

Sucāruvādadeśika: A Festschrift Honoring Professor Theodore Riccardi

by Todd Lewis & Bruce McCoy Owens (eds), published for the Social Science Baha by Himal Books, Kathmandu, 2014, pp. xii+398, ISBN 978-9937-597-13-5, price US\$ 27

Reviewed by Diana Cousens

This festschrift celebrates the life and work of Ted Riccardi, Professor of Indian and Himalayan Studies at Columbia University. Near the end of the book, editor Todd Lewis gives a worthwhile reflection on the importance of a Western education that goes beyond the classics of the Western tradition:

Students lacking in a solid grounding in the lives of “others” will be imprisoned by the nonsense of old clichés, unfounded projections, or media stereotypes. For them to be significant moral actors in this world, for them to become informed world citizens, liberal arts colleges need to continue enriching their core curricula by expanding its inclusion of cultural traditions from the Islamic, African, Latin American, South Asian, and East Asian worlds. ... This global perspective cannot be merely an afterthought or adding an ‘exotic’ case study, but needs to become the basis for re-centering many humanities courses and even shifting conceptual paradigms (Lewis 2014: 224).

The translation of non-Western cultures into Western academia is the challenging work that Professor Riccardi and his students and colleagues have undertaken. These 30 contributions span languages, disciplines and perspectives. The fact that these contributors have all had a close relationship with Riccardi is evidence of his significant influence. The range of topics and ideas, the diversity of specialists, and the substantial nature of the work is a worthy testament to a life committed to the study of the region.

The book is divided into five sections focusing on love songs, history, identity, translation, and ‘beyond’ Asia. Some very important work has

been saved for this last section, particularly George Saliba's description of his library research in Hyderabad that led to the discovery of previously unknown mediaeval Islamic astronomical manuscripts. In the Asafia and Osmania libraries Saliba found unique Tunisian and Spanish manuscripts that have formed the basis for subsequent studies by himself and others. The chapter is about the journey of discovery and how Riccardi acted as a mentor who 'twisted the arm of Fate'.

Also in this final section is a description of the Digital Himalaya Project by Mark Turin, which seeks to retrieve and archive one-hundred years of materials accumulated by Western anthropologists and researchers in the region. The project is co-located at Cambridge University in the UK and at Yale in the USA, and tackles the complicated task of preserving many different kinds of materials, including paper, photographs, film, video and sound recordings, and managing issues such as the ethics of consent. Any 'informed consent' provided in earlier decades did not take into account the potential for the mass distribution of images and information now possible in the digital age.

A significant contribution is a chapter by Collett Cox on approximately 18 early Indian Buddhist exegetical texts written in Gāndhārī in the Kharoṣṭhi script and dateable to as early as the first century C.E. These document the pre-history of the Yogācāra school. The texts appear to be teaching tools and include early sources for a number of key issues and ideas that became central in Sarvāstivāda doctrine. These include ideas of intrinsic (Skt. *svabhāva*), determined (Skt. *pariṇiṣpanna*) and established (Skt. *abhiṇiṣpanna*) nature. The birch bark scrolls on which they are written were found in a clay pot, probably in Afghanistan, and appear to have been originally composed in Gāndhārī and are thus not translations. They include references to local historical figures and do not have parallels in other Buddhist collections. One of the most interesting conclusions to be drawn from this collection is its challenge to traditional models of Buddhist textual transmission. The conventional view has been that the earliest texts transmit a common teaching core from a limited or single source. What we have here, on the other hand, argues, 'for an alternative model of divergent transmission traditions centred within regional monasteries, each of which is shaped by the constant input of living and changing teaching' (p. 43). Individual texts do not, therefore, preserve a single common core, but single instances of teaching reflecting local

contexts, perspectives, languages and so on. The Gāndhārī manuscripts undercut the idea of an early standardised canon in Buddhist literature. Scholars of Buddhist textual history will need to take these findings into account.

Another notable contribution to early Buddhist studies is Lobzang Jamspal's presentation of the 115 verse *Śiṣyalekha* by the sixth century scholar Candragomin, which he produces in the original Sanskrit alongside a new Tibetan translation. Charles Ramble presents an insightful study into the privatisation of tax collection in a region of nineteenth century Mustang, and into ideas of political resistance amongst these remote villagers. Christian Wedermeyer considers the role of religious reformers and revises the widely and long held perception of the eleventh century lama and contemporary of Atiśa, 'Gos Lo tsā ba, as an anti-Nyingma partisan. Instead, it is proposed that 'Gos be seen as a thinker comfortable with an Indian Tantrism that utilised violent magic in defence of the faith and whose influence extended for a thousand years.

Apart from its many original contributions, the charm of the book is in the personal stories that tie each contribution to Ted Riccardi. He appears here as a friend and especially a mentor, whose inexhaustible breadth of scholarship enables each different writer to grasp the field that is most suitably their own. His larger contribution is in enabling such openness and in demonstrating the value of a liberal arts education that has a global outlook.