

Because of the objection he had raised Köster was removed from all responsibilities for the encyclopedia. Grendel went ahead with his plans and during the war years most manuscripts were written by German authors in Germany, and after the war, when China was no longer accessible, they were sent to Japan in order to be "sinified". Those very few whom the successor of Grendel wanted to entrust with the "sinification" of a big crate of manuscripts, pointed out that such a sinification could never be just a clerical work and that instead experts in theology and in a literary Chinese style were required. Red China was now closed, and from among the Overseas Chinese theologians and stylists could hardly be expected. Besides, if in spite of all these adversities the encyclopedia could see the light of the day, the returns on its sale among Overseas Chinese could never cover the phantastic expenses involved. Sad as it was, the Chinese encyclopedia became a stillborn child. Many years have since passed and the encyclopedia enthusiasts of yore are now no more. What remains of all the enthusiasm, excitement and arguments is a kind of a folktale: Westerners want to make a Chinese Encyclopedia.

Part II has been written by Hermann Köster under the title "Zur Philosophie des Hsün Ch'ing. Eine Parallele chinesisches und westlichen Denken (On the philosophy of Hsün Ch'ing, a parallel between Chinese and Western ways of thinking)." Köster who was a keen and advanced student of classic Chinese philosophy, in 1958 wrote the profound essay "Symbolik des chinesischen Universalismus" and published in 1967 "Hsün-tzu ins Deutsche übertragen", a translation of Hsün-tzu, one of the leading Chinese philosophers of the third century B.C. If we mention such publications in our journal, it is because a folklorist who wants to work in the Far East, must take cognizance of the basic ideas of Chinese culture and civilization. Köster had, so to say, a special organ to sense the fundamental concepts and ventilated them in several articles and also in this book. To mention only a few: he analyzes macrosocial differentiation and the sense of duty (Pflichtgefühl), the importance of tradition, justice and propriety, peace and order, knowledge. So many concepts we carry along with us and take it for granted that we know what they mean. It is good to confront them with analogue concepts valid in other cultures in order to better understand their constitutive elements.

1. This book review has become Dr. Eder's last contribution to our journal. A short week after he had finished it, he passed away. As he himself says, this review may be unexpected in the pages of this journal, but it allows us a last glance at his editorial philosophy. (P.K.)

M.E. (1)

* * *

DEPERT, JOACHIM. *Rudras Geburt. Systematische Untersuchungen zum Inzest in der Mythologie der Brāhmaṇas.* Beiträge zur Südasien-Forschung, Südasien-Institut, Universität Heidelberg, Band 28. Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977. LX+396 pp. Paper. ISBN 3-515-02583-9. (With English summary)

Recently, interest in India is growing and the appeal of her exotic religions and philosophies make themselves strongly felt in Europe or in the so-called West in general. This phenomenon however, is a product of what our author apostrophizes as the "guru-

exporting India", and has only little to do with the Classical India, the India of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Sūtras, which is the subject matter of this book.

The texts, and especially the myths of this classical age have attracted and challenged many scholars already long ago. Yet, since their approaches were too much restricted by a very specific view as that e.g. of nature mythologists or of psychologists, the results of their efforts were trivial. They could explain, if anything, only very straitforward phenomena, because they did not realize that what seemed to be a bottomless sea or swamp of abstruse stories, was much more than a childish attempt to explain this or that phenomenon in nature. Against this sort of attempts to interpret Indian mythology, the author upholds first of all, that any mythology constitutes a system where every part and element plays its role and interplays with the other elements of the system. These elements or individual myths do not explain what happens in nature; rather the phenomena of nature serve through the myths to explain and give expression to realities of a quite different order, namely of a logical order. In order to achieve this, the system has its intrinsic logic that is strictly followed. According to that logic myths generate other myths or are transformed into other levels of expression. In this way they develop into sequences. But whatever level may be dominant at a certain moment it is never completely isolated. It always makes other levels visible through itself. Therefore, it is possible to start the interpretation of such a system from any point in the whole. On the other hand, every element can be reduced and so found to be a part in a series of variations on a basic theme, expressed by an opposition that is fundamental to the system or the particular culture between two mutually exclusive terms.

Here we find Lévi-Strauss in India. The author acknowledges his indebtedness to Lévi-Strauss' interpretation of myths, and he explicitly applies his method in order to make the system or the organizing principle visible that underlies the immense body of myths formed by the Brāhmaṇas. As the fixed point of reference for the discussions the author chooses a myth found in the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa which tells the story of how Prajāpati attempted to commit incest with his daughter and was killed for this by Rudra. This episode spells out the fundamental opposition that characterizes the Brāhmaṇas and gives them their intrinsic coherence by means of the two main actors, the god Prajāpati, the Great Father, and Rudra, his killer. Translated into the varṇa-system, Prajāpati stands for the Brahman, Rudra, however, is not only the non-Brahman, he is the least, the most unclean of the non-Brahmans, because he is the murderer of a Brahman. The two actors in the great drama represent two value systems that oppose one another. The sacred and clean world that isolates itself in order to protect its clean sacredness is that of the Brahmins. Against this stands the profane and unclean world of the non-Brahmins, that is open and communicative, because what is already unclean does not have to be protected anymore. It is then the author's aim to show, that this fundamental opposition between isolation and communication is the basic theme that pervades the whole body of myths on every level. He shows its transformations from level to level and also its transformations in time and history.

In the perspective of time the mythical incest is of particular importance, because this is isolation in the extreme. In terms of time this means absence of running time, eternal life. But this state of affair is terminated by the violent attack of the murderer, who represents the communicative aspect. He kills the incestuous father and by so doing he gives everything a communicative mark in the sense, that from now on death is in the world and time has become diachronic and fleeting.

Having shown the many forms the fundamental opposition, "isolation—communication" may take, the author then hints at another conclusion that could be drawn from

this, although he reserves a thorough discussion of it for future research. He points out that the difference in thought between India and the West appears as an inversion of the mythical theme of a murder or death that involves a father and his youngest or eldest son. While in Indian mythology the youngest son kills his father, in western and especially christian mythology it is the father who sacrifices his first or only son. This would mean that in the Indian case man has freed himself into the infinite and boundless consciousness which he finds also in himself, but in the West he has to relate himself always to a higher and better being that is outside and beyond himself and restricts his freedom.

Most probably such a line of thought will not please everybody and it can be seen as being in line with the author's somewhat polemic stand towards other theories in general, but it certainly opens new views and stimulates research in a direction that is not satisfied with the mere and stereotyped assertion that East and West are different without asking how they are different and where the reasons for this may be found.

This book, which has grown out of a doctoral dissertation presented at the University of Heidelberg raises many questions. One wonders e.g. if the attempt to relate certain representations with particular ethnic groups or certain ways of life, as sedentary or nomadic, would withstand all criticism from other disciplines. In spite of such problems the author succeeded in his endeavour to show that in this mass of stories there is a coherent system that can be grasped, and that this system reveals much more than just itself.

Unfortunately the text is written in German and at times with rather complicated phrasing. Typing mistakes or omissions of words and references can further hamper the understanding of a reader who is not too familiar with the language. On the other hand, the translating of more than fifty versions and variations of myths that refer to the topic will be appreciated by those who are interested in the problem, but may not be able to have access to the original. From the standpoint of such a reader it would certainly have been a great service to provide a glossary or at least an index, because a reader not familiar with India to the extent of the author may have to struggle considerably with the many expressions taken from Indian sources.

Westerners are sometimes told that they will after all be unable to fathom the experiences and thoughts of the East, and that they should better keep to their own world. The author appears to have reached a highly sophisticated understanding of Indian mythology. In his interpretation of christian mythology, however, he falls prey to a misunderstanding that is rather common also in anthropological writings. To repeat a misinterpretation does not make it to become true. He speaks of Christ as the "Immaculate Conception" (239), because he was born of a virgin. The truth is, that at least in Catholic understanding, immaculate conception has to do in the first place with a state of that virgin from whom Christ was born and not with Christ himself. It means, that the virgin was born without "original sin", a condition of weakness every other human being is thought to be born with. Christ of course would share in this special condition, but still this does not have to do with his being born from a woman alone, without the intervention of a man. The idea of an immaculate conception is not a value statement that would declare sexual intercourse among married partners as unclean.

Peter Knecht

* * *