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## REZENSIONEN / COMPTES RENDUS / REVIEWS

FISCHER, Karin: *Yakṣagāna: Eine südindische Theatertradition. Mit Übersetzung und Text von "Abhimanyu Kālagar"*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2004 (Drama und Theater in Südasien 3, herausgegeben von Heidrun Brückner). XI, 202 pp. ISBN: 3-447-05103-5.

This book in German is about Yakṣagāna, an important theatre tradition found in the South Indian State of Karnataka. The study is a welcome contribution to a new trend emerging in Indological and anthropological scholarship that combines ethnography and the analysis of performance texts to reflect on Indian society and explore its textual and artistic production.

Building on the work of well-known Kannada intellectual, author and theatre person, K.S. Karanth, and the researchers Martha Bush Ashton and Bruce Christie, Fischer describes the history, context (patronage, performers, training and audience), the multimedial constituting elements of Yakṣagāna and its performance conventions. While the origins of the theatre remain uncertain, it becomes clear that this popular genre in the Kannada language has been wrought by cross-pollination between literatures, musical and dramatic traditions in Telugu, Sanskrit, Kannada and Tamil, in particular during the Vijayanagara period (14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century). Interesting is Fischer's discussion of the pivotal role played by the Dāsa-movement in the shaping of performance texts, such as those used in Yakṣagāna (pp. 63-66). A further investigation of these non-Brahmin, social-religious movements and their contribution to the shaping and dissemination of dramatic texts performed in Kannada, Telugu and Tamil seems imperative to get a better insight into the development, interconnections and meaning of these texts (and performance traditions) for their local audiences (see also De Bruin 1999, 180 with regard to the influence of these movements on the Kattaikkuttu theatre tradition).

According to Fischer, Yakṣagāna is a style of performance that does not aim to be realistic. While the make-up, costumes and ornaments are conventional and the principal characters are heroes and gods characterized by a certain degree of stereotyping, there is also space for individual characterization and "humanity" (p. 26). For example, the emotional farewell between Abhimanyu and his mother, Subhadra, before the former leaves for the battlefield, offers the

performers abundant scope to highlight the “human” and “emotional” aspects of these two epic characters.

In Fischer’s analysis of the performance conventions, I find her discussion of the role of the Bhāgavata particularly interesting. In addition to being the principal singer, whose voice largely determines the quality and success of a performance, the Bhāgavata fulfils the role of informal director. He selects the songs and interacts with the actors on stage rendering (them) their “voices”, while they provide the “visual” enactment of the role. In the many dialogues that alternate with sung text, the Bhāgavata plays the role of opposite number responding to and cuing the actors on stage. The representation of the voices of on-stage characters by the Bhāgavata seems an important issue and a distinguishing factor of Yakṣagāna *vis-à-vis* other performance traditions in the region, where the actors speak and sing themselves (e.g. Kaṭṭaikkūttu) or where there is an even greater separation between the voice and other dramatic aspects of the performance, such as dance, gestures and facial expression (e.g. Kathakaḷi). Fischer illustrates how framing devices used in the Sanskrit version of the *Mahābhārata*, such as the fact that Vaisampayana tells the story of Abhimanyu to King Janamejaya, and the abundant use of the third person by the Bhāgavata clearly define Yakṣagāna as a narrative tradition.

A translation of the *prasaṅga* (“episode” or “play”) “*Abhimanyu’s Fight*” (“*Abhimanyu Kāḷagar*”), based on the “Udupi version” generally attributed to the author Dēvidāsa (p. 58), the Kannada text of the Udupi edition in transcription and a comparison between the song-passages found in the Kannada *Mahābhārata* version of Kumāra Vyāsa and Dēvidāsa’s text complete the study. *Abhimanyu Kāḷagar* is one of the most popular episodes among Yakṣagāna audiences. The play is a *pièce de résistance* for a professional Yakṣagāna troupe, not only because it needs so many and so many different characters on stage, but also because it requires a talented actor who can play the principal role of Abhimanyu convincingly.

The play features the fight of Arjuna’s young son, Abhimanyu, who, in his father’s absence, attacks the Kauravas and breaks through a special army formation (*cakravyūha*) they have put up on this occasion. The child Abhimanyu engages into battle all the great warriors on the side of the Kauravas. Not knowing his way out the army formation, he is killed by them in an unequal and unfair fight. In her discussion of the interpretation of this *Mahābhārata* episode Fischer draws our attention the centrality of Kṛṣṇa in the play. Kṛṣṇa turns out to

be the instigator of the unjust contest between Abhimanyu and the Kaurava warriors. As reason for Kṛṣṇa's desire to eliminate Abhimanyu, Fischer quotes one of her informants who, without being able to give the source for this reference, told her that Abhimanyu is a reincarnation of Kāṁsa—an old enemy of Kṛṣṇa whom, we assume, he wishes to avenge. This quote probably refers to the (multiform) story of Viṣṇu's gatekeepers in Vaikuṇṭha. Having refused the sage Durvāsa entrance to Viṣṇu, the gatekeepers were caused to undergo several births as demons, among them Hirāṇya, Kāṁsa and Śiśupāla, before being reunited again with Viṣṇu. In the Kaṭṭaikkūttu performances of this episode, and apparently also in the Yakṣagāna performance tradition, Abhimanyu is said to have been in a former life one of those gatekeepers of Viṣṇu. The themes of a sequence of incarnations and the demonic nature of Abhimanyu and other heroes in the *Mahābhārata* war in South Indian folklore are well-established (Hiltebeitel 1988, 400; De Bruin 1999, 136-138, 294-296). Here, as in other instances, the popular tradition appears to look for meaningful explanations for the unfair murder of a child-warrior by renowned Kshatriya warriors and the temporary break-down of (Kshatriya) order. However, reading the central meaning of the *prasaṅga* as a conflict between *dharma* and *adharma*, in its more limited interpretation of "good" and "bad" and the fulfilment of the principal characters' Kshatriya obligations, as Fischer does, (p. 26 and p. 94) does not do full justice to the complexity and ingenious handling of the stories by the performers. For instance, it pays insufficient attention to the way in which a popular tradition, like Yakṣagāna, tries to make sense of Kṛṣṇa's role as instigator of the murder of his own sister's son and his status as a popular and beloved God who is the subject of intense *bhakti*.

For her treatment of the oral nature of the tradition, characteristics of which can be found in Dēvidāsa's text, Fischer bases herself on the work of Stuart Blackburn on the Tamil Bow Song tradition and on my own work on the Tamil Kaṭṭaikkūttu tradition, but her acknowledgments could have been a little more generous. While her discussion thus appears to forestall the translation and analysis of the actual text in performance, it comes as somewhat of a disappointment that she opts for translating and comparing the printed versions of the text bringing us firmly back to conventional (written) text-based Indological scholarship. Being a performer of Yakṣagāna herself it would have been more interesting for the current developments in the field would she have opted for a translation and analysis of the actual text in performance and the subtle nuances the performance reveals in the hands of the Bhāgavata and actors on stage. Nevertheless, the efforts Katrin Fischer has put into making this particular

theatre text of the Yakṣagāna tradition accessible to a wider (German speaking) audience are admirable, in particular when one takes into account that the book is a reworking of her M.A. thesis. I look forward to the future work of this young scholar.

Hanne M. de Bruin

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1999 *Kaṭṭaikkūttu: The Flexibility of a South Indian Theatre Tradition*. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.

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'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal's Commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* (*Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos kyi 'grel bshad de kho na nyid rab tu gsal ba'i me long*), critically edited by Klaus-Dieter Mathes. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003 (Nepal Research Center Publications, Vol. 24). 576 pp. ISBN 3-515-08358-8.

This book contains a critical edition of a Tibetan commentary composed by 'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal (1392–1481) on the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*. The *Ratnagotravibhāga*, attributed to Maitreya, and its *vyākhyā*, attributed to Asaṅga, are of special significance in Buddhism for the discussion of the 'buddha-nature' (*tathāgatagarbha*), i.e. the idea that the nature of a buddha is inherent in every human being. gZhon nu dpal's commentary (hereafter: ZhP), which has never been published before, provides an account on this issue which is imposing both in view of its size as well as its historical and philosophical

importance. MATHES' edition thus provides an important and valuable contribution to future studies on the subject.

The edition proper (pp. 1–576) is preceded by a brief introduction (pp. ix–xvii) which, besides editorial remarks, deals with gZhon nu dpal's life and education on the basis of an unpublished biography by his disciple Zhwa dmar Chos kyi grags pa (1453–1524), and of the *bKa' gdams chos 'byung* of Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (b. 1440), another of his disciples.<sup>1</sup> This information adds to the preliminary observations by MATHES in an article entitled "'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal's Extensive Commentary on and Study of the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*" (MATHES 2002)<sup>2</sup>, which gives a more detailed biographical account and discusses the position that gZhon nu dpal holds in ZhP.

'Gos Lo tsā ba Yid bzang rtse ba gZhon nu dpal is well known to Tibetologists for his work entitled *The Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*), composed a few years earlier than ZhP.<sup>3</sup> This mine of biographical, bibliographical and historical information already gives us an idea of the mastery that this remarkable scholar had of all fields of Buddhist studies. MATHES' introduction informs us of the key elements of gZhon nu dpal's thorough education in all the major religious traditions with the most important masters of the time, such as Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), the Fifth Karmapa De bzhin gshegs pa (1384–1415), the rNying ma pa teacher sGrol ma ba Sangs rgyas rin chen (1350–1430), or the Sa skya master Rong ston Shes bya kun rig (1367–1449). gZhon nu dpal distinguishes himself by his open-minded and non-sectarian approach, which is reflected in his ZhP, where he combines the commentarial tradition of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab (1059–1109) with sGam po pa's (1079–1153) "Great Seal" (*mahāmudrā*) interpretation. The introduction also deals with the circumstances of the redaction of ZhP – composed in 1473 as gZhon nu dpal was nearly blind and had to dictate his work from memory over a period of four months – and of the carving of the printing blocks as described in the colophon. MATHES notes that gZhon nu dpal obviously had access to the Sanskrit original

- 1 Other biographical sources mentioned in MATHES 2002:80 (see n.2) include the *Kaṃ tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar* of Situ and 'Be lo, the *Gangs can mkhas grub rim byon ming mdzod*, and Khetsun Sangpo's *Bibliographical Dictionary*.
- 2 Published in: *Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet*, Tibetan Studies II, PIATS 2000, ed. by H. Blezer with the assistance of A. Zadoks. Brill's Tibetan Studies Library Vol. 2/2. Leiden: Brill, pp. 79–96.
- 3 For a translation of this work, see George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, reprint Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass [First ed. Calcutta, 1949; second ed. Delhi, 1976; reprints Delhi, 1978, 1988, 1995, 1996].



of the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* as he frequently discusses Sanskrit words from this text and occasionally mentions or (politely) criticizes the existing translation by rNgog Lo tsā ba Blo ldan shes rab, which is the one found in the canon (sDe dge *bsTan 'gyur* 4024–4025).<sup>4</sup> MATHES (p.xv) also mentions a translation by Nag tsho Lo tsā ba which gZhon nu dpal occasionally discusses, but gives no specifics about this translator.<sup>5</sup> By comparing the quotations of the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* in ZhP with the Sanskrit text (edited by E.H. Johnston)<sup>6</sup> and the Tibetan translation found in the canon (edited by Z. Nakamura on the basis of Sde dge, Narthang and Peking *bsTan 'gyur*)<sup>7</sup>, MATHES establishes that gZhon nu dpal's version, in several cases, better fits the original (p.xiv).

As a detailed analysis of ZhP is planned to appear in MATHES' forthcoming habilitation thesis, only a short paragraph is devoted to gZhon nu dpal's views in the work under review:

gZhon nu dpal clearly follows the hermeneutics of the *Samādhinirmocanasūtra*, and claims in particular that the gradual purification of the three *dharmacakras* only leads up to the seventh Bodhisattva level, which is, in fact, not the actual seventh level, but only a provisional one on the path of preparation, as described in the *Vairocanābhisambodhitāntra*. gZhon nu dpal justifies the superiority of the third *dharmacakra* on the basis of *mahāmudrā* explanations by various Indian and Tibetan masters, and leaves no doubt that even the gradual approach of the four *mahāmudrā* yogas is outshone by the instructions of how to realize one's natural mind suddenly, in 'one go'. gZhon nu dpal shows that these four *mahāmudrā* yogas were already contained in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and various passages of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in a hidden way. (p. xi)

- 4 MATHES (p.xv n.44) gives two references of such passages in ZhP; in the first one, gZhon nu dpal says that rNgog Blo ldan shes rab's translation is "somewhat incorrect" (*cung zad mi legs te*) (ZhP 94,4).
- 5 It is most probably Nag (')tsho Lo tsā ba Tshul khriṃs rgyal ba (1011–1064), who was a student of Atiśa. According to gZhon nu dpal's *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*), Nag tsho Lo tsā ba and Atiśa were asked by rNgog Byang chub 'byung gnas of Yer pa to translate Asaṅga's commentary on the *Mahāyāna-Uttaratantra*, i.e. the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*. See George N. Roerich, *op. cit.*, p. 259. In ZhP 4,19–20, gZhon nu dpal refers to a translation by Dīpaṃkara and Nag tsho. A discussion of Nag tsho's translation appears for instance in ZhP 482,16.
- 6 The *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*, Patna, 1950: The Bihar Research Society.
- 7 *Zōwa-taiyaku Kūkyōichijōhōshōron-kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1967: Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan.

Apart from these lines, MATHES' introduction does not deal with the contents of ZhP, nor with the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. The introduction thus leaves us with the clear impression that this publication is aimed at readers who already have a strong background in the history and contents of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. MATHES 2002:84–92 deals with the question somewhat more extensively. We learn that up to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its *vyākhyā* were not quoted or discussed in major philosophical treatises in India, as “the main Indian reaction to the controversial teaching of an imminent *buddha*-nature was, however, simply to ignore it” (p.84). As mahāyāna expositions started to integrate Tantric teachings, the Mahāsiddha Maitrīpa (b. 1007/1010?) rediscovered the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and passed it on to Ānandakīrti and Sajjana. With the help of the latter, rNgog Blo ldan shes rab translated it into Tibetan and commented on it<sup>8</sup>, thus starting a rich Tibetan tradition of commentaries on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (known in Tibet as the *rGyud bla ma*).<sup>9</sup> According to MATHES 2002:89, ZhP would be the first available commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* written from the point of view of the bKa' rgyud school. The question whether the teaching of the *buddha*-nature had a definitive meaning or a provisional meaning was hotly debated in Tibet, and gZhon nu dpal distinguishes no less than four positions on the meaning of the *tathāgatagarbha*, adopting none of them himself (p.86). In consideration of gZhon nu dpal's expertise in all the main traditions of his time, his explanations in ZhP are of great interest for our understanding of these issues.

8 rNgog Blo ldan shes rab authored two works on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. One is a summarized presentation (*don bsdu pa*) entitled ‘*Theg chen rgyud bla'i don bsdu pa*’, which has been published in 1993 in Dharamsala (H.P.: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives). The other, currently unavailable, is entitled ‘*rgyud bla ma'i fik chung*’ (‘Small commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*’). It is mentioned in ZhP 4,22. Both are listed under the numbers 11472 and 11316 by A khu Shes rab rgya mtsho in his *dPe rgyun dkon pa 'ga' zhig gi tho yig* (hereafter: *Tho yig*), a list of rare or extraordinarily valuable books (ed. in: Lokesh Chandra. *Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature*, New Delhi, 1963, Part III). Sajjana himself is known to have composed an explanation on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (*rgyud bla ma'i rnam bshad*), cf. *Tho yig* 11338.

For gZhon nu dpal's own account of the spread of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in Tibet, see ZhP 4. He mentions, among others, commentaries by Phya pa (Chos kyi seng ge), gTsang nag pa (brTson 'grus seng ge) and Dan 'bag pa (sMra ba'i seng ge).

9 The data-base of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center ([www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org)) lists no less than 46 works on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, most of them are commentaries (*'grel pa*, *ḥikā*) or explanations (*rnam bshad*).



MATHES' edition is based on a 698-folio manuscript in cursive handwriting (*dbu med*) and a block print of 463 folios (from blocks that were, according to the colophon, carved six years after the composition of the text, i.e. ca. 1479). These two probably share a common source.

The edited text appears in Tibetan script, a procedure becoming standard – especially for those texts for which no previous edition is available – as it has the advantage of making the text available to Tibetan readers. MATHES has extended this practice to the critical apparatus, namely, the folio numbers, notes and verse numbering, with the exception of the use, in footnotes, of English words such as “inserts”, “not clear”, “*et passim*” or the abbreviation “om.” (for “omits”). The Tibetan letters ཨ (A) and ས (B) are used for the respective sources, and the letters འ (N) and ས (B) to indicate the recto and the verso (for instance འཇམ་མཁའ་ stands for the block print, folio 43b). The combination ཨས (AB, which can be pronounced “a-ba”) appears in the footnotes to indicate that both sources share a common reading, but also in verse numbering when a quatrain is divided in two half-verses; the number of the verse is then followed by ཨས (ab) for the first half, by འཇམ་ (cd) for the second.<sup>10</sup> Note that the indication མཇུག་ (*med*) in footnotes 1, p.1, and 2, p.575, indicate the absence of a folio, and not a variant reading. With the exception of small ambiguities such as these, the use of Tibetan script retains the precision of the conventional Romanised notation.

The sources used by MATHES present a number of unusual orthographical forms. Most of these orthographical particularities concern the use of prefixes (for ex. 'thun instead of *mthun*, *gzha* for *bzha*) or archaic forms (for ex. *ngo ti* for *ngo bo*). These have been adapted by the editor to the usage of modern Tibetan. MATHES provides a list of emendation in the introduction (p.xv–xvi) and, in the edition, indicates in a footnote the first occurrence of the change with the remark “*et passim*”. The recurring use of *shes* instead of *zhes* after a final -s, which is not completely consistent, remains mentioned in a footnote through the whole text.

As for graphic particularities, they only concern the transcription of Sanskrit words: the *bindu* stands for the *anusvāra*; the so-called ‘inverted i’ (*gi gu log*) is sometimes found on top of a combination of characters with a subscribed ‘r’ to render the Sanskrit ‘ṛ’<sup>11</sup> (but a normal ‘i’ is also found); a double vowel ‘o’ (*naro*) is used for the Sanskrit ‘au’<sup>12</sup>, and a double vowel ‘e’ (*greng bu*) for the

10 See for instance p.380.

11 See for instance p.482, l.16 the transcription of the words ‘saṃskṛta’ and ‘mr̥du’.

12 See p.499, l.12 and 501, l.14 the transcription of the name ‘Kaunḍinya’.

Sanskrit ‘ai’; a subscribed small ‘a’ (*a chung*) is used to lengthen the vowel<sup>13</sup>. The Tibetan fonts used in that edition, created by Tony Duff, allow combinations of letters which are not normally found in Tibetan, but occasionally appear in the rendering of Sanskrit words. Curiously, the combination, not found in modern Tibetan, of a superscripted ‘s’ with certain consonants (for instance in ‘*sdzogs*’, ‘*sdzob*’) appears to be problematic, and such words have been written by hand.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike many Tibetan texts that display a hierarchical organization of the subject matter into sections and sub-sections (*sa bcad*), ZhP follows the Indian style of commentary, quoting the original text before explaining it. The text is divided into five chapters. The numbering of the folios starts from 1 for each chapter. In MATHES’ edition the root verses of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* have been indented and numbered and the passages in prose of the *vyākhyā* appear in bold letters. They can easily be located as the corresponding chapter and verse numbers very conveniently appear in the heading. As no further line-break or divisions into paragraphs has been introduced by the editor, the lay-out remains as dense as in traditional *dpe cha* editions, and one regrets, in pages filled with an average of 26 lines of continuous text, the absence of line numbers which would have simplified the localization and reference to passages. The edited text could have been better spaced out, for instance, by indenting the numerous quotations made from gZhon nu dpal from various other sources. One finds, among others, quotations from the *Madhyāntavibhāga* (*dbus dang mtha’ rnam par ’byed pa*), *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (*Lang kar gshes pa*), *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (*chos dang chos nyid rnam par ’byed pa*), etc., but also from many Tibetan commentaries.<sup>15</sup> MATHES mentions in his introduction with regard to these numerous quotations:

My editing policy has been to compare gZhon nu dpal’s quotations with the Derge and Peking editions of the Kanjur and Tanjur, but to leave the original reading wherever

13 See p.4, l.9 the transcription of ‘Maitrīpa’.

14 See for instance p.9 n.4, p.14 n.5

15 Moreover, as Takasaki notes in his study on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā* itself includes numerous quotations from other treatises expounding the *tathāgatagarbha* theory: “The number of Scriptures utilized in the *Ratna*. {i.e. *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*} is more than 20 and quotations or altered scriptural passages seem to occupy more than one third of the whole text.” (Jikido Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra) Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatabarbhā Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, Rome, 1966: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (Serie Orientale Roma XXXIII), p. 32). For a list of the main sources see pp. 32–33.

possible. The variant readings were minimal, however. Exceptions are Maitrīpa's *Tattvadaśaka* and Sahajavajra's commentary on it. [...] gZhon nu dpal's quotations of the *Tattvadaśakaṭīkā* make much more sense and thus contribute considerably to an intelligible reading. (p. xv)

Assuming that for the purpose of this comparison all the verses have been identified, it would have been useful for the reader if MATHES had supplied the corresponding reference. It would also have been convenient to establish a list of text-names appearing in ZhP and to mark them in the edition by using a distinct font format, and, possibly, to provide an index for their occurrence.

The same remark holds as far as names of Indian and Tibetan thinkers are concerned. MATHES 2002:90 mentions that at the beginning of his commentary (ZhP 38–78) gZhon nu dpal quotes from Saraha (8th/9th cent.), Maitrīpa, Koṭali (11th cent.), Dam pa Sangs rgyas (b. 1117), sGam po pa, Phag mo gru pa (1110–1170), Bla ma Zhang (1128–1189), 'Bri gung pa 'Jig rten gsum mgon (1143–1217), lCe sgom pa (13th cent.) and the Third Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje. One also finds in ZhP the names of Naropa (for instance ZhP 487,14), Seng ge bzang po (ZhP 484,3), Candragomin (ZhP 487,22), Dharmakīrti (ZhP 568,18), Dig-nāga (ZhP 484,17), Kamalaśīla (ZhP 460,18), and many others. It is regrettable that such information is not easily accessible to the reader, especially as some of the sources gZhon nu dpal quotes or discusses are not currently available, as for instance the commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* by gTsang nag pa (brTson 'grus seng ge), quoted in ZhP 567,19.<sup>16</sup>

These remarks do not in the least undermine the fact that MATHES has accomplished a great task by critically editing gZhon nu dpal's lengthy commentary – one probably has to do such an editing work oneself before one can fully appreciate the enormous amount of effort and time that such an enterprise requires. Moreover, MATHES' edition appears as a very precise and careful work, devoid of typo or transcription mistakes.<sup>17</sup>

16 gZhon nu dpal mentions the existence of this commentary in ZhP 4,23. This work is also listed by A khu Shes rab rgya mtsho under the title '*rGyud bla ma'i ḥikka*' (*Tho yig* 11472).

17 I have not had access to copies of the sources used for the edition for comparative purpose, but the only minor typos I spotted concern footnote numbering, as on p.14 n.6 (see line 23), and p.468, n.1 (see line 5), p.488, l.7 and n.2 (should be n.1).

This worthy publication should thus retain the attention of those interested in the Tibetan discussions on the questions raised in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and one certainly looks forward for the study of this text in MATHES' forthcoming habilitation thesis.<sup>18</sup>

Pascale Hugon

- 18 To be published in the first half of 2006 in David Jackson's series Contributions to Tibetan Studies under the title: A Hidden Path to the Buddha Within: 'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal's Mahāmudrā Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga in Comparison with Related Exegetical traditions.

