

## Review

*Religion and Identity in South Asia and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Patrick Olivelle*, edited by Steven E. Lindquist. Cultural, Historical and Textual Studies of Religions; New York: Anthem Press, 2011. 392 pp., £60 (pb). ISBN 978-1-78308-067-0 (pb).

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**Keywords:** Buddhism; Dharmaśāstra; Hindu diaspora; Hinduism; identity; Jainism.

This important volume of 16 collected essays honours the distinguished career of Patrick Olivelle, one of the most influential scholars in the field of American Indology. Departing slightly from the traditional model of the *Festschrift*, the papers are the work of both senior scholars and emerging voices in the field, all of whom credit Olivelle as a significant scholarly influence and inspiration. As the title suggests, these papers are not concerned solely with ancient India, the primary locus of Olivelle's own scholarship; rather, topics from Central and East Asia are explored as are socio-political problems in contemporary South Asia. The assembled works thus represent a wide breadth of scholarship that crosses methodological, temporal, and geographic boundaries. The ensuing range of intellectual issues, perhaps unavoidably, results in a certain lack of cohesion and the title's overarching theme of 'Religion and Identity' is not engaged in equal measure by all of the contributors. Yet, the variety of the studies included attests to the wide scope of Olivelle's intellectual influence, both within and beyond the Indological community.

The book is divided into four sections, each organized under thematic headings. The first two, entitled 'Word, Text, Context' and 'Custom and Law', address subjects and are grounded in methods related closely to Olivelle's own work—that is, the rigorous philological study of normative Sanskrit texts concerned with jurisprudence, ritual, and renunciation. In their contributions to the first section, Timothy Lubin and Jarrod L. Whitaker address social categories and problematic terms—the *snātaka* (Vedic 'bath-graduate') and the concept of life (*āyus*) in the Ṛgveda, respectively—and they provide more nuanced understandings of both through a critical revisiting of the classical textual sources. Steven E. Lindquist and Robert A. Goodding utilize similar methods in their studies exploring the role of authors and authorship

in pre-modern India. Lindquist questions the contested legacy of the sage Yājñavalkya and concludes that he is most fruitfully understood as a literary construction, rather than an historical figure. Goodding's contextualization of the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, the work of the medieval author Vidyāraṇya, highlights the role of this author in negotiating the tensions between renunciation and social obligation. The section concludes with Brian Black's study of the rhetorical uses of secrecy in Upaniṣadic sources, a rhetorical strategy that, as the author explains, may have been employed to popularize a text's teachings.

The second section continues with textually-grounded studies of the Brahmanic tradition with a particular focus on bodies of juridical literature (*Dharmaśāstra*). The first essay by Robert A. Yelle is a detailed study of the etymological tradition in Sanskrit literature and the ways in which the semantic range of words was elucidated within the tradition for both literary and ritual aims. Juxtaposing these linguistic practices within the Hindu and European traditions, Yelle raises probing questions about the nature of language. Contributions by Donald R. Davis Jr and Frederico Squarcini follow. Davis's fascinating study provides a rare window into the multivocality of the *Dharmaśāstra* tradition in practice. Using an early modern source from Kerala, he provides a historical contextualization of this text's unique perspective on female adoption and matriliney. Squarcini's essay questions the presentation of public modes of punishment in the *Mānavadharmasāstra* and the author's rhetorical construction of such measures as necessary for the preservation of proper order and conduct in early Indian society.

The second half of the book introduces a shift from studies of the Brahmanical tradition to discussions of self-fashioning in Buddhist and Jain contexts. Three papers are grouped under the third heading, 'Buddhists and Jains as Selves and Others'. The first two, by Oliver Freiberger and Daniel Boucher, address the construction of religious community and identity in a Buddhist context. Freiberger approaches the question from the outside using dialogic narratives that illustrate the various literary strategies by which members of the tradition defined themselves vis-à-vis the many 'others' they encountered. Boucher also employs narrative sources to consider the ways in which the values of sacrifice and of ascetic practice were alternately questioned and accommodated within the early *Mahāyāna* tradition. Finally, Lisa N. Owen's contribution integrates text and image to explore the representation of Jain identity in the cave temples of Ellora. Questioning some of the traditional iconographic analysis of Jain images in the caves, she shows how their attributes evoke the ideals of fertility and fecundity typically associated with the *yakṣa* and *yakṣī*. As glorifications of both the *Tīrthaṅkara* and Jain religious practice, she argues that these figures contributed in significant ways to the structure and ambiance of sanctified spaces.

The concluding section of this volume, entitled '(Re)Considering Geographical and Conceptual Boundaries', extends the volume's temporal and

geographic scope by raising questions concerning religion and identity in Central and East Asia and amongst the Hindu diaspora in the United States. Devin DeWeese traces the fashioning of distinct 'corporate' identities amongst three competing Sufi religious orders with common origins in India and Central Asia. In his contribution, Jason BeDuhn explores the phenomenon of the internalization of sacrifice using the parallel cases of the Jewish, Hindu, and Manichaean traditions. BeDuhn's comparative study draws upon Olivelle's work to show how the ideology of sacrifice, once the purview of the priestly class, was re-envisioned to accommodate new forms of ascetic practices that were in competition with the older sacrificial models. The final three contributions probe issues related to identity politics in post-colonial India and among the Hindu diaspora in the USA. Manu Bhagavan charts some under-theorized ties between the popularization of Hindutva ideology and the Congress party. Laura R. Brueck maps the emergence of a unique Dalit voice in the field of Hindi literary criticism. The final essay by Karlina McLain provides a fitting conclusion—she explores the modern retellings of the story of Śvetaketu, a character who was the subject of some of Olivelle's research in the Upaniṣadic text corpus. Using the popular *Amar Citra Katha* series of comic books, McLain highlights the important pedagogical function of Śvetaketu as a moral exemplar for young people coming of age in the Hindu diaspora in the United States.

The individual essays collected in this volume make valuable contributions to the fields of Indology, South Asian Studies, and Religious Studies, more broadly and will be useful for professional scholars and students alike. In addition, the bibliography of Olivelle's important publications that accompanies the editor's Introduction will be a useful resource to current and future scholars.