

TULL, HERMAN W. *The Vedic Origins of Karma. Cosmos as Man in Ancient Indian Myth and Ritual*. SUNY Series in Hindu Studies. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989. x+181 pages. Bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$44.50; ISBN 0-7914-0094-8. Paper US\$14.95.

Karma is usually defined as "the effect of former deeds, performed either in this life or in a previous one, on one's present and future condition" (e.g., BASHAM 1954, 553). The present well-thought-out work deals with the origin of the karma theory of rebirth. It has been customary to see the first indication of the beginning of the karma doctrine in the famous passage of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad where the sage Yajñavalkya has a discussion about life after death with the learned brahmin Ārthabhāga. The passage in question is quoted on p. 28 of Tull's work:

Having gone aside, they engaged in a consultation. That which they spoke about was karma and that which they praised was action (*karman*), one indeed becomes good by good action (*karman*), bad by bad [action].

The earliest Vedic texts, the Vedas themselves, have not traditionally been regarded as connected with the karma theory, nor has the next phase of Vedic literature, the ritual texts of the Brāhmaṇas. The main aim of the present work is to show that this view is incorrect, and that the passage of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad quoted above is not the first indication of the theory of karma. Tull contends that the beginnings of the karma theory go back much further and can, indeed, be found in the Brāhmaṇas. He shows that there is a continuity of thought between the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, particularly the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads. The link between these two works has been known for a long time, and is to be expected, since both texts belong to the tradition of the same school, that of the White Yajurveda. What the present book stresses, however, is the notion that the sacerdotal teachings of the Brāhmaṇas foreshadow the theory of karma. Tull concentrates on the *agnicayana* ritual, i.e., the building of the fire-altar, and shows how this reflects the cosmic man myth: the ritual death that underlies Vedic sacrifice leads to "an afterlife existence in the real cosmos." In stressing this continuity of thought Tull attacks the views of a number of earlier writers, particularly A. B. Keith (25, 119). KEITH (1976, 441-42) saw a clear distinction between the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads:

The distinction corresponds . . . in the main to a change of time and still more a change of view. The Upaniṣads hold in some degree at least the doctrine of transmigration . . . the Brāhmaṇas . . . know not transmigration.

While stressing the continuity between the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, Tull nevertheless admits that there *is* a difference in outlook between the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads: "while the Brāhmaṇas exhibit an overwhelming concern with the ritual world, the Upaniṣads look outward to the larger cosmos" (121). The reader cannot help but feel that Keith has been too harshly treated. What particularly angers Tull is the "view of nineteenth-century Indology" that regarded the ritual sections of the Brāhmaṇas as a "worthless supplement" of the Vedas (von Roth, quoted p. 16) and "monuments of tediousness and intrinsic stupidity" (Bloomfield, quoted p. 18). This criticism is parallel to W. D. O'FLAHERTY's (1985) views on some of the work of nineteenth-century scholars, and particularly their work on the Brāhmaṇas.

There is clearly truth in Tull's views about the continuity of Vedic thought and

the way in which the doctrine of karma is anticipated in the Brāhmaṇas. This makes these texts interesting to interpret, but it still does not make them entirely fascinating reading. Some of the nineteenth-century criticism of the Brāhmaṇas was on a literary rather than a philosophical basis and should therefore be judged accordingly. To this day most literary-oriented readers still prefer to read those parts of the Brāhmaṇas that contain myths, such as the story of the flood, or how Cyavana was made young again, rather than the long discussions of ritual, even if these discussions can be shown to foreshadow karma theory. Those myths are of great antiquity and therefore of particular interest from the point of view of Asian folklore studies.

The present work is not only well argued but also well documented, references to the Sanskrit texts are given with great accuracy, and the translations are excellent. It is a pity, however, that the work of MINARD (1956) does not appear to have been consulted and has not been included among the references. There are several sections of Minard's enormous work that discuss the same matters as Tull, notably II, p. 329, "Sur une cosmogonie," which deals with Prajāpati and the cosmogonic egg and therefore covers the same topic as pp. 61 and 65-67 of the present work. Another topic covered by Minard is "Purāṇa des souffles" II, pp. 334-36, in a sequence which points out the same matters as pp. 92-93 of the present work. Minard's approach may be recondite, but he does give us hints that the cosmology involved in the Vedic sacrifice is somehow related to more widespread beliefs in sympathetic magic. Similar indications might have widened the interest of the present work. Nevertheless, we must be grateful to H. Tull for presenting such an incisive and authoritative work.

REFERENCES CITED:

BASHAM, Arthur L.

1954 *The wonder that was India*. London: Sidgwick and Jackson.

KEITH, Arthur Berriedale

1976 *The religion and philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*. 2 vols. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

MINARD, Armand

1956 *Trois énigmes sur les Cent Chemins. Recherches sur le Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*. Vol. 2. Paris: Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne.

O'FLAHERTY, Wendy D.

1985 *Tales of sex and violence: Folklore, sacrifice and danger in the "Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa."* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

L. A. HERCUS

The Australian National University
Canberra

ISRAEL

SCHWARZBAUM, HAIM. *Jewish Folklore between East and West. Collected Papers*. Edited and introduced by Eli Yassif. Beer-Sheva, Israel: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1989. vi+397 pages. General index and index of tale types. Cloth n.p. (Distributed by The Bialik Institute, 37 Pierre Koenig St. POB 92, Jerusalem 91920, Israel)

In his obituary for Haim Schwarzbaum (1911-1983), Dov Noy tells that upon his arrival at Bloomington, Indiana in 1952 to begin his graduate studies, Stith Thompson