

the 1716 edition was known and was the source. Second, one cannot assume direct influence just because a particular motif from the Gesar is present in another epic, unless this motif is used in the same context as in the Gesar cycle. These two criteria should prove to be very useful in deciding questions of direct influence. They will highlight the difficulty of apodictically demonstrating such influence. Indeed the hallmark of Heissig's book is this sort of critical and prudent assessment of evidence.

Following as it does the publications by Heissig and his collaborators of collections of Mongolian epics, this book helps bring into focus a number of issues. Heissig frequently refers to the above published materials, showing their interrelations. Since the full references are given only the first time they occur, it is time consuming for one who encounters a particular source somewhere in the middle of the book to identify the reference. The use of such abbreviations is, no doubt, a time-honored practice, but it would perhaps have been more helpful to the reader to gather reference material in a separate bibliography. A Mongolist can easily understand references from even the most abbreviated citations, but the book is certain to be of interest to scholars of epic literature and folklore, who would appreciate a more accessible bibliography.

The book is extremely valuable, especially if one is willing to spend the time needed to familiarize oneself with its thinking. Heissig has given us a thoughtful and well-balanced guide to an important area of Asian epic tradition.

Peter Knecht

#### INDIA

BAILEY, GREG. *The Mythology of Brahmā*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983. 256 pages, bibliography, index. Rs 100.

This book is important for scholarship on India for two reasons: First, even though only one important temple to Brahmā remains in worship today (at Pushkar near Ajmer), Bailey gathers evidence from Vedic, Hindu, and Buddhist sources to show that from c. 400 BCE to 400 CE Brahmā was an important cultic figure with many temples of his own in north India, some of them important pilgrimage centers. Second, Bailey provides an analytical handle for grasping the role of Brahmā in Hindu myth through his description of Brahmā's origins in the "apotheosization of the *brahmā* priest" in the *śrauta* sacrifice, the priest who served as "the general overseer of the whole series of rituals that make up the complete sacrifice" (6). In the myths of the later epics and Purāṇas, Brahmā plays roles defined by this Vedic ritualism as modified by the *bhakti* and *yoga* of "Hinduism." He is, for example, matter (*prakṛti*) as it moves from undifferentiated "chaos" (*pradhāna*) into an ordered and individuated form (*ahaṃkāra*); he is the order (*dharma*) that further organizes that individuated matter into the cosmos we inhabit and within the cosmos he is the begetter of beings who are born and die, imitating his own career as the single ancestor of all beings (*pitāmaha*, the grandfather).

Brahmā's roles articulate a world view that affirms *pravṛtti*—actions intended to recycle the created matter of the cosmos in an orderly manner in order to sustain the cosmos and those within it. In contrast to Viṣṇu and Śiva, Brahmā has no concern with transcendent freedom (*mokṣa*) nor with *nirvṛtti*—actions of renunciants that are intended not to procreate. Brahmā, like most householders, is thus reborn repeatedly—as the cosmic egg (*brahmāṇḍa*), as the *dharma* that orders the cosmos into a hierarchical and interdependent structure, and as the progenitor of the gods and demons

whose perpetual rivalry weakens that order, requiring the repeated intervention of Brahmā's own parent, Viṣṇu or Śiva, as *avatar*. Brahmā then relates to the *avatar* as a Brahmin ritualist ideally does to a Kṣatriya, though in this case, the Kṣatriya *avatar* also represents the anti-ritualist values of *nirvṛtti* and *mokṣa*.

This brief sketch of Bailey's analysis belies the rich and useful detail he provides in the book's four parts. Part one is a long essay analyzing the worship and status of Brahmā in ancient India, perhaps the single most revealing and smoothly written chapter of the book. Part two discusses preliminaries in two chapters. In one chapter Bailey argues that value systems or ideologies underlie Hindu myths and, following Madelaine Biardeau (1968, 1969, 1971) and Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1973), that one such system is the opposition between the values of the householder (*pravṛtti*) and those of the renunciant (*nirvṛtti*). The myth of Brahmā illustrates the former, for *pravṛtti* is its organizing principle in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Purāṇas, and the Pāli texts of the Buddhist canon. In the other chapter of part two Bailey analyses the Vedic deities who served as Brahmā's functional antecedents, arguing persuasively that neither Brahmā nor his predecessors, such as Bṛhaspati, were merely the apotheoses of the Brahmin but were actually embodiments in myth of the ritualistic values that the Brahmin himself partially embodied in society.

The remaining two parts make up two-thirds of the book and they explore, from a refreshing perspective, the richness of Hindu myths. Commendably, Bailey treats a myth as a narrative that contains various motifs, the meaning of which can only be derived from the whole story. This means that Bailey carries the reader through an in-depth and detailed discussion of myths laden with smoothly translated quotations, often quite lengthy. Although most of the myths may be familiar to students of Indian culture, Bailey's discussion of them from the point of view of Brahmā evokes new insights everywhere.

Part three discusses Brahmā in the cosmogonic myths, devoting a chapter each to three themes. One is the creation of matter from its primary and disordered state to its organization as an egg, the *prakṛtasarga*, followed by the creation within the egg of the individual contents of the universe, the *pratisarga*. Bailey follows Biardeau here and provides a sieve through which the details of complex and seemingly inconsistent texts sift into a pattern. For example, at the end of the *prakṛtasarga* Brahmā appears as the first individual (*ahaṅkāra*) who makes the *pratisarga* possible, for, like us, his microcosmic versions, he has the viewpoint of *pravṛttidharma* "which attributes a positive value to intentional actions performed by beings who consider themselves ultimately real in their embodiment and separateness from others" (103). Just like any of us, Brahmā too is caught in *saṃsāra* by his instinctive outlook, except that he is *saṃsāra*. The *prakṛtasarga* is his lifetime and the *pratisarga* is his daytime; his days and nights are creations and dissolutions restricted to the triple world within the egg. For every one *prakṛtasarga* there are 36,000 *pratisargas* and each time Brahmā awakes for a new day, he begins it like a pious Brahmin with meditation; from his *yoga* emerge the four groups of beings that inhabit the egg—plants, animals, gods and humans—each shaped in its character by the nature of Brahmā's mind and body during his meditation, but carrying on its own replication not through *yoga* but through sex. Among them only humans can obtain freedom (*mokṣa*) from his endless *pratisargas*, but they depend on Brahmā's own progenitor for that—Brahmā can bestow immortality but not *mokṣa*. As ascetic traditions increased their *nirvṛtti* influence on the ritualistic world view of Vedic Brahminism, Brahmā's temples inevitably declined in favor of those dedicated to Viṣṇu and Śiva, the progenitors of Brahmā who could give both immortality and *mokṣa*.

The opposition of sex and *yoga* as methods of creation is the next theme. Bailey again stresses *pravṛtti* versus *nirvṛtti*. One might also wish that he had explored Brahmā's myth as a development of the insight in Rig Veda 10: 129 that from asceticism (*tapas*) developed desire (*kāma*), "the first seed of mind," for as an embodiment of ritualist values who creates through *yoga* and through sex, Brahmā seems to represent that Vedic insight. The third theme Bailey develops in this part is Brahmā as the "individuating agent" (*ahaṅkāra*) who is dominated by the "passion" (*rajas*) that is the motivation of *pravṛtti*—a further example of the world-affirming values Brahmā represents in the myths.

Part four treats Brahmā's role in "the *avatāra* myth," those stories that portray an *avatar*, usually of Viṣṇu, who seeks to restore *dharma* when it has gone into decline. This part is divided into five chapters. The first three—"Dharma and Fate," "Brahmā and Viṣṇu," and "Brahmā and the Demon Ascetic"—are, in addition to his historical study of the Brahmā cult, Bailey's most original contributions. His analysis reveals many dimensions to the Hindu perspective on individual freedom versus determination as his summary of the *avatāra* myth suggests: "It shows Brahmā to be locked into the *saṃsāric* cycle of the triple world, embodying *dharma* and deeply concerned to preserve it but also as determining the fate of beings whilst being locked into fate himself" (139). While drawing heavily on the epics, especially the *Rāmāyaṇa*, he elucidates for us the change in Arjuna's perspective in the *Bhagavad Gītā* from himself as an anguishing free agent at the beginning to himself as a tranquil puppet in the hands of God at the end.

The ideal of a complementary relationship between Brahmin and Kṣatriya informs the portrayal of Brahmā's relation to Viṣṇu in the myths, Bailey says, though modified by Viṣṇu's affirmation of the values of *bhakti* and *nirvṛtti*. Insightfully he compares Brahmā in the myth of the Buddha's teaching of Dharma in the *Dīgha Nikāya* with the Brahmā myth in the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and argues persuasively that there is an *avatāra* myth and a Brahmā myth that the Buddhists and Hindus share but use differently, each portraying the "dissemination of *dharma* in the triple world and the doubt of the one who bears responsibility for its dissemination" (182). Unfortunately he does not carry his analysis of the Buddhist version very far.

To answer the puzzling question of why Brahmā grants boons to demons, Rāvaṇa for example, Bailey discusses the characteristics and *svadharmas* of gods, demons and humans, analyses *tapas* and the fire sacrifice as differing and similar modes of generating power, describes Brahmā's strategies for preventing ascetics from gaining too much power through *tapas*, and scrutinizes carefully the story of the lengthy rivalry between the Brahmin Vasiṣṭha and the Kṣatriya Viśvāmitra. Sometimes in these pages his discussion is dense and occasionally it is not convincing, but it is always helpful.

The penultimate chapter treats the theme of the creation of evil and generally follows O'Flaherty (1976). His last chapter is the "Conclusion" and it does tie things together at first but then ends more from exhaustion than from logic. No wonder, for Bailey obviously put an enormous amount of work into this study and has, for the most part, pulled it together extremely well, creating a very helpful and usually readable guide for serious scholars of Hindu history, myths, and thought who want to look at it from a different and fruitful angle—those, for example, who study the ways various Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva *sampradāyas* use the common Hindu lore to their own purposes.

## REFERENCES CITED:

BIARDEAU, Madelaine

1968- Études de mythologie hindoue: cosmogonies puraniques, I, II, III. *Bulletin*

1971 *de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* vol. LIV, LV, and LVIII, pp. 19-45; 59-105; 17-89.

O'FLAHERTY, Wendy D.

1973 *Asceticism and eroticism in the mythology of Siva*. London: Oxford University Press.

1976 *The origins of evil in Hindu mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dennis Hudson  
Smith College  
Northampton, MA

BAṢU CAṆḌĪDĀSA. *Singing the Glory of Lord Krishna: The Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana*. Translated and annotated by M. H. Klaiman. American Academy of Religion, Classics in Religious Studies, no. 5. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984. Xi+331 pp. Appendix, bibliography. Cloth US\$28.85 (Members US\$24.25) ISBN 0-89130-736-2; Paper US\$20.75 (Members US\$16.25) ISBN 0-89130-737-0.

The *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana* (*SKK*) of Baṣu Caṇḍīdāsa has been the cornerstone of extensive linguistic and literary research in the history of Early Middle Bengali. Although its date is still under question, the text remains important for its early portrayal of the popular stories of the lord Kṛṣṇa's love for the cowherd girl, Rādhā. The extant *SKK* is a collection of 412 songs divided unevenly into thirteen sections, all of which have been translated in this edition. The manuscript clearly suggests that the songs were meant to be sung, each bearing an appropriate key (*rāga*) and time signature (*tāla*). Internal evidence supports the oral intention by including the author's signature line (*bhaṇitā*), a common lyric convention in Middle Bengali. The translator has chosen to omit the signature lines and musical cues to avoid repetition, a choice certain to disappoint some readers; while the songs have been numbered in the translation, an addition sure to facilitate reference.

Like so many scholars before her, Klaiman has thrown herself into the often vicious debate surrounding the text's authenticity and importance. Looking at the *SKK* as a religious document, Klaiman proposes several intriguing possibilities, not the least of which is her argument that the *SKK* suggests the upwelling of emotional fervor fueled by the advent of Caitanya would have occurred without his presence. Unfortunately, her hypothesis is scantily outlined and lacks any comparison with the pertinent Bengali lyric literature of the early Vaiṣṇava movement. This omission typifies the introductory matter, for Klaiman misses the opportunity to provide the reader with a rounded history of the lively debate centered on the text. Glossing the dating issue, Klaiman makes the important point that dating conclusions can be as much the effect of cultural bias as the logic of linguistics (18-20), although in this reviewer's opinion she fails to prove it. The interested reader will have to find the complete saga of the *SKK* elsewhere; unfortunately the bibliography does not