

H.W. Schumann, *The Historical Buddha, The Times, Life and Teachings of the Founder of Buddhism*, Translated from the German by M. O'C. Walshe, Buddhist Tradition Series 51, Delhi: Motilal Banarssidas, 2004, xvii + 274 Pp. Rs. 295. (Hardback)

'The title *The Historical Buddha*' — writes the author in his Preface, p. xi — 'indicates both the subject of the present work and the limits of its scope. It excludes any treatment of the non-historical Buddhas of the past and the future who are frequently mentioned in Buddhist scriptures; it also excludes all legends which developed around the person of the historical Buddha, except in so far as a historical kernel could be detected in them. The book deals with the demythologized person of the great sage, with the age in which he lived and with the political and social conditions which made his mission possible and permitted its success.'

On the next page, he writes again: 'Buddhists sometimes maintain that the Buddha as a person is not important, that not the ephemeral events of his lifetime but only his timeless teachings are worthy of our attention. There is something to be said for this view, and in fact we can leave the Buddha out of his system without removing any essential element. On the other hand, every philosophical view is a rationalization of the mentality of the thinker who produced it. A different person, or the same person in different surroundings, would have developed a different mentality and accordingly would have rationalized somewhat differently: in other words, he would have thought differently. Accordingly, the creator of a system is worthy of interest as a person and in the context of his circumstances, especially for the westerner who thinks in historical terms, and for whom the How of an insight is just as interesting as the What.'

The present reviewer can only subscribe to these views. And the author, using archaeological and literary sources, has succeeded in depicting a vivid picture of Gotama the man and of his times. So far as the literary sources are concerned, the investigation is limited to the Pāli sources alone. No reference will be found to the painstaking researches carried out in the past on the various sources of the biography of the Master and on the different stages of composition, the different versions of such and such texts. Instead, the author takes the Pāli sources as they are, adding here and there, to illuminate this and that event, delightful remarks. For instance, the town courtesan Ambapāli's gift of her grove to the Master and the Saṅgha is explained as 'partly no doubt in the hope that her son [by the former king Bimbisāra, who had become a monk] might spend the rains there' (p. 245); the postponement of the cremation of the Buddha after his death¹ is explained as: 'it seems no one was prepared to bear the cost of the wood for the pyre' (p. 251) ...

¹ See E. Waldschmidt, *Die Überlieferung vom Lebensende des Buddha: eine vergleichende Analyse des Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra und seiner Textentsprechungen* II, Göttingen, 1948 (*Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse, Dritte Folge, Nr. 30*), pp. 265, 297 ff., 345-346.

A good account is given of the doctrine and the Order, of the social, economic and also spiritual surroundings of the Buddha. The author has well placed the Buddha against the background of the Vedic sacrificial cult, against which his teaching was a reaction.

However, a misunderstanding of the difficult Upaniṣadic doctrine of *ātman* and the Buddha's equally difficult doctrine of *anātman* (Pāli *anattan*) has led him to identify a 'foolish doctrine' mentioned in the *Alagaddūpama-sutta* of the *Majjhima-Nikāya* (*Sutta* 22) as the Upaniṣadic doctrine (p. 139). Many well-known scholars before him did so, but there is no doubt that the doctrine in question belongs rather to the Brāhmaṇas (see K. Bhattacharya, *Some Thoughts on Early Buddhism with special reference to its relation to the Upaniṣads*, Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1998 [Acharya Dharmananda Kosambi Memorial Lectures, Post-graduate and Research Department Series No. 41], pp. 9 ff.).

In our days when there is a strong tendency to attribute to the Buddha social ideas more progressive than they actually were, I particularly appreciate the author's very objective treatment of 'the Buddha and caste' (pp. 191 ff. On the Buddha's discourse on 'the true nature of Brahmanism,' consisting not only of a 'pure and virtuous life,' but also of 'a good knowledge of the Veda,' p. 61, see K. Bhattacharya, *L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien*, Paris, 1973, p. 86, n. 3).

The last chapter, 'Afterwards,' deals with the Councils that followed the death of the Buddha, and the formation of the Canon. There are good maps and illustrations, a bibliography and an index.

Dr. Schumann is to be congratulated upon this beautiful intellectual achievement amidst important diplomatic occupations.

Paris

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Étienne Lamotte, *Opera Indologica*, [1] *Notes sur la Bhagavadgītā* (1929) avec une Préface de Louis de La Vallée Poussin [2] *Bouddhisme et Upaniṣad* (1932) par Jean Przyluski avec la collaboration d'É. Lamotte, Avec une nouvelle Préface de Minoru Hara, Publications de l'Institut de Louvain 53, Louvain-La-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain 2004, XIV + 201 Pp. € 25. (Paperback)

In the field of Indology, like in any discipline of the humanities, there are a number of different scholarly cultures, that mainly seem to have developed under the influence of the languages through which most manifestations of culture are expressed. The principal strands of the humanities are normally identified as being expressed by an Anglo-Saxon, a German or a French discourse. Of course, theories and approaches are also pursued in other linguistic and cultural idioms,