Hans T. Bakker (ed.), *Origin and Growth of the Purāṇic Text Corpus: With Special Reference to the Skandapurāṇa* (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference held in Helsinki, Finland, 13-18 July, 2003), vol. 3(2) (General Editors: Petteri Koskikallio & Asko Parpola), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004, XI + 208 Pp. Rs. 600. (Hardback)

In his Preface the editor Hans Bakker gives informations relevant to the subject of this book which came as a natural outcome of the work on the critical edition of the *Skandapurāṇa* (*SP*) prepared by a Groningen group of scholars. Editor observes that *Skandapurāṇa* "... lends itself well to an investigation into the origin and growth of a Purāṇic text and the religious developments that these reflects." (p. V) The reason lies in the fact that there are three different recensions preserved, the oldest one in three manuscripts from the 9th century. There also exists a text made up of *khaṇḍas* published also under the title *Skandapurāṇa* (*SkP*). How complicated is the question of collating different recensions can easily be seen in the Sigla referring to the *SP* which helps the reader through this difficult book. (p. XI)

Hans Bakker (Groningen) in his "The Structure of the Vārāṇasīmāhātmya in the Skandapurāṇa 26-31" (pp. 1-16) draws attention to the problem of datation of Purāṇic texts due to the fluidity of its transmission and their preservation in late, mostly divergent, manuscripts. He observes that "... unless we have such firm evidence as a testimonium in a dated text, a given verse or passage in a published Purāṇic text can rarely if ever be assigned with confidence to a date much earlier than the earliest manuscript used for the edition." (p. 1) With all caution, the author ascribes *SP* to the 6th century. He further concentrates on this important *māhātmya* dealing with India's most holy city and draws attention to the fact that the chapters he explores reflect "the earliest stage of a process in which the Śaiva religion transformed what originally might have been mainly a commercial centre." (p. 4) He gives the example of Yakṣa Piṅgala who as a devout worshiper of Rudra takes name Harikeśa and who is disowned by his father Yakṣa Pūrṇabhadra. Harikeśa goes to Vārāṇasī to practice asceticism there and eventually becomes later the protector of Vārāṇasī. Follow the description of the holy town and other stories whose characters are Śiva, Devī, Kubera, Apsarases, etc. At the end of his article Bakker adds a small, but very useful, appendix whith the contents of *Vārāṇasī-Māhātmya* which helps the reader to find his way out in the Purāṇic labyrinth of stories.

Judit Törzsök (Lille) in her article "Three Chaperts of Śaiva Material Added to the Earliest Known Recension of the Skandapurāṇa" (pp. 17-39) says that the *SP* "offers a unique opportunity to investigate the ways in which a Purāṇic text became enlarged throughout the centuries ..." (p. 17) She explains different recensions of the text: recension *S* preserved in Nepalese mss. from the 9th century and two later recensions known as *Revākhaṇḍa* (*R*) and *Ambikākhaṇḍa* (*A*) which bring additional material for investigation which will help to reconstruct the history of the *SP*. The texts are not related to what is commonly known as the printed and translated *SkP*. Törzsök then investigates the addition of

chapter on Gaṇeśa (*vināyakotpattiḥ*) in *R* and *A* and thinks that this might be one of the earliest versions of Gaṇeśa myth. Follows her elaborate research on the stories of Śiva's ashes (*bhūtyuttpatiḥ*) and of the feast of Bhairava and Udakasevikā, including the story of their birth. The last story gives her an opportunity to compare *R* and *A* versions of *SP* with two long citations of Dharmanibandha authors, Lakṣmīdhara (12 c.) and Caṇḍeśvara (14 c.) which "are likely to give independent evidence about the state of the text at two given periods". (p. 31)

Kengo Harimoto (Groningen) in "Some Observations on the Revā- and the Ambikākhaṇḍa Recensions of the Skandapurāṇa" (pp. 41-64) continues research on the subject of the different recensions of *SP*. Apart from the earliest Nepalese mss. from the 9th century there exist five later ones, four of which call themselves *Ambikākhaṇḍa* and one *Revākhaṇḍa*. Important is that according to the author that *A* and *R* recensions "transmit texts that are more closely related to each other than they are to the Nepalese recension" (p. 41, fn. 1) and "that neither *A* or *R* was the ancestor of the other." (p. 45) He pays attention to commentators Lakṣmīdhara and Caṇḍeśvara and observes that two of them "... had different versions of the *SP* in front of them." (p. 49) His conjecture is that Lakṣmīdhara seems to have had an earlier version of the *SP* and that Caṇḍeśvara might have not consulted the *SP* itself. Harimoto continues to investigate the difficult question of recensions and he ends his text with these words: "As far as the contents is concerned, we may say that the *R* MS contains a less corrupt but (intentionally) altered text, whereas the *A* recension represents a less altered but more corrupt text. Unfortunately this observation is not very helpful in reconstructing the *RA* text before it split into the *R* and *A* recensions." (p. 59) These words show how difficult it is to work philologically on the texts of Purāṇas — there are more open questions than answers in researching this floating literature, floating not only in time, but also in space. The whole Indian subcontinent is present in the depiction of different *mahātmyas* in which, I believe, can be seen how local traditions crept into brahmanic one (*deśī/mārga*).

The problem of different recensions is also the subject of the article of Peter Bisschop (Groningen) who in his "Śiva's Āyatanas in the Various Recensions of Skandapurāṇa 167*" (pp. 65-78) focuses on one *ādhyāya*, which illustrates the importance of distinguishing between the recensions. He starts with mentioning the *SkP* which is "essentially a compilation of *Mahātmyas* of holy places all over India." (p. 65) Containing sacred topography, and mythology connected with *tīrthas* it differs from the *SP* or the original *SP* which is according to him primarily a mythological work though there are many *Mahātmya* passages also in the *SP*. Bisschop gives a brief synopsis of the Nepalese recension and then discusses some of the main diferences found in recensions *Ambikā* (*A*) and *Revā* (*R*). He gives examples of the description of abodes (*sthāna*) of Śambhu, from which the last mentioned are Kārohaṇa and Vārāṇasī; the list of *āyatanas* gives the names of Śiva's sanctuaries located in the north. Then the author discusses "text-internal-cross-references" (p. 70) by which he means "re-tellings of or allusions to myths related before in the text." (p. 70) Later he describes

mythological additions that have no parallel in the *SP* and concludes with "a recent finding of a passage in which the *SP* appears to have drawn heavily on the original *Vāyupurāṇa*." (p. 75)

Yuko Yokochi (Kyoto) writes "The Relation between the Skandapurāṇa and the Āvantyakhaṇḍa" (pp. 79-109). She collated the passages of the *SP* which were in common with the *Āvantyakhaṇḍa* and some later *Purāṇas*. By comparing passages about Śiva's installing the skull (*kapāla*) and about demon Andhaka, in a conclusion, which is not easy to understand to a non-specialist, she says that "*ĀKh* probably borrowed the passages directly from the *SP*" (p. 95) and in summing up she adds that "it can be inferred ... that there is a good reason to believe that the text of the *SP* from which the *ĀKh* may have borrowed both passages was an early verrsion of the *RA* recension, which, in passages that it shared with the S recension, may have been still closer to that (and therefore to the original composition) than the hyparchetype of the *R* and *A* recensions that our MSS allow us to reach." (p. 97)

Follows the text "Saving the Saviour: Śiva and the Vaiṣṇava Avatāras in the Early Skandapurāṇa" (pp. 111-138) by Phyllis Granoff (Hamilton, Ont.) in which she explores the Śaiva mythology as found in the *SP* in connection with the development of early forms of Hinduism. Granoff thinks that the early *SP* can present familiar stories in different guise and that it gives "a rare glimpse of classical Śaivism in its formative stage, that is, as the myths of Śiva were in the process of being developed." (p. 111) She focuses on the story of Śiva as Śarabha found in *SP* 71 edited by Bhaṭṭarāī in 1988. Granoff observes that Śaivism "only gradually appropriated demon-killing myths ..." (p. 111) Mentioning some other of her texts she sees Śiva as "reluctant fighter against demons..." (p. 112) and that Gaṇas were more active in the story. Her idea is that "Śiva was not in the earliest stages of the cult a demon-killer like the Purāṇic Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa." (p. 112) I would just like to point to Śiva as Tripuradāha mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (4, 9-10) that could, in my opinion, be dated earlier than the *SP*. The author gives a detailed analysis of Śiva in the form of Śarabha, a kind of a bird-like creature, who kills the Man-lion, and points to different accounts of this story in other *Purāṇas* (*Śiva* and *Liṅga*). The story of Śiva as Śarabha and as an antagonist of Viṣṇu was not too popular, as Granoff thinks but according to her "... this story may also illustrate how Purāṇic myths in their transformations can retain within them traces of their history, for the evidence given below suggests that hybrid animal-human forms and even simple animal forms were often associated with the demonic." (pp. 124-125) The text goes on with the story of Varāha, Prahlāda etc. and in conclusion her supposition is "that Śaiva mythology grew in close association with Vaiṣṇava/Kṛṣṇaite mythology, particularly stories of incarnations/forms of gods defeating demons." (p. 131) Granoff finds Śiva as passive in the demon-killing stories in the early *SP*. But was he also passive in another variants of his story in the elusive text of Purāṇas is a question which needs more research. Granoff also sees in the before mentioned stories a "Śaiva sectarian effort to discredit popular Vaiṣṇava cults." (p. 137) The great value of the article is to draw attention to the fact that both Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism draw

from the same "well-spring of demon-like creatures." (p. 137) In my opinion this well-spring was a fluid floating narrative tradition without sectarian marks.

At the end Kengo Harimoto (Groningen) gives an Appendix (pp. 139-190) which presents the contents of all the three recensions in an inventory of the *ādhyāya* colophons in the various manuscripts. The book ends with references (pp. 193-202) and an index (pp. 203-208).

This very scholarly book written by the experts on the *SP* presents a difficult reading for an indologist not being an expert in Purāṇas. This short review, not even a summary of the richness of informations gathered in this book, can only show the importance of this kind of indological effort. One can congratulate the authors on their hard work. It is an important philological investigation of difficult texts as Purāṇas are and an exemplary work on textual criticism and can be a useful basis for further research on the mythology and religion of Hinduism.

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