HEIDRUN BRÜCKNER, GABRIELE ZELLER (hrsg.), *Otto Böhtlingk an Rudolf Roth: Briefe zum Petersburger Wörterbuch 1852–1885*, bearbeitet von Agnes Stache-Weiske, Glasenapp-Stiftung 45, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008, pp. xxii+870. ISBN 978-3-447-05641-0 / 3-447-05641-X (hbk), € 98.00

This volume includes almost 500 letters written by one of the greatest Sanskritists of the 19th century, Otto Böhtlingk (1815–1904), between 1852 and 1885 to his colleague, the no less eminent scholar Rudolf Roth (1821–1895), in the course of their joint work on the famous *(Great) Petersburg Dictionary of Sanskrit* (Böhtlingk and Roth 1855–75). This dictionary still stands as the unsurpassed achievement among Sanskrit dictionaries.[1] The letters, all addressed to Tübingen (where Roth was living during this period), were written in the different places Böhtlingk was working on the dictionary: St Petersburg and small spa villages and summer resorts nearby, such as Lepelä or Wendelä (1852–1868); a number of cities visited by Böhtlingk during his trip to Germany and Switzerland in 1866 (Berlin, Jena, Weimar, Zürich, Bern); Jena (1868–1881); and Leipzig (the last letter, dated 28 April 1885). This historiographic treasure was recently discovered by Gabrielle Zeller (Tübingen University) in the Tübingen University Library and published by her and Heidrun Brückner (University of Würzburg). The editors thus rendered an immense service to all those interested in the history of Sanskrit studies in Europe.

The book opens with a very interesting and informative editorial Preface, which clarifies the scientific background of this greatest academic indological project of the 19th century.

The bulk of letters are dedicated to the minute details of the titanic work performed by Böhtlingk and Roth over more than 30 years. Framed by remarks about many details from Böhtlingk's everyday life (departure to and return from resorts, health of family members, visits of friends and colleagues), these letters contain thousands of conjectures, emendations, and corrections (in references, translations of forms and quotations, etc.) scattered throughout the pages of the volume.

Not only does this epistolary monument allow the reader to peep into the intellectual 'back room' of the great scientist; it also half opens the curtain hiding

[1] The gigantic Indian project entitled the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sanskrit on Historical Principles*, which now comprises 7 volumes (Ghatage et al. 1976–), still remains on letter *A*.

the interlacement of the academic and personal relations of the academic society of that remote past. We can clearly see the great sympathy of Otto Böhtlingk towards Albrecht Weber; his friendly and encouraging attitude towards a scholar of the younger generation, Berthold Delbrück;[2] his reserved and cool terms with another eminent Sanskritist of the 19th century, Max Müller;[3] and his negative evaluation of Theodor Benfey.

The letters are accompanied by ample footnotes, mostly of biographical and bibliographical character, carefully complied by the editors, who provide the reader with all necessary personalia and references to the scholarly work mentioned by Böhtlingk.

The book concludes with an index of names. An index of the roots and forms discussed would perhaps have been of some use as well, but is not really necessary since the presentation largely follows Sanskrit (Devanāgarī) alphabetic order. Of special interest might have been an index of passages: the book offers quite a rich collection of short discussions, references, or conjectures about some difficult and unclear passages from Vedic, Epic and Classical Sanskrit. But performing this task would of course have heavily delayed the work of the editors, titanic and time-consuming as it was and for which all indologists and historians of learning should be immensely thankful to them.

References

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[2] Delbrück's name first appears in the letter dated 11/23 March 1867, where '[e]in Dr. Delbrück, der hier [in St Petersburg—*L.K.*] fleißig den Ṛ[g]V[eda] studirt hat' (p. 604) is mentioned. In the letter dated 13 October 1870, written in Jena, Böhtlingk mentions his intention to introduce Delbrück to the academic community ('Heute führe ich ihn im Club ein', p. 710). We also learn from the letter of 10 November 1870 that it was Böhtlingk who had encouraged Delbrück to undertake an ambitious project aimed at a collection of verbal forms from the Ṛgveda ('Ich habe Delbrück aufgefordert alle Verbalformen im Ṛ[g]V[eda] zu sammeln und zusammenzustellen', p. 712), which resulted in the seminal work Delbrück 1874.

[3] Noteworthy is the crushing criticisms and characteristics given by Otto Böhtlingk to Max Müller, such as the following: 'Müller ist es, wie man aus Allem ersieht, nicht sowohl um die Wahrheit, als um den momentanen Eindruck, die Popularität, zu thun' (letter of 21 March/2 April 1855, p. 117).

FELIX OTTER. *Residential Architecture in Bhoja's Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra: introduction, text, translation and notes*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010, pp. xi+299. ISBN 978-81-208-3447-7

The *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* (henceforth – *SamarāSū*), a treatise on building ascribed to King Bhoja of the Paramāra Dynasty from the early 11th century Mālava, as many other Sanskrit texts, has a history of its own. Presumably written originally as an untitled treatise on architecture, it was given the title *The Stage Manager of the Battlefield*, to accept Felix Otter's translation, as a praise name to associate it with King Bhoja of the Paramāra posthumously.

The modern perception of this text has also been marked by the controversial attitudes towards it. Some uniqueness derived from the attribution of its authorship to a single person, which gained currency with the well-known two-volume study on *vāstu* literature based on the *SamarāSū* by D.N. Shukla, *Vāstu-Śāstra* (Lucknow, 1958), obviously placing this treatise to the fore of historically reliable sources of Indian architecture. There is no doubt however that the messy arrangement of Shukla's study, which makes it close to an unreadable, deprived it from the fate of being a ground-breaking study on the *SamarāSū*. All that rather strengthened the view that Sanskrit texts on building, the *vāstuśāstra*s, are unworthy of study due to their distorted, and thus unreliable, language.

The present study by Felix Otter proves that despite being a historically dateable text, the *SamarāSū* has not been at the centre of scholarly debate for a long time. This statement moreover stands true for the study of residential architecture, which makes up an important part of the text and which still rarely attracts the attention of contemporary scholars. Otter's book is to the best of my knowledge the first work that exposes the technicalities of residential architecture dealt with in the *SamarāSū* by placing it into the context of knowledge on the subject provided by its supposed source-texts such as the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, the *Matsyapurāṇa* and the *Viśvakarmaprakāśa*. Comparison of the material on residential building in the texts mentioned above is a recurrent topic traced in the extensive introduction, notes concerning the translation of selected *adhyāya*s or their parts, and the appendix.

Apart from the structural parts already mentioned, the book also contains a glossary of technical terms in the *SamarāSū* and drawings of residential buildings or their ground plans—both most helpful for following the highly technical descriptions.

To reappraise the uniqueness attributed to the treatise by Shukla, Otter starts with a discussion on the authorship of the text. He contends that the text, at least where it deals with residential architecture—to judge from style, structure, vocabulary, and contents—calls into question the authorship of a single person (p. 31–2). The view

is further supported by argument on the original intentions of the author(s) of the text with regard to its functionality: '[I]t is highly unlikely that any house was ever modelled on them—and it seems that that was not their purpose to begin with' (p. 55).

Discussion about the practical utility of Sanskrit treatises on architecture or fine art is a topic that few scholars on the subject matter can bypass. Adam Hardy, in his recent article on Drāviḍa Temples in the *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* (*South Asian Studies*, vol. 25 (2009)), elegantly grouped scholars' attitudes to architectural texts as ranging 'between an uncritical assumption that, traditionally, these texts set the rules for making buildings and sculptures, thereby holding the key to understanding them, and complete denial of their utility, on the basis that they were probably composed by Brahmans who were cut off from practical experience' (ibid., 41). The attitude of Otter can by no means be attributed to either of the abovementioned extremes, but there is some leaning towards the second argument. While Hardy advocates the view that the 'truth must lie somewhere in between' and thereby engages in recreating the architecture by drawing, Otter's interest is rather text-centred and he approaches the problem from the points of view of textual criticism and the history of the text. His argument for the use of texts thus issues from the legitimacy of architectural practice, which causes one to believe that 'the *śāstra* sanctions the activities of the builder ... incorporating them into the brahmanical tradition by putting them into a wider religious and doctrinal context' (p. 56). The scholar assumes that copying from older sources, which was supplemented by incorporating concepts and vocabulary items, was an invented method of śāstric transmission to keep the whole system of building updated and to avoid the increasing gap between śāstric tradition and building practice.

The argument presented is evidently aimed to confront the view that the transmitters of the text had altogether no interest in practical activities but inevitably leaves some unanswered questions related to the ambivalent use of terms or the level of practical involvement requested by the need to update the system of building. With regards to architectural terminology, Otter admits elsewhere (p. 64) that the author(s) of the treatise surprisingly did not make use of a number of *kośa*s that could have been available to him/them. It would look strange if the agents of śāstric transmission were supposed to act differently with regard to architectural texts than with other śāstric texts. Otter tends to think that this difference in the practice of śāstric transmission is related to the secular nature of residential architecture. Yet textual critics have proved that the ways terminology was treated in other Sanskrit texts on architecture holds true not only for secular subjects, but also in many cases for temple architecture. The question obviously remains open for debate although the attempt made by Otter is relevant for bringing residential architecture into the

purview as far as it has been usual to discuss the problems of the transmission of building instructions with regards to temple architecture only.

The largest part of the book is allocated to the annotated translation of the passages that specifically concern residential architecture. The *adhyāya*s or their parts selected for translation, namely 18, 19.15–28, 20, 24, and 39.1–34, account for the technologies of human dwellings. The other two aspects of the treatment of residential architecture—astrology-related material and rituals performed in association with the construction process—were ruled out for the reason of being merely contextual.

This book by Felix Otter provides well structured and contextualised knowledge of residential architecture in Bhoja's treatise, yet there is always a fly in the ointment. Unfortunately, the texts obviously lack scrutiny of presentation—typos and syntactical shortcomings reveal that the text underwent proofreading only in passing. In addition, incoherency in the bibliographical references does not facilitate easy reading: some short references in the text are not easily or logically found in the bibliography or are altogether missing.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned shortcomings in the presentation, Otter's book is the first so far critical translation of the chapters of the *SamarāSū* dealing with residential architecture. It is a valuable and timely contribution to the scholarship on the text, which is one of the sources of Indian architecture most frequently referred to. There is increasingly more research being done nowadays to critically study the *SamarāSū* from different perspectives and a critical translation of the text is about to be produced soon. Nonetheless, the book by Otter will definitely stand first in this sequence as one that made a valuable contribution to the scholarship of residential architecture in medieval India—a topic frequently neglected compared with the extent temple structures are studied.

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