

published by the pupils of Baron Victor Rosen, to celebrate the completion of the twenty-fifth year of his professorship. Many of the citations there given are from works which exist only in manuscript, but the notice of 'Omar given by al-Qazvīnī (who died in A.D. 1283, only 160 years after 'Omar), in his *Āthāru'l-bilād* (ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 318, s.v. Nishāpūr), has been generally accessible to European scholars for the last fifty years, though it seems hitherto to have remained unused by the "Omarians," to whom (with all due deference to Mr. le Gallienne) we venture to recommend a study not only of Persian but of Arabic.

E. G. B.

LE MAHAVASTU, texte sanscrit, publié pour la première fois par E'MILE SENART. Threë volumes, 8vo. (Paris, 1882, 1890, 1897. Printed at the National Press by Government authority for the Société Asiatique.)

It is a very great pleasure to be able to congratulate the Government of France, the French Asiatic Society, and, above all, the distinguished author himself, on the completion of this splendid work.

It is not only the *editio princeps* of a book of historical importance, it is the first critical edition we have of any one of the numerous books which may be conveniently grouped together as Buddhist Sanskrit literature.

The book calls itself, at the end (3. 461), "the Śrī Mahāvastu Avadāna according to the recension of the Lokottara-vādins belonging to the Ārya-mahā-sāṅghikas"; and just after the beginning (at 1. 2) it adds that this school was of the Madhya Desa, or Middle Country.

This refers, of course, not to the district so called by the Brahmins, but to the district further down the valley of the Ganges to the south-east so called by Buddhists. The book is not, therefore, a Northern text, except in the very limited sense that the six modern MSS. on which the edition is based come, all of them, from Nepāl. It claims to have been composed, and originally used, in

a district which may be roughly described as stretching from Lucknow eastward to the western confines of Bengal Proper—a district it would be quite inaccurate to describe either as Northern or as Southern. It is simply the Central district, the one from which *all* the old Buddhist texts, whether Pāli or Sanskrit, claim alike to come. The book itself, the dialect used in it, the opinions it puts forth, the legends its authors believed in, are Central—or East-Central, if it be desirable to distinguish between the two districts called Central by the Brahmins and the Buddhists respectively.

And should it be asked : “Why be so clear and emphatic on a point on which all are agreed ?” the answer is that the use of the terms Northern and Southern as applied, not to the MSS., but to the books themselves, or the Buddhism they teach, is the source of most serious misunderstanding. It inevitably leads careless writers to suppose that we have, historically, to consider two Buddhisms, and two only, one manufactured in Nepāl, the other in Ceylon. Now this is admittedly wrong. What we have to consider is Buddhism varying through slight degrees, as the centuries pass by, in almost every book. We may call it one, or we may call it many. What is quite certain is that it is not two. And the most useful distinction to emphasize is not the ambiguous and misleading geographical one, derived from the places where the MSS. come from ; nor even, though that would be better, the linguistic one : it is the chronological one.

The work under review, for instance, the Sublime Story, as we might freely render its title, stands in much closer relationship to the Suttas, preserved in Pāli, the modern MSS. of which come from Burma, or Siam, or Ceylon, than it does to the “Lotus of the Good Law,” written in Sanskrit, the MSS. of which come from Nepāl. Like the Pāli books, it belongs to what the later Sanskrit books call the “Lesser Vehicle,” the Hīna Yāna. The views of its authors on ethics, on religion, on philosophy, come in, of course, only incidentally. They are here writing, not on

Buddhism, but on the life-history of the Buddha. But wherever those views do appear, they differ only slightly from the corresponding views in the Pāli, whereas they differ altogether, move in a quite different circle, from the views which dominate the Lotus, belonging as it does to the so-called Greater Vehicle—the Mahā Yāna.

The Sublime Story that it tells is not so much the actual life in this world of the founder of Buddhism, nor the history of the faith. It is the story of how the truth was won; how the Buddha became a Buddha. Practically it amounts to a life of Gotama from the remote ages when he was Dīpankara down to the thirty-sixth year of his life as Gotama. It contains the same episodes and the same story as we have in the Pāli in the Nidāna, the Introduction to the Commentary on the Jātaka Stories. The difference is that the Jātaka commentator, knowing that the Jātakas will all come on afterwards in the book, gives the story of Gotama's life from the time when he lived as Dīpankara, many ages ago, down to a few weeks after his attainment of Buddhahood, without introducing any Jātaka tales. The author of the Sublime Story, having no such reserve, introduces his Jātaka stories as he goes along, after the episode which they are supposed to illustrate. As only a certain number of the 550 Jātakas are connected with those episodes in the actual life chosen for insertion in the Sublime Story, the others are naturally omitted; and some not included in the collection of 550 are also added. It would be very interesting to have a table of the episodes in the Mahā Vastu beginning with Dīpankara, with a column of parallel passages; and, separately, a table of the Jātakas and legends inserted, by way of illustration, between those episodes, with a similar column for parallel passages.

The task of arranging the Buddhist books known to us in chronological order must remain difficult, and uncertain in its results, until the whole of at least the older texts are made accessible to scholars. We shall then be able to compare the various ideas expressed, and in many instances to say, with practical certainty, that this or that is developed

out of the other. The clearest cases will be those in which a name, or a technical term, comes into play. We shall then have a kind of chronological table of ideas according to which the books, in which they occur, will group themselves.

Take such a case, for instance, as the mention of Sukhāvātī (Mahā Vastu, 3. 462). We may conclude for certain that the colophon in which it occurs must have been written after the time when the belief in the existence of this particular heaven, as a blessed state to which all men should aspire, had become part of Buddhism. It is admittedly not part of the belief of the early Buddhists. We don't know exactly when or where or how the idea arose. But any passage in which it is put forth bears thereby a mark of its comparative date.

The Vedas, in Buddhist belief, were once three, and afterwards became four by the addition of the Atharva. Any mention of the Atharva as a Veda, or any clear mention of four Vedas, is another mark. The Jhānas, once four, became five, by the division of the second into two. The mention of five Jhānas is another mark. The Sankhāras, once defined vaguely and generally by a well-known standing phrase, were afterwards defined categorically by a long list of the predispositions included in the term. The presence of this list is another mark. Professor Windisch, in his masterly monograph on Māra, has given us at least one, if not two, others; the theories of the Pāramitās, of the Ten Bhūmis, of the Four Truths, of the Eightfold Path, of the Four Visions (that appeared to the Bodhisat), and many other ideas, give us similar marks.

Such marks differ, of course, in value, and have the advantage (or is it a disadvantage?) of requiring for their critical use a somewhat serious and detailed study of Buddhistic ideas. But where they are found in any one book in sufficient number, all pointing towards the same conclusion, that conclusion may be accepted as a working hypothesis.

Judging from some of the above and other similar marks

—and there is almost nothing else, except the dialect, to judge by—the Mahā Vastu seems to be of about the same age as the Milinda, and older than any other Sanskrit Buddhist text—there are only three or four—of which we know enough to venture on comparisons. The only possible exception is the Lalita Vistara, which deals with the same portion of Gotama's last life on earth as is dealt with in the Mahā Vastu, but omits almost all reference to his previous births. It would be very interesting to have a detailed comparison of these two early Sanskrit Buddhist works on so nearly the same subject.

One of the most curious details in the present work is the fact that it claims to belong to the Vinaya. We have always hitherto understood Vinaya to mean “discipline, rules of the Order, Canon Law.” There is nothing of that kind here. When the Buddhist Community had lasted long enough for the want of a life of its founder to become felt, the further question arose as to which of the three Piṭakas it should be included in. The decision, at least among the Lokottara-vādins, was to put it, as a kind of preliminary note, to the Vinaya, the rules of the Order—on the ground, no doubt, that it gave an explanation of how the Order came to be founded. But it is odd to find that these three bulky volumes are the introduction only to a work, now lost, on a quite different subject.

We have only had space to hint at one or two of the numerous problems of historical importance and interest raised by a perusal of the Mahā Vastu. Fortunately, the distinguished scholar to whom we owe this admirable edition promises us a supplementary volume, in which such questions can be discussed at greater length and at greater leisure than they could have been in the present publication. It is needless to say with what eagerness all Indianists will look forward to such a series of essays coming from such a hand. Meanwhile this great work, with its magnificent index and its numerous careful notes, will be the daily manual and guide of those scholars engaged in the edition of the other Buddhist Sanskrit works now being brought out

by scholars in all parts of Europe through the enlightened generosity of the St. Petersburg Academy. We put our questions to scholars now, not so much by personal intercourse, as by consulting the works which give us their considered opinions. And it is sober truth to say of the author of a work like this, as Sonadaṇḍa, the Brahmin, said of Gotama (*saṅghī gaṇi gaṇācariyo*), that "students come across the continent, through many lands, to put questions to him, the teacher of the teachers of many."

T. W. RHYS DAVIDS.

MODERN PERSIAN COLLOQUIAL GRAMMAR, containing a short Grammar, Dialogues, and Extracts from Nāsir-ed-Dīn Shāh's Diaries, Tales, etc., and a Vocabulary, by Dr. FRITZ ROSEN. pp. xvi, 400. (Luzac, 1898.)

In spite of the considerable number of Persian grammars which have appeared in England, there was, till the appearance of the work now under notice, not one which could be unreservedly recommended to travellers and others whose chief object was to familiarize themselves with the spoken tongue, and at the same time to obtain a knowledge of the character. The best work of the kind will long be M. A. de Biberstein Kazimirski's *Dialogues français-persans et vocabulaire français-persan*, which, however, though a masterpiece of originality and a mine of information, is rather bulky for a traveller who is compelled by the exigencies of the Persian *chāpār* to reduce his worldly possessions to a minimum. The various modern Persian plays of Mīrzā Ja'far Qāraja-dāghī, too, though invaluable as a mirror of colloquial Persian, presuppose some knowledge of the classical language; while Finn's useful little *Vademecum* is designed for those who have neither leisure nor inclination to go deeply into the matter, or to trouble themselves about the written character.

Dr. Rosen, who enjoys a high reputation as a Persian scholar and linguist, published his *Neupersischer Sprachführer* at Leipzig in 1890, and of that work the volume before