

lone appendix of plant names and descriptions, however, is quite valuable, especially to other translators.

In spite of the inconsistencies in style and problems of presentation, Klaiman's *SKK* provides an important, quality translation which should make a significant contribution to the English reader's understanding of popular Middle Bengali literature and religion.

Tony K. Stewart
The University of Chicago
Chicago

SADLER, A. W. *In Quest of the Historical Buddha and The White Cranes of Sri Ramakrishna*. Bronxville, NY: The Laughing Buddha Press, 1984. 29 pages.

Professor Sadler has provided us with two literary fragments, the first of which is especially delightful reading. Inasmuch as he offers no introduction or commentary, we can only assume that the fragments are either a literary creation of the author or a set of sources for the folklorist or historian of religions. The limited edition and its format suggest aesthetic motivations.

The first of the two pieces begins as a letter received from an acquaintance, who informs the author of some unusual events of the summer of 1923. The writer of the letter is one George Corrigan, whose father had been a journalist living in Japan during the second and third decades of the present century. The senior Corrigan lived for a time at Denzūin, a Buddhist temple in Tokyo. When he died there was found in his safe deposit box, along with his will, a curious document, which the younger Corrigan assumes is recorded fact.

The document tells of a series of encounters with a mystery woman, whom he followed into the old Botanical Garden near Shimizudanimachi. On each occasion she led him farther into the Gardens before she vanished. Finally she disappeared just at the entrance to a small cave in the hillside. As Corrigan's sight adjusted to the darkness, he confronted the eyes of very large fox. Following the creature on all fours, he came into an ancient library where a scroll lay open, lighted by a single candle, waiting to be read. There were three documents, the first of which was the fragment of a letter with a Sanskrit notation stating that it was the handwriting (in Pali) of 'Lord Buddha.' The fragment tells of the contentiousness that led him to become a forest dweller, to discover transformation, and of his plan to return home.

The second fragment seems to be a letter of a son of the "Buddha," who tells of his father's crotchety ways as an old man. We are told of a man who became embittered of life and love, ceased to be a father, became a recluse, and finally gathered disciples, abandoned his home, and lived as a prince of paupers.

The third document contains the words of an Indian archivist who gives the two above-mentioned manuscripts to a monk who plans to take the Dharma to the north and east. The archivist wishes to have the truth preserved against the time when Buddhism will have died out in India and the later monastic community will have "retold the story to fit their own anemic fancies."

Corrigan had deciphered the ancient manuscripts and was emerging from the cave just as the great earthquake of 1923 began its convulsive devastation. He dashed to safety and spent two days helping the victims. After the terror subsided he returned

to the Gardens only to find that the cave had been obscured, its entrance sealed forever.

The White Cranes of Sri Ramakrishna is another fragment, this one containing the reflections of one Anand Mookerjee, a Boston theosophist of the 1930s, on his reading of Romain Rolland's *Life of Ramakrishna*. Mookerjee suggests that Ramakrishna's vision of the white cranes at the age of six reveals a directness of perception that is the essence of true knowledge.

There are numerous questions for Prof. Sadler: how shall we classify this material; is it strictly entertainment; is it offered as historical evidence; or, is it a teaching work, designed to induce the kind of reflection that will lead to theosophical enlightenment? Without more information, we are not in a position to offer critical assessment.

Richard E. Wentz
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ

STRONG, JOHN S. *The Legend of King Aśoka. A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna*. Princeton Library of Asian Translations. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984. Xii+336 pages. Glossary, bibliography and index. Hardbound US\$37.50, ISBN 0-692-06575-6.

Most South Asianists find the Aśoka known through his royal edicts and rock inscriptions to be an intriguing figure. The Aśoka who emerges from Buddhist legend, however, far surpasses the inscriptional Aśoka in both cruelty and beneficence. The historical King Aśoka (third century B.C.) brought most of India under his control. In North India during the second century A.D., one or more compilers brought together a cycle of Aśoka legends. Also featured in the collection is Upagupta, the monk who guided Aśoka on a tour of sites where the main events in the life of the Buddha took place. These legends and stories make up the *Aśokāvadāna*, a Sanskrit text here fully translated into English for the first time by John Strong.

Strong's translation (comprising Part Two of his book) is powerful, clear, and methodologically sound. The characters come through vividly, especially the monk Upagupta, the fierce executioner Caṇḍagirika, and the blind but enlightened Kunāla. Because Strong's translation draws the reader into the events, one can see these stories for what they truly are—didactic but also entertaining. As Strong comments, they "tended not to be heavily doctrinal but were designed to attract potential converts or maintain the faith of previous converts" (32). Strong manages to retain a popular flavor and an appealing quality in English. Unlike the only earlier English translation by Winifred Stevens, *Legends of Indian Buddhism*, which provides only selected tales and little of the Upagupta material, Strong sets forth the entire text, thus revealing the crucial links between different cycles of stories. His appendix also makes available twelve additional Aśoka legends no longer extant in Sanskrit but preserved in texts translated into Chinese during the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. Strong summarizes many of these legends from Jean Przyluski's *La Légende de l'empereur Aśoka*.

In Part One, Strong offers a highly intelligent interpretation of the meaning of selected legends contained in the *Aśokāvadāna*. These five chapters can be read with profit either before or after the translation. In them Strong emphasizes the factor which unites the Aśoka legends. As he says "... The *Aśokāvadāna* constantly seeks solutions enabling it to maintain the ideals of the Buddhist tradition—the Bud-