

Siegfried Lienhard, *Die Legende vom Prinzen Viśvantara. Eine nepalesische Bildrolle aus der Sammlung des Museums für indische Kunst Berlin. Veröffentlichungen des Museums für indische Kunst Berlin Band 5, Berlin 1980. 259 pp., 27 plates in colour.*

For more than two millenia, Buddhist art has told and retold the jātaka of prince Viśvantara who, seeking to perfect the virtue of generosity, not only made a gift of all his possessions, but even gave away his own loving children and devoted wife. Perhaps the social ethics of such an act, if taken literally, may be questioned. No matter - the story is to be found in different versions and in many languages all over the Buddhist world, and continues to move the hearts of Buddhists in many countries, including Nepal.

Professor Siegfried Lienhard of Stockholm is undoubtedly the foremost European expert on the literature and religion of the Newars. In this connection his *Nevārīgītimañjarī, Religious and Secular Poetry of the Nevars of the Kathmandu Valley*, Stockholm Oriental Studies 10, Stockholm 1974, is a truly pioneer work of fundamental importance. In the present work, of which the English title would be "The Legend of Prince Viśvantara. A Nepalese Painted Scroll from the Collection of the Museum of Indian Art in Berlin", Professor Lienhard pursues the study of Newari culture and religious beliefs, this time in the context of Nepalese art.

The book is an intensive and detailed study of a painted scroll measuring 10.65 x 0.38 m, depicting the story of prince Viśvantara in 85 scenes. Below each scene is a short explanatory text in Newari. According to the colophon, found below the last scene, the painting was completed in 1837, in the town of Banepa, an ancient centre of Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley. The entire scroll is reproduced on 27 splendid colour plates, and one can only congratulate the Museum of Indian Art in Berlin for

not letting itself be tempted to chose the less costly but also far less satisfactory alternative of reproducing the scroll in black and white. A certain number of the scenes on this scroll have previously been published by Professor Lienhard in an article entitled "La légende du Prince Visvantara dans la tradition nepalaise", *Arts asiatiques* vol. 34 (1978).

The greater part of the volume (pp. 71 ff.) consists of a detailed description and explanation of each scene. Prefacing it, there is an introduction in two parts. There is, first, a general introduction in which the story and its different versions are presented, the position of the story in the religious life of Nepal is discussed, and the history of its representation in art is surveyed. The second part of the introduction consists of a detailed analysis of the actual scroll, i.e. of the various components which together fill its surface - buildings, trees, hills, dress, furniture, and animals are dealt with in a systematic way. Stylistically the scroll is closely related to the Kangra school of painting which flourished c. 1770-1820 in the western Himalayan foothills.

There exist numerous mss. of the Viśvantarajātaka in Nepal, but so far none have been published. However, with regard to certain details, the Nepalese version differs from the standard version as found, for example, in the Pāli Tipitaka. The most important variation is probably to be found in the final scenes: the prince does not, as in the other versions, return to the capital together with his wife and sons, but remains in the forest hermitage while they return alone. In the version depicted on the scroll his father, here styled King Śibi, thereafter abdicates and leaves for the life of a homeless ascetic. His grandson Jālini becomes king. A certain number of other details which are peculiar to the Nepalese version are also noted by Professor Lienhard.

The scenes shown on the scroll closely follow the Nepalese version of the story. On pp. 53-70 professor Lienhard gives the Newari text followed by the German translation of the inscription on the scroll.

It is interesting to note that in certain respects the scroll faithfully depicts scenes which directly reflect its Nepalese origin. Thus the performance by a vajrācārya of the aṣṭamīvrata ritual is shown twice. The religious frame in which the story is set is, moreover, that of Nepalese Buddhism; thus the first two scenes characteristically show Vajrasattva and Lokanātha respectively, and the final three scenes show Lokanātha once more and finally the Pārāvarta-Mahāvihāra (no longer preserved) in Banepa. To sum up, this is a handsomely produced and most carefully written volume which is of interest to the specialist as well as the general reader. Further studies by professor Lienhard on the many facets of Newari culture are eagerly awaited.

Per Kvaerne

Robert Rieffel, *Avec Zimba Le Sherpa*. Ed. Denoel, Paris, 1981. 297 p., 2 colour photographs, 2 maps.

Bien que les écrits anciens et récents, ainsi que les pratiques rituelles de l'Hinduisme aient été étudiés par des érudits européens depuis plus d'un siècle, il serait à peine exagéré de dire que l'on pourrait parfaitement dresser un exposé fidèle de l'Hinduisme sous la forme d'un démenti catégorique à la plupart des énoncés qui en ont été faits, tant par des savants européens que par les Hindous formés aux modernes façons de penser sceptiques et évolutionnistes.

Ānand K. Kumār-Swāmi, *Hindouisme et Bouddhisme*, coll. Idées, NRF 1949, p. 14.

A work like Robert Rieffel's *Avec Zimba Le Sherpa* would not normally find its way into a book review chronicle of a specialized "Journal of Himalayan Studies," even though the author has, in his way, spent weeks and months mountaineering towards his "Kailash". His account is basically an invitation to the joys of trekking (*randonnées en montagne*), a wanderer's diary while hiking in Langtang, Annapurna region and Sherpa country. "There are only a few extraordinary or strange events in my account," reads his introduction, and "my purpose is not to be sensational". And while "With Zimba Sherpa" is not a guide-book (even of trekking), like his by now classic *Nepal Namasté*, the amateur will nonetheless do well to make a number of suggestions and pieces of advice part of his own arsenal of wise trekking experience.

What will strike the scholarly reader are the interpretations followed by Monsieur Rieffel when it comes to commenting upon "points of interest" cultural in nature. No bibliography is given--a trekker is not immediately interested in that sphere--yet in most cases one easily guesses ("reconstructs") the sources followed. And here is the tragic point. Differing in this from most authors of travel accounts, M. Rieffel made a *serious* effort to get his facts straight. He constituted for

himself a basic study library, containing those titles he finds quoted over and over in the bibliography of many (or most) specialized works, by "well-established authors".

Thus he repeats (p. 87) the totally farfetched, and actually funny, explanation of the origin of the "Wind-Horse" () of Sir Waddell (Lamism, p. 410 ff) and improvises along these lines a bit his own "hypothesis" (p. 276, *The notion of "movement" in lamist religion*). Yet that same old L. Augustine Waddell is still quoted (as authoritative) in so recent a scholarly (standard) work as John K. Locke's *Karunamaya* (1980). We cannot blame Monsieur Rieffel, we can only blame the scholarly habit of systematically "quoting the greats" (A. Bharati), without trying to distinguish between what they knew and where they merely pretended to know (and didn't).

This becomes all the more urgent in Himalayan studies. The gap between the anthropo-"rogue" (as a French speaking Chinese colleague calls them) and the studied-upon-*anthropos* is gradually being bridged at certain international orientalist symposia. It is sufficient to read through the individual contributions of *Tibetan Studies*-- the *compte-rendu* of the International Oxford Symposium--to notice the previously impossible (to imagine even): next to the old style Buddhologists, a number of scholars also speak as Buddhists, from oral tradition and transmission in the culture previously only studied "upon", not "studied under" the guidance of some of its recognized masters. In the same way the (ex-)Tibetologist author of the *Cult of Tara* is said to have stated, "previous to the coming of the Tibetan scholars and masters, I was well on my way to become a first-class Tibetologist scholar, at least in the U.S. But now, after their coming to the American Universities, . . . no way!"

We are for instance also able to notice how in the great majority of the contributions to Tibetan Studies ("Tibetan" means the textual traditions followed, but a lot, in fact,

directly concerns Nepal), there is no more trace of the once over-common "academic sneer", that scholarly-nervous tic of systematically over-doubting every statement from tradition, with a pretention of so-called higher criticism, *ex cathedra* wordmanship. If some of that also echoes in Monsieur Rieffel's work, we are again not to blame him, but the opinions expressed and seldom or never rectified, by previous "greats," often moved by anti-religious, or anti-local-religious motives (political, missionary, etc.). Thus M. Rieffel, in a discussion about the usual trekker's dilemma of how far he can really provide (or promise) medical aid, notes:

On the other hand, to hand to them a few drops of collyrium, or a tranquillizer here and a few aspirins or Ganidan pills there, will not really cure anyone-- we do realize that too. Their disappointment will fatally send them back to their medicine-men, sorcerers, *bombos* or *jhankris*, whose medical capabilities haven't been scientifically established as yet. (p. 22)

Yet even the Jesuit scholar C.J. Miller shows otherwise in his work; it does work in up to \pm 65% of the cases. The famous epidomologist Dr. Le Chat, when acquainted with that statement commented, "if we take into account the really important numbers of incurable cases that fill up so much of our hospital space in Europe, I think we come roughly to a very close (65%) (chance of) success with our modern medicine". But the a priori opinion in the West is otherwise and M. Rieffel writes for such a public; he has never heard otherwise either. Besides, the "cultural documentation" is only a minor component in this *oeuvre*. He has done his part of scholarly documentation and normally that ought to be more than sufficient. It is the academic world that has not performed half of its own task: that of translation for a wider public of people who *are* interested, but to whom academic style writing is inaccessible. Our main task in Himalayan Studies will therefore not consist, I believe, in *only more* specialized studies-in-the-field, but in better, more faithful

"translations", that can meet with agreement from the knowledgeable tradition-bearers in the culture "studied-upon", "worked upon".

We hasten to add that not one such flaw appears in any of the sections of *Avec Zimba Le Sherpa* where the author talks from his own experience and from his own observation. There is fine observation, a sense of clear description and, especially, a dosis of good feeling.

A typical point in case is the paragraph where M. Rieffel, "out of habit", tends to brush away as mere legend the visit of Master Jowo Atisa (Dipaṅkara-Srī Jñāna):

The monastic community *would seem to be* one of the most ancient of the entire country, *so our young "guide" tells us*. Indeed, one striking statue near the entrance represents Jo-Wo, a name given *sometimes in certain regions* to the great mystic Atisa (who lived in the XIth century and was one of the *first reformers* of the Buddhism then practised). The presence of this statue means he *would have* visited this monastery--more than 800 years ago--when, well over sixty, he was on his way to Tibet. (p. 70)

This episode reads like a mini-anthology of once widespread popular academic opinions, and of ways of "bluffing-one's-way" through-problems". To start with I would say that this visit is most likely to have occurred. Just like Tibetan prayer-wheels added to Newari temples in the Valley indicates reference to these shrines in Tibetan religious literature (guides to the Places of Power), so too does the statue of Jowo Atisa indicate that here one of his transmissions was passed on. Recent studies that interrelate the various *Accounts of Total and Perfect Liberation* () and Newari sources indicate that Jowo Atisa did much more than "pass through" Nepal. His foremost function was the emphasis on keeping intact a *bhikṣu-sangha*, a central core of monks, which does not mean that, as a *bhikṣu*, he was "against *siddhas* and *tantrikas*". In fact that would be a total *contradiction*

in terminis; all the biographies agree that Lord Atisa received the instruction to become a monk *in a* tantric vision. At least one Perfection-of-Wisdom-song and a number of Vajra-Songs were passed on by him to the Newari Vajrayana Transmission. The Extensive/Complete Biography, right in a note to the introduction, etymologizes his title as:

A-Ti-Sa =	A -- Great Yogi
	Ti-- Great Pandit
	Sa-- Great Monk

Of course, old-British and British-style Indian scholars still would love to make us believe that Master Atisa, from North India/Bengal, "purified" the ("degenerate," . . . "popular," . . . "syncretized," . . . "tantric") Buddhism of his time and attempted to restore it to what it had once been in "the mother country" India. Far from it; Jowo Atisa emphasized the *sine qua non* preparatory practices, including knowledge of Hinayana as the basis, and including especially *bodhicitta*, a mind oriented towards the enlightenment of all living beings. His *Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment* is even now still widely studied and practised in Nepal. This does not do away with the fact that, in another *function* of his, he also passed on initiations and cotranslated Trantric *sādhana* texts. The contradiction is only in the mind of Western and Indian scholars, who never got near to a living transmission. As little, in fact, as did Sir Ānand Kumār-Swāmi, author of the *boutade* below the title of this short discussion. Well, so much for that statement too.

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