

## Reviews

BECHERT, HEINZ (ed.), *The Dating of the Historical Buddha. Die Datierung des historischen Buddha. Part. 2. (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, phil.-hist. Klasse, 3. Folge, Nr. 194)*. (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung, IV, 2). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1992. X, 530 pages, DM 256.-. ISBN 3-525-82481-5.

One of the results of the symposium on *The Date of the Historical Buddha*<sup>1</sup> was that at least some of the problems connected with this important date in Indian history are unlikely to be solved on the basis of presently available evidence. However, its organizers, with H. Bechert as initiator and editor of the articles sent for publication, have tried to assemble as much evidence of all kinds as possible, so as to provide a solid base from which to start new discussions. As a result, nearly half of this second volume is of primarily historical interest: out of a total of 530 pages 160 consist of reprinted documents for reference purposes, and another 166 are devoted to summing up the history of research and various modes of reckoning of the Buddha's dates in the West (S. Dietz: *Die Datierung des historischen Buddha in der abendländischen Forschungsgeschichte bis 1980*), in China (Chen Yen-Huei: *Chinesische Studien zum Datum des Buddha*), in India and Tibet (D. Seyfort Ruegg: *Notes on Some Indian and Tibetan Reckonings of the Buddha's Nirvāṇa and the Duration of his Teaching*, E. Zabel: *Tibetische Quellen zur Datierung des historischen Buddha*, C.T. Zongtse: *Tibetische Berechnungen des Parinirvāṇa des Buddha*), and in Central Asian and Iranian sources (K. Sagaster: *Das Datum des Buddha nach mongolischen historischen Texten*, K.T. Schmidt: *Eine tocharische Quelle zur Buddha-Datierung*, W. Sundermann: *Eine Bemerkung zur Datierung des Buddha in der mittelpersischen Literatur der Zoroastrier*).

However, many of the articles quoted and the other papers collected in this voluminous and expensive book are well worth reading for their own sake, as may be seen from the following examples.

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1 See *Internationales Asienforum* 19, 1988, 391-403 and 23, 1992, 374-377.

Since the inscriptions of Ashoka provide the earliest evidence with regard to Buddhist doctrine which can be dated precisely, L. Schmithausen closely examines Buddhist canonical texts and doctrinal terms mentioned in Ashokan inscriptions. The use of certain doctrinal terms as well as certain concepts and notions seem to render a rather short chronology more probable, even though some other features seem to presuppose considerable development and therefore a longer distance in time between Ashoka and the Buddha.

H. von Stietencron, investigating the puranic genealogies, points out that major mistakes are not likely to occur in either the royal genealogies or in the line of the masters of *vinaya*, since both play a role in the transfer and recognition of charisma. In all the lists of the different kingdoms, the generation of the Buddha's contemporaries is separated by 9 or 10 generations from Ashoka, thus excluding a very late dating of the Buddha. However, in terms of absolute chronology the calculation of the date of the Buddha need not be binding, for the years of individual reigns are less reliable in those texts whose purpose is to establish rights of succession. A. Yuyama re-examines the manuscript readings and meanings of certain numbers relevant to the problem of chronology in Buddhist canonical literature. New proposals about the Buddha's dating are made by A.K. Narain (483 BC) and R. Gombrich (ca. 404 BC).

The book also contains a short introduction by the editor H. Bechert.

*Almuth Degener*

INSTITUTO CULTURAL DE MACAU (ed.), *Os Mares da Asia 1500-1800. Sociedades Locais, Portugueses e Expansão Europeia. The Asian Seas 1500-1800. Local Societies, European Expansion and the Portuguese.* (Revista de Cultura, No. 13/14). Macau: Instituto Cultural de Macau 1991. 361 pp., 100 Patacas; 200 escudos; 13 US \$.

The present volume edited by the Instituto Cultural de Macau attempts to analyse the impact and consequences European expansion had for the local societies of the Asian seas between the Indian Ocean, China and Japan during the period 1500-1800.

Thematically the articles - most of them in English, some in Portuguese or French - first treat "Ports, Cities and Trading Networks", fol-