

- Languages, Texts, and Society: Explorations in Ancient Indian Culture and Religion.* By PATRICK OLIVELLE. *Kykéion Studies and Texts, Scienze della Religioni*, vol. 4. Florence: FIRENZE UNIVERSITY PRESS [MUNSHIRAM MANOHARLAL], 2005. Pp. 419. € 20.
- Ascetics and Brahmins: Studies in Ideologies and Institutions.* By PATRICK OLIVELLE. *Kykéion Studies and Texts, Scienze della Religioni*, vol. 6. Florence: FIRENZE UNIVERSITY PRESS [MUNSHIRAM MANOHARLAL], 2006. Pp. 328. € 19.80.

When our non-philologically inclined colleagues ask us scornfully what modern-day philology can contribute to the larger and more searching questions that occupy their attention, Indologists have the good fortune to be able to point to Patrick Olivelle, a consummate philologist (and recent past president of the AOS), who is a dream example of how deep engagement with texts on all levels produces insights into the deeper content and larger context of those texts. The two volumes under review, containing collected papers and book chapters from over thirty years, are an excellent introduction to the magic that Olivelle can work on texts and to the breadth of his interests.

Each of these volumes contains seventeen papers, but the two volumes differ in focus. The later publication, *Ascetics and Brahmins*, has the narrower focus but longer chronology: it consists of articles and some book chapters, dating from 1975 through 2006, concerned with renunciation and asceticism in the Indian religious tradition, the subject of much of Olivelle's earlier work. The pieces are not arranged chronologically but by topic. The collection begins with more general treatments (e.g., the first, "Introduction to Renunciation in the Hindu Traditions," originally published as a chapter in Gavin Flood's *Companion to Hinduism* [date not given, but 2003]), and then moves to more specific topics, such as food (ch. 5: "From Feast to Fast: Food and the Indian Ascetic," 1991) and the body (ch. 7: "Deconstruction of the Body in Indian Asceticism," 1995). The original publication information, especially the date, is not always recoverable. As is inevitable when a scholar has been treating a particular topic for some decades, certain key themes, arguments, and passages recur in a number of the articles. Especially important is Olivelle's continual insistence that asceticism was a part of the whole Brahmanical system, not opposed to it nor imported into it, and that it must be studied within the context of that system. This view leads naturally to structural (though perhaps not "structuralist") argumentation, which he integrates into a larger historical perspective. (See his remarks on structuralism and historical context on p. 44.)

The earlier published volume, *Languages, Texts, and Society*, presents a more diverse collection of articles but is chronologically more compact, spanning the decade from 1995 to 2004. Three major subjects account for most of the articles in this volume: the Upaniṣads

(chapters I, II, XIII; e.g., I "Young Śvetaketu: A Literary Study of an Upaniṣadic Story," 1999), dharma literature (V–XII, XIV; e.g., VIII "Structure and Composition of the Mānava Dharmasāstra," 2002), and religion and the body (XV–XVII, e.g., "Food for Thought: Dietary Rules and Social Organization in Ancient India," 2002). These topics are not surprising, of course, especially the first two. The Upaniṣadic articles coincide, more or less, with Olivelle's work on his 1998 edition and translation of the early Upaniṣads (*The Early Upaniṣads: Scholar's Edition* [Oxford Univ. Press]; see also the earlier *Upaniṣads* [Oxford World Classics, 1996], with translation only). And the abundance of articles on dharma attest to Olivelle's more recent concentration on the legal literature, culminating in two monuments (I do not use this word lightly): the edition and translation of the early dharmasūtras, *Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Āpastambha, Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Vasiṣṭha* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000; see also the earlier *Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Ancient India* [Oxford Univ. Press, 1999], with translation only), and the critical edition and translation of Manu, *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmasāstra* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2005). The articles on the body and on food arise naturally from the dharma texts' preoccupation with these matters and also hark back to Olivelle's treatment of those issues in the context of asceticism (see above).

It is simply impossible within the confines of a review to do justice to the richness of these two collections, and I will not even try. But it does give me pleasure to draw the attention of our readership to these two volumes, and it gave me even more pleasure to read through these articles again and to watch Olivelle, time and time again, demonstrate what philology can do in the right hands.

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