

As the first major work on the *Āpaddharmaparvan*, this book promises to be useful for a long time to come for both researchers and teachers working with the *Mahābhārata*, and with Sanskrit literature more generally. Also, Bowles' arguments about the literary integrity of the *Āpaddharmaparvan* should lead to a greater appreciation of the epic's didactic sections and are sure to have significant implications for ongoing debates about the compositional history and artistic integrity of the *Mahābhārata*.

My only criticisms are concerned, not so much with Bowles' general argument about the literary qualities of the *Āpaddharmaparvan*, which I find convincing, but rather, with the general plan and conception of the book. The chapters on *āpad* and *dharma*, although well researched and well written, seem largely irrelevant to the overriding concerns of the book, particularly when they are easily summarised and when the remainder of the book rarely calls upon anything more than a general meaning of these terms. Meanwhile, not enough time was spent exploring the *Āpaddharmaparvan*'s employment of narrative strategies, such as framing, embedding, and the sequential placement of textual units, within the context of narrative strategies employed throughout the *Mahābhārata* as a whole. Bowles does address these issues to some extent in Chaps. 4 and 5, but a more programmatic discussion of framing techniques and literary strategies would have added greater force to his arguments. When he describes Yudhiṣṭhira as an 'ignorant' student in his role as the primary listener throughout the *Āpaddharmaparvan*, for example, I wondered if Bowles' discussion of the participants in the *Āpaddharmaparvan*'s framing dialogues could have benefited from a more thoroughgoing analysis of the dynamics between speakers and listeners in dialogical frames in other sections of the text. Additionally, a more detailed discussion of the different genres employed throughout the epic would have been useful, comparing the *Āpaddharmaparvan*'s use of *saṃvāda* (dialogue) and *upākhyāna* (subtale), for example, with how they are employed within the other didactic sections as well as other sections of the *Mahābhārata* more generally.

On the whole, however, this is an excellent study of a high academic calibre. Bowles not only brings alive an all too often neglected section of the *Mahābhārata*, but by doing so he fosters a renewed appreciation of the text as a whole.

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***The Khecarīvidyā of Ādhinātha: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of an Early Text of Haṭhayoga.* By James Mallinson. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-415-39115-3, pp. vii, 299. £75.00.**

This remarkable book is the second volume of the Routledge Studies in Tantric Traditions, edited by Gavin Flood. Beautifully produced by the author, who was

responsible for the typesetting, it combines an easy-to-read typeface (Garamond) with an elegant font for the Devanāgarī script. Due to the highly technical nature of the material, this winning combination of authorial attention to detail with a highly elevated sense of aesthetics, results in not merely a book but a work of art.

The preface and introductory material for this book tell an intriguing tale of how the author decided upon this topic, gathered his research materials, and interviewed practitioners. *Khecarīmudrā* entails inverting one's tongue to massage the upper palate. Advanced practitioners slowly wear away the flesh that constricts the tongue and eventually manipulate the tongue for 'the insertion of the tongue into the abode of Brahmā and the raising of Kuṇḍalinī in order to flood the body with *amṛta* and defeat death by temporarily or permanently leaving the body' (p. 3). This practice, although odd, is widely known throughout India. My own Yoga teacher trained in this technique as a girl in Calcutta, and various Westerners have also been initiated into this practice. Rather than dwelling on the sensational aspects of Khecarī Mudra, Mallinson seeks to provide the textual foundation for understanding it.

The *Khecarīvidyā* consists of 284 verses divided into four chapters. It takes the form of a dialogue between Lord Śiva and his consort Devī. It was quoted within the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, the *Yogakuṇḍalyupaniṣad*, the *Haṭharatnāvalī*, and the *Goraḥasiddhāntasaṃgraha* and *Matsyendrasaṃhitā*. In short, this text holds great importance in the literature of Tantra and Haṭha Yoga. This work presents a comprehensive study, including a critical edition based on twenty-two manuscripts and a full and accurate translation in eminently readable English.

Mallinson surmises that the text was composed prior to 1400 C.E. Its place of composition cannot be determined, as 'witnesses' to the text are found 'from Jodhpur in the west to Calcutta in the East, and from Kathmandu in the north to Pondicherry in the south' (p. 4), though the author finds that the purest versions originate from the south. Variant versions of the text include (or exclude) references to marijuana and alcohol, betraying a sensitivity to local attitudes regarding the more controversial practices of Tantra. In his historical survey, Mallinson notes mention of correlate practices in the Pali Canon, where the Buddha talks about tongue manipulation with his Jaina student Saccaka. The *Viṣṇusmṛti* (ca. 400 C.E.) provides the first description of a tongue-to-palate technique in a Hindu text, which is described also in the *Maitrāyanīyopaniṣad*. Several texts of the Tantra tradition mention this practice, as noted in detail by the author. The introductory section includes a three page segment on '*Khecarīmudrā* in modern India' and 'Practitioners of *khecarīmudrā*.' The brevity of this section invites further research into the sociology and applied physiology, including dangers and benefits, of this practice.

The overwhelming bulk of this study focuses on the text itself. One section describes each of the 35 manuscripts consulted to form the critical edition, including its quotation in the texts mentioned above, and descriptions of manuscripts not available to the author. The critical edition includes copious references to each of

the variant texts. The translation, consisting of nineteen pages, stays true to the Sanskrit without sounding stilted or forced. Some terms, such as *melaka*, are left untranslated, due to the uncertainty of their meaning. The physical description of the practice is quite graphic:

In the manner described by his guru, [every day] for seven days the knower of *ātman* should rub the base of the palate and clean away all impurity. He should take a very sharp, well-oiled and clean blade resembling a leaf of the Snuhi plant and then cut away a hair's breadth [of the frenum] with it. After cutting, he should rub [the cut] with a powder of rock-salt and *pathyā*. After seven days he should again cut away a hair's breadth. [The yogin], constantly applying himself, should thus practise gradually for six months. (p. 119)

The results of this practice culminate in a 'flow of nectar and ultimate bliss' (p. 131). Repeatedly, the text states that one will become free from wrinkles and grey hair. If one dies while practising the *mudrā*, one will attain final liberation, escaping from the curse of rebirth: 'Never again does he drink at a mother's breast on the wheel of rebirth' (p. 132). Otherwise, the text (thankfully) gives instruction for removing the tongue from the top of one's head to 'live happily and healthy' (p. 133). The concluding fourth chapter describes various drugs to be ingested by the Yogin to enhance the senses, reclaim one's youth, and become free of 'grey hair or wrinkles' (p. 135).

The appendices to the book include segments of the text included in other texts and works cited in the *Bṛhatkhecarīprakāśa* commentary. The book includes 498 notes, a fourteen page bibliography, a Sanskrit word index, and a comprehensive index. A stellar work of exemplary scholarship, this book should be purchased by individuals with an interest in Yoga and Tantra, and all university libraries.

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***Gender and Narrative in the Mahābhārata*. Edited by Simon Brodbeck and Brian Black. London: Routledge, 2007. ISBN: 0-415-41540-8 (hbk), pp. xix, 326. £95.00.**

This book, consisting of an Introduction by the editors, and eleven further essays by a mixture of leading and emerging *Mahābhārata* scholars, is the product of a conference held in 2005 as part of the *Epic Constructions: gender, myth and society in the Mahābhārata* research project, based at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. As the editors (Brodbeck and Black) explain in their wide-ranging and very useful introduction, the volume is deliberately positioned to link the traditional philological