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VII. BOOK AND EXHIBITION REVIEWS

Kantowsky, D. & R. Sander (eds.)

1983

Recent Research on Ladakh. History, Culture, Sociology, Ecology. Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of Konstanz [Constance] 23-26 November 1981. Munich, etc.: Weltforum Verlag 1983. Schriftenreihe Internationales Asienforum, Band 1. 282 pages, 16 black & white plates; ink drawings, tables, sketch-maps. Price: DM 59.

Reviewed by: András Höfer
Universität Heidelberg

The book is a meritorious undertaking in that it reviews a number of projects, mainly by young scholars, exploring a little-known area which has only recently been re-opened for Westerners. It contains 15 contributions in English, 2 in German and 2 in French. They differ in both scope and quality, and this cannot be justified by the preliminary character of the research results alone. Suffice it to mention some of the outstanding papers: D. Schuh's notes on the relations between Ladakh and Bhutan in the 17th century, along with a warning against the social scientists' lighthearted reliance in secondary sources on Tibet; R. Vohra's useful, though somewhat eclectic and short report on the Buddhist Dards; J. Bray's interesting account on the Moravian missionaries; P. Kaplanian's structuralist interpretation (perhaps overinterpretation) of a myth relating the origin of the culture and population of Ladakh, unfortunately with some unexplained details; M. Brauen's solid analysis of marriage rituals in the light of songs; R. Sander's note on population growth and polyandry; J.H. Crook's and T. Shakya's informative study of household structure in Leh; F. Erdmann's contribution on social stratification in Ladakh, regrettably with little comparative reference to Tibet proper; R. Reis' preliminary paper on the position of women as mothers or nuns; and W. Friedl's very useful ethnographic notes on agriculture, animal husbandry and handicrafts in Zangla.

Such a wide range of topics and approaches should have been interconnected and presented in a programmatic perspective by an introductory chapter. Instead, the editors were content with a hasty and rather odd preface. The index is not complete, and the spelling of indigenous names and terms remains heterogeneous; in one instance, all diacritics have been brushed aside, even though the author obviously chose the Pelliot system of transliteration. A map and English summaries of the contributions in French and German could have facilitated the orientation for the reader.

Gutschow, Neils

1982

Stadtraum und Ritual der newarischen Städte im Kāthmāṇḍu-Tal. Eine architekturanthropologische Untersuchung. [Urban space and ritual in the Newar towns of the Kathmandu Valley. A study in architectural anthropology]. Stuttgart, etc.: W. Kohlhammer Verlag 1982. 208 pages, 233 illustrations: black & white plates, sketch maps, plans, drawings. ISBN 3-17-007736-7. Price: DM 98.

Reviewed by: András Höfer
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Among the students of the architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, Gutschow was the first to go beyond the traditional scope of the art historian and to investigate urban space as a meaningful whole. This orientation was already manifest in the book "Bhaktapur — Gestalt, Funktionen und religiöse Symbolik einer nepalischen Stadt..." (Darmstadt 1974), which he wrote with G. Auer.* The present publication draws on a long field experience which means that about 90% of the data were collected by the author.

*Some other major publications in English: "Ordered space. Concepts and functions in a town of Nepal." Nepal Research Centre Publications, no. 1. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner 1975 (with B. Kölver) -- "Ritual as mediator of space in Kathmandu, Nepal." Nepal Research Centre Publications, no. 2. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner 1977 (with M. Bajracharya) -- "Kathmandu. Historical development, spatial structure, and ritual topography." Khumbu Himal, Band 13,3. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner 1979.

To each of the three towns, namely Bhaktapur, Kāthmāṇḍu and Pāṭan, one chapter is devoted and thematically subdivided as follows: history and the mythic foundation of the town; the elementary structure of urban space; town quarters; the dynamic order in urban space as reflected by processions and festivals. In a final chapter the main theses are discussed in a comparative perspective. The book concludes with 244 notes and a detailed bibliography.

Gutschow starts from the statement that it is the lack of an ideational concept which accounts for the dreariness of our modern cities in the West. By contrast, such concepts do exist in the case of the traditional towns of Nepal. They put, as it were, life into the visually perceptible form of urban space by projecting a "cosmo-magical" (R. Heine-Geldern) world-view on to it. The author labels this type of projection "Sacralization" or (less aptly) "theologization." One may conclude from his demonstration that through such projections the mere material manifestation of space becomes enrooted in a higher-level order which is both transcendent and transcendental (to use this Kantian distinction) for the individual inhabitant. And the most important elements of such ordering concepts are constituted by archetypal-universal patterns, such as the four corners, the world axis or the idea of the eternal return.

The study is centered around what Gutschow calls the "urban ritual." He is primarily interested in ritual as a movement through space in the form of innumerable religious processions that define different categories of space and bring sanctuaries and/or town quarters into relation with each other. It is following these procession routes that man visits his gods in a pilgrimage; that the gods visit each other at the great festivals; and that the bodies of the dead leave the town in the funeral processions. Formally speaking, Gutschow distinguishes between centrifugal and linear processions. Funeral processions leading out of the town to the cremation grounds outside the agglomeration, as well as certain processions linked with rituals of purification and renewal are of the centrifugal type. The linear type, by contrast, includes different patterns of circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇā*) namely those which (a) demarcate the town from the outside world; (b) integrate heterogeneous areas, such as the lower and the upper town, for example; and (c) lead along a fairly complex itinerary to specific sanctuaries.

Such age-old procession routes "actualize" even streets which are otherwise no longer used and monuments which have long since become dilapidated. Moreover, their network provides a model for various ways of sacralizing the space as a whole. As traditional graphic representations show, the actual shape of a town may be stylized as a mandala or as the conch of Viṣṇu or, yet again, as the sword of Kālī or Māñjuśrī, and thus reduced to its ideal or "true" form. Once conceived of, such sacralization models may be applied to other areas yet to be consecrated. Gutschow calls this transfer "translocalization" or "Umwidmung" (literally "re-dedication"). (Here, he should have quoted Sylvain Lévi who had already pointed out this phenomenon and showed, for example, how the sacred topography of the Indian mythology was applied to the Kathmandu Valley). Different conceptualizations can also exist side by side; the same ritual within the same space has different cognitive relevances and taxonomies for Buddhists and for Hindus, which is the case in the *Dīpaṃkarabuddha Jātrā* in Bhaktapur. Finally, the author stresses that rather than determining material configurations of urban space, sacralizations (and the rituals themselves) have always emerged in response to such developments. Thus the foundation of a town by a new dynasty is to be understood as a symbolic act; the new ritual that was established simultaneously, had the function of integrating a rather incidental and heterogeneous space into a meaningful whole.

Those having no first-hand, intimate knowledge of the Kathmandu Valley will have to be prepared for a partly strenuous reading. The text is often hastily formulated, and since cross-references are scarce and an index is lacking, the plethora of names and terms is somewhat confusing. Yet the reader is rewarded by an excellent concluding chapter (p. 178 ff.) and a great number of excellent illustrative figures. The black & white plates are compelling in their spontaneous vividness. With a few (obviously technically conditioned) exceptions, indigenous names and terms are given in correct spelling.

This is a substantial publication, and Gutschow's merits remain undiminished even if future research may correct some of his conclusions from the historical or indological viewpoint. For the social scientist, the book contains a number of stimulating proposals. Not only does it invite extension into the total societal sphere, say, in the manner of Ostor's "The play of the gods" (Chicago 1980), but it is also a challenge to the anthropologist in particular. He, the anthropologist, will be able to bring into light much more about "ritual as movement through space," a movement by which space becomes apprehensible, and about the role that such an apprehension plays for the psychological efficacy of rituals. The exploration of this field requires that one go beyond some postulates of Gutschow, such as the univocality of archetypal symbols, or his reduction of the efficacy of ritual to a merely conscious, intellectual understanding of sacralization models by the participant.

Brauen, Martin (ed).
1983

Peter Aufschnaiter. *Sein Leben in Tibet*. [Peter Aufschnaiter. His life in Tibet]. Innsbruck: Steiger Verlag 1983. ISBN 3-85423-016-8. 207 pages, numerous illustrations (black & white and colour photographs, drawings, sketch maps), 1 map supplement.

Reviewed by: András Höfer
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P. Aufschnaiter, the well-known Austrian mountaineer with Nepali citizenship, led a life free of the "publish-or-perish" dictate, although he was working incessantly during his seven years in Tibet (1944-1952) and his last 21 years in Nepal. He explored and even surveyed, with primitive equipment, some parts of Tibet and northern Nepal, took notes on climate, fauna, flora, topography and, of course, on the people whom he loved as much as the mountains. Those who came to know him later in his life in Nepal will remember the small room in the quarters of the Swiss Association of Technical Assistance at Jawalakhel near Kathmandu, where amidst seemingly chaotic heaps of instruments, books and boxes, this tall, laconic man was bending over his desk to write "just for the drawer".

The book presents a part of his literary bequest which was acquired by the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich. The autobiographical account (emended partly by the editor, partly by Aufschnaiter himself shortly before his death in 1973) deals with the years between his adventurous escape from the British internment camp in Dehra Dun and his arrival in Nepal. It describes the odyssey over Spiti, Gartok and the Mt. Kailash area to Kyirong, from there over Changthang to Lhasa where Aufschnaiter spent several years as an employee of the Tibetan government, from there over Gyantse, Shigatse, Shang and Tanag, Sakya, Rongphu back to Kyirong. Aufschnaiter's own narration, here and there somewhat short-spoken, is aptly accompanied by quotations from his correspondence with friends, relatives and Sven Hedin. The text is interspersed with a good selection of photographs (only partly by Aufschnaiter himself), maps of itineraries and/or the areas surveyed, and drawings (ink and pencil). An introduction appraises life and work, and an appendix lists, among others, Aufschnaiter's publications and 55 unpublished maps of Tibet, of which those of Kyirong and Zangzang seem to be of particular value. His detailed map of Lhasa and surroundings is included as a supplement.

Martin Brauen has succeeded in producing an exemplary edition.

Art Review: Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art

Reviewed by: Deepak Shimkhada

After "Manifestations of Shiva", a major Indian art exhibition which went on view about the same time two years ago, "Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art", may seem a sequel. But it is not so. "Light of Asia" is different both in scope and subject matter.

Unlike Hinduism, Buddhism spread through Asia in distant lands among diverse peoples. As an organized religious faith, Buddhism called for conversion resulting in a large following. With more than 190 works on display, "Light of Asia", opened in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art on March 4, 1984, during a gala evening with sampling of Asian foods and live Indian music, reflects the many-sidedness of Buddhism. It continued on view through May 20, after which it traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Brooklyn Museum.

The exhibition, as the title suggests, deals mainly with Buddha Sakyamuni, drawing scenes from both his historical and legendary lives. But his aniconic and transcendental representations are also being incorporated to give a wider coverage of the subject matter. The artworks, mainly sculpture, thus examine the life of that historical figure in various artistic traditions of Asia. A brief history of the life of Sakyamuni is necessary here in order to better appreciate the various life scenes portrayed in many forms of art. After all, the works reflect the life and teachings of the man who founded Buddhism as an organized religion which later swept the Asian continent with a following of almost two-thirds of the world's population, constituting a major cultural force. With a growing interest in Buddhism among Westerners today, it is not surprising to see an exhibition of this magnitude come alive in the middle of the Los Angeles metropolis.

When born around 563 B.C. at Lumbini, now in Nepal, Sakyamuni, better known today as Buddha, was called Siddhartha. His personal life is, however, colored with many supernatural events and legendary stories, making history read like a fairy tale. For example, he is said to have emerged from the right

flank of his mother, Mayadevi, while she was on the way to visit her parents. The birth, though it might actually have been a caesarean birth as that of Julius Caesar, does create a supernatural setting in which blossom other such stories. Even as an infant, Siddhartha is said to have performed miracles such as the taking of the seven steps in each cardinal direction, and declaring in a loud voice to be the best among all living beings.

Upon hearing the good news of the birth of his son, Suddhodhana, a king of the sakya clan at Kapilavastu, had the diviners read the infant's horoscope. But the signs of a superhuman (mahapurusha) the infant exhibited were so complex that the diviners were unable to predict the infant's future with certainty. That is when the great seer Asita, clairvoyant in all fields of knowledge, was summoned in, who, taking 32 major and 80 minor physical signs of greatness displayed by the infant, predicted that the infant, upon adulthood, would become either a universal monarch (chakravartin) or a knower of the perfect knowledge, a Buddha. This was received both with elation and guarded apprehension, and he, desiring to see his son rule the world as a universal monarch, married the young prince to a beautiful girl named Gopa, and lavished them with pleasures of life. In a slightly different version of Sakyamuni's life, recounted in the Mahavastu, she is known as Yasodhara. But as his karma would have it, Siddhartha's urge to seek the truth of life was much stronger than the pleasures of life forced upon him.

Deeply affected by the four phases of human life seen through an old man, a sick man, a corpse and a monk whom he encountered during his outings, Siddhartha decided to seek the root of the evil that pulled living beings into the endless chain of rebirths. So one night, while his wife and the newly-born son, Rahula, were sleeping, he quietly slipped out of the palace on a journey to no-return. This is known as the Great Departure.

Upon renouncing his princehood and other material attachments, Siddhartha wandered through many places and believed in many faiths in search of the truth. But the truth could not be found. Finally at Bodhgaya, after having sat in meditation below the tree of knowledge (bodhidruma) for 40 days and 40 nights, he became an enlightened being, a Buddha. But when Sakyamuni was about to attain enlightenment, Mara, the evil one, filled his mind with temptations of life, attempting to stop him from becoming a Buddha. To complete this mission, Mara released his vast army, consisting of horrible-looking goblins and charming seductresses, who attacked Sakyamuni from every direction. In "The Temptation of Sakyamuni", a painting from Nepal, dated 1561 A.D., the scene is brought to life by dramatizing the incident with fearful facial expressions and agitated body movements of figures. Below the central throne in which the Buddha is seated are Mara's daughters who dance seductively in an attempt to distract Sakyamuni from his meditation. On top are Mara's angry retinue, together with Hindu gods, throwing an array of weapons at Sakyamuni. But despite all this, Sakyamuni remained unperturbed and finally triumphed over Mara. This event is appropriately called the Maravijaya (victory over Mara).

The Buddha delivered his first sermon at Sarnath, not far from Varanasi, in front of only a handful of disciples. The Hindu notion that life transmigrates through endless cycles played a major departing point in Sakyamuni's teachings, for it was that very notion which set him on a course to become a Buddha. Because one is fated to die to be reborn, Sakyamuni saw life as suffering (dukkha), and naturally the thrust of his teachings lay in the process of freeing oneself from that cycle of rebirths. The Buddha taught that one must extinguish all one's desires (trishna) and consciousness; only then can one attain nirvana, the final release.

In the beginning he had only a few followers. But as his teachings gained momentum among the masses of India, the number of followers soared dramatically. But it had not been an easy task for Sakyamuni. He was met with adversaries who did not believe in his Dharma. Since logic and reason meant very little to them, Buddha used his supernatural powers to impress. The Miracle at Sravasti as seen in a detail of the copper image from Nepal, showing scenes from the life of the Buddha, and the Miracle at Sankisya depicted in a stone relief from the ancient site of Gandhara in Pakistan are examples in which sakyamuni is seen performing extraordinary feats.

After having set the wheel of his Law in motion, the Buddha finally entered into nirvana at an advanced age of 80. The passing away of the Buddha is called the mahaparinirvana, since there was no return to this world (samsara) in any form of life. In this state, the Buddha is shown in art reclining horizontally in sleeping posture with the head rested under the palm of his right hand. The death, since it was an important event in the life of the Buddha, became a popular theme in Buddhist art. But in Japan, where it is called nehan, it is treated with more empathy than anywhere else.

Bringing several major pieces of artwork together under one roof from 75 museums and private collections worldwide, originating in Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran,

Japan, Korea, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Tibet (not necessarily in this order), the exhibition is the culmination of four years of planning and hard work led by Pratapaditya Pal, Senior Curator of the Indian and Southeast Asian art at the Museum. Since the exhibition attempts to retrace the life of Sakyamuni, a narrative method has been followed to unfold the stories in chronological sequence, starting with Sakyamuni's legendary life, showing his Nativity, Enlightenment, Teaching, and Death. Also included are his symbolic, iconographic and cosmic representations. In his cosmic representation, the Buddha transcends his historical persona and stands for a supreme spiritual principle. The popular representation of the Buddha as a superhuman (mahapurusha) is seen in the works of China, India, Japan, Java, Korea, Nepal, and Tibet and even in Sri Lanka and Thailand, the countries of Theravada Buddhism.

Certainly, "Light of Asia" -- both in scale and scope -- surpasses the earlier exhibition devoted to Buddha Sakyamuni, organized by the late Professor Benjamin Rowland, Jr., of Harvard University, some 20 years ago. But due to constraints of time and space, among other things as conceded by Pal, the exhibition seems to suffer from being somewhat a hodgepodge of too many art objects crammed under one roof, most of which are already familiar to Asian art enthusiasts. With very few unfamiliar pieces on view, the exhibition is not likely to generate overwhelming interest among those looking for something new. Furthermore, the massive dose of Buddhist materials presented in the exhibition may be too much to digest at one time for an uninformed viewer, and it may turn off some viewers, instead of turning them on. In spite of all this, the exhibition can be considered a true landmark in the history of Buddhist art. It allows the viewer to examine Buddhist art in various cultural and historical contexts. The sumptuously illustrated catalog with well-written introduction to each thematic section is an added bonus. Speaking of the thematic divisions, Pal says, "The thematic unity of the exhibition should help even the most uninformed viewer to recognize and appreciate the cultural diversity of Asia without being overwhelmed by it." Each artwork in the catalog is illustrated and fully described with up-to-date information on the piece, and this informative catalog, though it is rather expensive to own, is a must.

The exhibition takes its name from Sir Edwin Arnold's poem The Light of Asia, and originates in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the recipient of the Heeramanek collection of Indian, Nepalese and Tibetan art. The majority of the artwork for obvious reasons comes from the museum where the exhibition originated. Among many fine examples of Buddhist art housed in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, one that deserves special attention is a statue of Sakyamuni which is included in the exhibit as a prize-piece.

Made of brass with traces of polychromy, the statue shows Sakyamuni in a monk's robe. He stands upright on his two feet with the left leg slightly flexed, displaying the gesture "have no fear" (abhaya mudra) which he demonstrates with his right hand. The left hand holds the robe's ends. The cavities created by the edges of the transparent robe form deep troughs making the statue look gracefully noble. With revealing body beneath the robe the statue represents the stylistic traits of the Sarnath school which reached its zenith during the 6th century of the Gupta period in North India. On the other hand, the repeated curvilinear folds of the robe seen over the Buddha's body follow the Mathura idiom, which goes to indicate that the statue was done in a composite style. Furthermore the introverted gaze with drooping eyelids as though in meditation, the rotund and fleshy face, heavy thick lips and circles around the neck are characteristic features of the pan-Gupta style which the statue mirrors. Although numerous Buddha statues in metal may have been cast during the Gupta period, only a handful survive today, making it a rare piece. Because metal was scarce and expensive, most metal images were probably melted down to make farm tools, household utensils and weapons, hence the paucity of metal images.

Taking into account the traces of indigo found on the head of Buddha's head, Pal thinks that the statue was carried off to Tibet by monks during the destruction of monasteries in North India in the 12th century.

Among the 32 major physical signs of greatness Sakyamuni inherited by birth, the usanisha (a cranial bump), hair that curls to the right, hands that touch the knees, webbed fingers, broad shoulders, large forehead and perfectly arched eyebrows are included in this statue as part of his iconography mentioned in texts. However, the urna, a mole between the eyebrows, found invariably in statues of the Buddha, is not portrayed. Why it is omitted is not clear.

With the display of abhaya mudra, the Buddha's message is simple: if an individual follows his path, that individual need have no fear of going through the cycle of rebirths. This Buddha image, though its style and proportion are different from the rest of the works on view, epitomizes the ideals of Buddhism that Buddhist art is supposed to reflect.