

RONALD STUART MCGREGOR: *Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century*. (A History of Indian Literature, ed. Jan Gonda, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 6). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984. VIII, 239 pp., DM 98.-

RONALD STUART MCGREGOR: *Hindi Literature of the Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries*. (A History of Indian Literature, ed. Jan Gonda, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 2). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974. VI, 61 pp., (= p. 61-122), DM 34.-

Most of the research work on the vast literature composed in the various New Indo-Aryan languages has been done by Indian scholars and was published in Indian languages. A comprehensive history of Hindi literature in English has therefore been long felt overdue.

The two books under review are written by one of the few competent western scholars in the field and cover the history of Hindi literature from its beginnings up to the second decade of the twentieth century.

"Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century" deals with the literature composed in the medieval dialects of the language. Slightly differing from the traditional Indian treatment, McGregor distinguishes three main periods, viz. "The Rise of New Traditions in Literature and Religion" (1200 - c. 1450; ch. II), "The Years of Maturity" (the 15th and 16th centuries; ch. III) and "The Waning of an Era" (from the 17th to the 19th centuries; ch. IV). The discussion of the single authors in relation to their historical, religious and literary backgrounds is generally well-balanced, treating the problems of the textual tradition of their works as well as giving a thorough evaluation of their poetic achievement. This holds especially true of the major poets of the middle period like Kabir, Surdas, Mirabai and Tulsidas, who became the "classics" of Hindi literature, having "an influence upon the vast majority of Hindi speakers outweighing that of most of the literature of Sanskrit itself, which to them after all is as generally inaccessible as it was to their ancestors" (p. 2). However, McGregor does not confine himself to the authors of poetry, but also discusses the few specimens of early prose, partly hagiographical, partly technical (commentaries, works on poetics etc.) that have come down to us.

"Hindi Literature of the Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries" deals with the origin and the rise of modern Hindi. The literature of the centuries preceding 1800 is composed in various dialects, the most prominent being Brajbhasa, the local speech of the Mathura region. There are many reasons why, with the impact of western influence, the need of a new language based on the Delhi speech (Khari boli) began to be felt. In describing this rather complex process McGregor avoids both the colonialist statement of Sir George A. Grierson (modern Hindi was "invented by the English") and the nationalist reaction to it that denies any non-Indian influence in the making of the "national language".

Both books give an excellent survey of the periods in the history of Hindi literature they cover. In addition to this, the bibliographical notes never try to be exhaustive (as in some of the other volumes in the same series), but are confined to a very carefully made selection that is of great help to anybody looking for further material on the subject.

Rainer Kimmig

MILINDAPANHA. Die Fragen des Königs Milinda. Zwiegespräche zwischen einem Griechenkönig und einem buddhistischen Mönch. Aus dem Pali übersetzt von Nyanatiloka. Herausgegeben und teilweise neu übersetzt von Nyanaponika. Interlaken: Ansata Verlag, 1985. 393 pp., sFr 58.-

It was in the second century B.C. that king Menandros, a ruler of Greek origin over north-western parts of India, discussed with the Buddhist monk Nagasena the basic assumptions of Buddhist theories of knowledge and personality. These dialogues have been preserved in Pali, the language of Theravada-Buddhism under the title "Milindapanha". Anton Walter Florus Gueth (born in Wiesbaden 1878) who was named Nyanatiloka after his ordination as Buddhist monk in Burma in 1904 (he was the second European to take the yellow robe), translated the complete text into German during the first World War. The edition of the two volumes published in 1919 and 1924 respectively has been out of print for several decades. Thus, it is indeed a meritorious act that Ansata publishers have brought out a new and comparatively cheap (cloth-bound!) edition for which Nyanaponika (born in Hanau 1901), the main disciple of Nyanatiloka signs responsible, and to which Heinz Bechert has written a short historio-indological introduction. Anyone with any experience of discussions on Buddhist questions will find "Milindapanha" to be an extraordinarily modern book: We have not (how could we?) gone further than king Menandros in our (futile) attempts to question the eternal laws of dependent origination which Samana Gotama was able to reveal - and to transcend.

Detlef Kantowsky