Concept of the Sage](#)	31
11	July 1989	Edward Shaughnessy *University of Chicago*	[Western Cultural Innovations in China, 1200 BC](#)	8