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Review

La formation du Mahāvastu *et la mise en place des conceptions relatives à la carrière du* bodhisattva, by Vincent Tournier. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2017. xxiv + 631 pp. €45 (pb). ISBN 978-2-85539-133-5.

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This monumental work by Vincent Tournier is more than a study of the *Mahāvastu*; it is an important study on the history of early-first-millennium Indian Buddhism that has implications for our understanding of the development of the *nikāya*s and of the Mahāyāna. The text itself is of a formidable length at over 600 pages, but nearly half of this (Part II of the book) is taken up by Tournier's edition—based on numerous manuscript sources—and translation of relevant parts of the *Mahāvastu*. It thus serves as a useful reference for the study itself, which is found in Part I. This is divided into three chapters—each about 100 pages long—although there are numerous further subdivisions that make for easy reading. The first chapter has two purposes: to establish that the *Mahāvastu* did indeed, as the text itself claims, originate as the 'Great Chapter' of the Vinaya of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins, as well as to give an overview of the development of the *Mahāvastu* as an independent text. Tournier shows that the two prologues of the text, the *Nidānavastu* and the *Nidānanamaskāra*s, reflect two stages of composition dating to roughly the first century and the third century CE. Further, an appendix called the *Daśabhūmika* was added by the sixth century CE.

The second and third chapters build upon this basic analysis of the text with a study of how the career of the *bodhisattva* was conceived over the course of the *Mahāvastu*'s formation. Chapter 2 is a study of a genre of texts known as *Bahubuddhakasūtra*s. These are texts that describe Śākyamuni's predecessors under whom he himself progressed on the *bodhisattva* path toward Awakening. Tournier examines the parts of the *Mahāvastu* that fall into the genre, in comparison with other *Bahubuddhakasūtra*s outside the *Mahāvastu*, and shows how they were used to establish the Buddha's supramundane or *lokottara* status, in line with the Lokottaravāda. Chapter 3 then examines the subtle change introduced by the addition of the *Daśabhūmika* appendix. The

Daśabhūmika marks a shift from a descriptive account of the *bodhisattva* career to a prescriptive one, thus reflecting the influence of the Mahāyāna. Tournier argues it does so in an intentionally conservative manner, ignoring the great *bodhisattva*s of the new Mahāyāna scriptures and propounding the *bodhisattvayāna* in 'traditional garb' (p. 619), by referring instead to Śākyamuni and his prominent disciples of the old scriptures.

Tournier's work in this book will be of great interest to Buddhologists in general and especially those who specialize in the *Mahāvastu*, of course, but also those who specialize in the origins of the Mahāyāna as well as in pre-Mahāyana Buddhism. My main criticism, if it can be so called, is that I wish Tournier had done more. Admittedly, this may seem an unreasonable criticism given the length and philological detail of the book as it now stands. What the book lacks, however—and what indeed may limit its interest to scholars whose specializations are not those I just mentioned—is a strong contribution to wider debates within Buddhist Studies and the study of religion in South Asia. In particular, Tournier's findings clearly have implications for our understanding of the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism, but he shies away from substantively engaging with that debate, even stating that he remains 'agnostic' about Mahāyāna origins vis-à-vis the Mahāsāṃghika (p. 618). One can only hope that future scholars will bring Tournier's work to a wider audience by making use of his findings in their own contributions to these wider scholarly debates.