

In this way, concepts of sovereignty inspired a whole new set of religious values and ideas, many of which contributed to the speculative explorations of spiritual liberation recorded in the early Upaniṣads. The idea of the identity of microcosm and macrocosm was enhanced by the identification of the king with his dominion, idealized as the universe in its entirety. The paradigm of sovereignty was thus formative for a language and symbolism of spiritual aspiration that went on to dominate religious discourse in India for centuries. The ideal attributes of a great king became the model for the spiritual aspirations even of those with no claim to political power. Gradually, the political aspect of the ideal faded, and was preserved only in certain key metaphors employed in what was now a new discourse of spiritual freedom. Thus it might even be said that late Vedic and early Hindu spirituality reflects the popularization of the ideals of an ambitious king. (p. 152)

In closing this valuable work, Proferes promises a future exploration of the theme of kingship, of *rājavidyā*, with regard to Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavadgītā*. He refers to Angelika Malinar's 1996 monograph *Rājavidyā* (revised English translation, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrine and Contexts*, 2007 [see preceding review]).

Since Proferes has been careful to point out that his monograph is not so much concerned with Vedic polity, but is focused rather "on the poetic form of Vedic political discourse within its liturgical context," a comment on the poetic form of his translations in this monograph will be of use to would-be readers. While the translations are accurate and rooted in good philology, they are also often very awkward and clumsy. The sentence on p. 71 that translates and comments on *RV* 4.38.9ab reads: "As horse, 'the peoples cheer the speed and dominance of the racer filling the bounded lands.'" I fear that only a Vedicist who can construe the accompanying Vedic text will be able to decipher this sentence. Besides awkward syntax like this, there are occasional lapses of diction, for example when he translates the Vedic term *vīryā* as 'puissance' (p. 52). This translation conjures up images of Francophile Vedic poets, which I would think we would want to avoid. On p. 149 in the passage *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.17 the phrase *pañca pañcajanā* is translated quite accurately as "the five Five peoples," without any comment or explanation whatsoever. In discussing the hierarchy of fires in Vedic, a very important topic, Proferes refers to this Agni hierarchy as an "igneous hierarchy" (p. 24). This rather obvious allusion to the etymological link between 'agni' and 'igneous' made me cringe a little.

Finally, one philological matter is worth noting. In discussing *RV* 5.27.6, Proferes interprets the word *āsvamedhe* as a reference to the Vedic horse sacrifice, rather than as a proper name, as most Vedicists have taken it (see most recently M. Mayrhofer, *Die Personennamen in der Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā: Sicheres und Zweifelhafte* [Munich, 2003]). This is an interesting and intriguing suggestion, but it is offered without comment or any reference to previous work, as if the suggestion were perfectly obvious and settled. Perhaps Proferes knows something that I don't know. It would have been useful to me, for one, to have been enlightened by him about this interpretation.

GEORGE THOMPSON
MONTSERRAT COLLEGE OF ART

Discovering the Vedas: Origins, Mantras, Rituals, Insights. By FRITS STAAL. New Delhi: PENGUIN BOOKS, 2008. Pp. xxxvi + 419.

This charming book consists of five parts, divided into sixteen chapters, plus two brief mathematical appendices. Part I, two chapters, focuses on the Indo-European and Central Asian origins and background of the Vedas. Part II, eight chapters, is the heart of the book: a fairly detailed outline of the Vedic compositions and the culture that is reflected in them, in 136 pages. Part III, "Analysing the Vedas," offers in three chapters useful overviews of Staal's most significant contributions to the study of Vedic mantras and Vedic ritual, as well as interesting new evidence for the migrations of Vedic culture into and within the Indian subcontinent. Part IV, "What We Can Learn from the Vedas," introduces the notion of "Vedic sciences"—not those pseudo-sciences celebrated in the popular press, but rather

topics like the function of lists, the concept of the *sūtra*, the principles of Vedic geometry, and the remarkably sophisticated Vedic traditions of linguistic analysis that inspired Pāṇinian grammar, as well as other Asian traditions regarding phonology and scripts. The section on "Vedic Insights" concludes with an overview of Staal's reflections on the powers and limitations of language within the context of Vedic mantras and rituals. Part V, "The Vedas and Buddhism," discusses the issues that distinguish the philosophy of early Buddhism and Jainism from the Vedas. The book has a frontispiece with an excellent map, twenty-six illustrations, three tables, source notes, bibliography and index, and a list of errata which will be expanded in future reprintings.

A former President of the American Oriental Society, Frits Staal needs no introduction to the readers of this journal. Although it was written by a Vedicist, this book is not intended only for Vedicists. Staal's intention is to speak to the larger community of scholars and intellectuals about the significance of the Vedic tradition. He summarizes and extends his previous work on the Vedic sciences, with enlightening comparisons to early Greek, Chinese, and Babylonian sciences. He adds provocative remarks about the early development of the use of artificial languages within India, as well as many asides in many other directions. All of these matters are discussed valuably and with great wit and gusto. It is a remarkable fact, as Staal insists, that the early Vedic ventures into pre-modern science were accomplished—not *in spite of* the complete absence of writing in this culture—but *because of* it. Staal's long and productive career as a Vedicist began with a study of Vedic recitation and chanting traditions in 1961, and it continues with the study of them to this very day. All of the insights into language that these Vedic proto-linguists achieved were the result of their acute attention to the production and accurate recording of the sounds of their language. Staal has taught us to see the connections between ritual and science in the Vedic tradition. This is a very significant achievement.

Staal has raised many new and provocative questions about the historical evolution of the Vedic tradition. His discussion of how the migration of the Vedic clans from Central Asia southward and eastward into the Indian subcontinent has been encoded into the migration of the Vedic ritual tradition deserves further examination. So does the thesis of chapter 13 ("Secrets of the Sadas"), that the Sāmavedic song tradition reflects the adaptation of Rigvedic mantras into a non-Indo-European tradition, either indigenous or derived from the Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex, as the linguistic evidence suggests. The same holds for his original treatment of the Yajurveda in chapter 7. Throughout the book, Staal returns to the Rig-, the Sāma-, and the Yajurvedas. His treatment of the Atharvaveda, on the other hand, is relatively poor, as he himself acknowledges.

There is good evidence that there was early esoteric interaction between these Sāmavedic song traditions and certain late Rigvedic hymnic cycles, such as the *Ādīrghatamas* cycle (RV 1.140–64), a profoundly influential *maṇḍala* of late Rigvedic hymns that has not yet been adequately studied. Staal's interpretation of RV 1.164.45 (which famously refers to four parts or tracks of language, but names only one of them, the last: ordinary human language) offers a brilliant potential solution to this well-known Vedic riddle. The three hidden parts of language are, he suggests, three different types of mantras: (1) *anirukta* mantras, which are ineffable or unarticulated; (2) *upāṁśu* mantras, which are articulated but inaudible; and (3) *tūṣṇīm* mantras, which are chanted silently but with their sounds in mind. Given the clearly esoteric riddling context of this hymn, Staal's suggestion cannot be easily confirmed, but it opens up new avenues of exploration for a well-known but still dark hymn from a Vedic poet whose name, *Ādīrghatamas*, Staal glosses as "Seeing Far into Darkness." Staal compares him indirectly to a Vedic Einstein.

Vedicists in general have not been very successful at reaching out to a larger, non-specialist, but nevertheless educated, audience. That may be due to the difficulty of the material that we work with. Vedic is both archaic and esoteric, and therefore two times difficult. But our failure to connect with a larger audience may also be due to our own failure to call attention to the most striking features of this tradition. In my view it is a paradox that the Vedic tradition can present us with remarkably sophisticated ideas about language, while being at the same time deeply immured in various forms of crude magical thinking: sacrifice and mimed bestiality, for example, in the Vedic horse sacrifice. Think also of the story of *Sunahṣepa* and his brothers, whose three names attach the old Indo-European word for dog to three obscure non-Indo-European words for a dog's nether parts: *-śepa*, *-puccha*, and *-lāṅgūla*. This is not a matter of Vedic science. It is a matter of Vedic satire, perhaps, or an allusion

to some vaguely known dog-man cult. Science and satire and dog-man cults are all parts of the mosaic of Vedic culture, which preserves collective memory of archaic sacrifices as well as sophisticated poetic traditions that extend all the way back to Proto-Indo-European, while also making initial forays into a science of language. I would think that any intellectually curious person would want to know more about this mosaic.

Most Vedicists are philologists. Perhaps we should also be logicians and historians of science as well. When Staal says on p. 87 "I am not a Vedic specialist," maybe he means that he is not a Rigveda specialist or a Vedic philologist (and maybe he implies too that philology is not the only tool that we need). But by all accounts he is a Vedicist, and a great and most unusual one, whether he approaches the Vedas as a philosopher, a linguist, a logician, or a musician. His various perspectives have been valuable because of the great diversity of the Vedic tradition itself, and because of its remarkable focus on getting the details right—whether it is a matter of the exact transmission of compositions, rituals, or collective knowledge in general ("veda"), or of novel features such as meta-rules, infinity, or the number of the gods. No one more than Frits Staal has called attention to this important feature of the Vedic tradition.

This is a valuable book for Vedicists and non-Vedicists alike. It highlights the many contributions of Vedic culture to "science"—i.e., to the very thing to which the name "Veda" refers. Staal's perspective on Vedic is often adventurous and tendentious, perhaps most notably in his famous thoughts on "the meaninglessness of ritual," on the thesis of Kautsa, and on the syntactic similarities between mantras and bird song. But it has been a perspective productive of new and stimulating ideas that have significantly changed the ways that we now view the Vedic tradition. The fact that recent handbooks of Vedic culture and Hinduism contain significant sections on the Vedic sciences can be attributed in large part to the influence of Frits Staal.

GEORGE THOMPSON
MONTSERRAT COLLEGE OF ART

Zen Sourcebook: Traditional Documents from China, Korea, and Japan. Edited by STEPHEN ADDISS, with Stanley Lombardo and Judith Roitman. Indianapolis: HACKETT PUBLISHING COMPANY, 2008. Pp. xxxii + 275. \$39.95 (cloth); \$12.95 (paper).

Despite the plethora of popular and scholarly books on the Chan/Zen tradition(s) of East Asian Buddhism, there is a regrettable dearth of comprehensive and reliable readers or sourcebooks that introduce a broad range of classical texts in a manner that makes them accessible to a general audience of non-specialists. This book tries to address that gap in the available literature by presenting a reasonably comprehensive yet handy reader that contains selections from a broad range of texts composed in premodern East Asia. The three editors of the book should be commended on their joint effort at putting together a balanced volume that covers a great deal of the Chan/Zen tradition's rich heritage and long history. The book contains a variety of texts composed in a number of representative genres and styles, including sermons, encounter dialogues, poems, and letters. Its primary audiences will be undergraduates enrolled in courses on Zen or East Asian Buddhism, Zen practitioners, and general readers interested in learning more about classical Zen teachings, history, or literature.

There are two noteworthy features that set the book apart from competing volumes (of which there are not that many). First, the inclusion of a few texts composed by Korean Zen teachers, in addition to the expected coverage of the Chinese and Japanese traditions, although once again Vietnamese Zen finds itself overlooked. Second, the inclusion of excerpts from works composed by (or dealing with) female Zen adepts. These are notable advantages when the book is compared to *The Roaring Stream: A New Zen Reader* (Eco Press, 1996), edited by Nelson Foster and Jack Shoemaker, perhaps the best example of a book of similar scope and ambition. On the other hand, the coverage in the Foster and Shoemaker volume is more comprehensive, and on the whole its contents and presentation are better