

Buchanzeigen = Notices = Notes

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CLÉMENTIN-OJHA, Catherine: *Le trident sur le palais. Une cabale anti-vishnouite dans un royaume hindou à l'époque coloniale*. Paris: Presses de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient. 1999. (Monographies, 186.) ISBN 2 85539 786-3. 365 pp.

There have always been debates in India. There are references to debates as early as the Vedic texts, even though there are reasons to think that these debates were not quite what they became in classical times. In classical debates participants argued with each other and tried to convince each other—or at least those who witnessed the event. Debates would often oppose Buddhists philosophers to various representatives of Brahmanical thinking, and the outcome of these debates might bring rewards and advantages to the winner, and to the religious current he represented.

Debates did not disappear with the eclipse of Buddhism. Indeed, debates went on right into modern times. The book under review is about a debate that never took place, but that occupied the minds of many for several years.

Maharaja Ramsingh II of Jaipur had turned away from the preferred religion of his ancestors, Vishnuism, and converted to Shivaism. Then, in the sixties of the nineteenth century, great pressure was brought to bear on the dignitaries of the different sects of Vishnuism to abandon their heretical beliefs and practices. Many of them complied, some preferred exile. But these events were accompanied by accusations and attempted justifications. Theoretically a debate should have decided the issue. For understandable reasons, the different parties had grave misgivings about the conditions of debate proposed by their opponents. As a result the debate never took place, but enough had been said (and has been preserved) to make for a very interesting story.

An impressive amount of material about this almost forgotten episode in the history of Jaipur has been collected and admirably presented in this book, in which the different characters in this drama come alive, most of them not otherwise known (even though Dayanand Sarasvati, who was not yet famous at that time, plays a small role in it). In spite of the complexity of the situation described and the numerous persons that somehow or other participated in the confrontation, the resulting book is a pleasure to read.

Johannes Bronkhorst

FISCH, Jörg: *Tödliche Rituale. Die indische Witwenverbrennung und andere Formen der Totenfolge*. Frankfurt/New York: Campus. 1998. ISBN: 3-593-36096-9. 576 pp.

This book is no doubt the most complete survey of widow burning in India available at present. It does not however limit itself to widow burning, nor to India. It places this phenomenon in the wider context of what the author calls *Totenfolge*, "following the dead", which is confined neither to widows nor to India: cases of men and women following their superiors into death are known from all over the world. After an introduction, part I presents in some 180 pages what is known about *Totenfolge* outside India. The remainder of the book contains a very detailed, and admirably balanced, discussion of widow burning in India. Tables, maps, two extensive bibliographies, a discussion of the available sources and secondary literature as well as an index conclude the volume. This book is an absolute must for anyone seriously interested in the phenomena it deals with.

Johannes Bronkhorst