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Temple consecration rituals in ancient India: Text and archaeology

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STELLINGEN

I

There is a clear difference between relics, burial deposits and consecration deposits. One should therefore take care to distinguish between these terms and avoid using them interchangeably as is often the case even in scientific publications.

See Chapter 1.2 of this dissertation.

II

In the study of ancient rituals texts and archaeological material are equally important in providing answers. Interdisciplinary studies and exchange between the researchers working in different fields should therefore be encouraged.

III

The scarcity of the material traces of construction rituals on the Indian subcontinent compared to those from Sri Lanka and several regions of Southeast Asia is due partly to the differences in the histories of India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and partly to the approach of the authorities in charge. It cannot be taken as a proof that the construction rituals in ancient India were carried out on a much smaller scale than in the neighbouring regions.

See Chapter 7.5 of this dissertation.

IV

Contrary to common usage, the Sanskrit term *garbhagṛha* indicating the innermost chamber of a Hindu temple should not be translated as ‘womb-chamber’ (see, for instance, Kramrisch 1946: 162, Michell 1988: 62, Blurton 1992: 234). Such a translation is not supported by evidence and is misleading. The term should be translated, perhaps less spectacularly but more correctly, as ‘inner chamber’ or ‘innermost chamber’.

V

The ancient Sanskrit architectural texts (the so-called Vāstu- and Śilpaśāstras) are not purely theoretical treatises which formed a part of the curriculum of the nobility, but technical manuals meant to be put into practice.

VI

The striking similarity in style, vocabulary and ritual details between the Buddhist architectural text *Mañjuśrīvāstuvīdyāśāstra* dating from ca. 10th – 12th century AD and written in Sri Lanka, and several South Indian Hindu treatises on architecture dating from roughly the same period suggests the closeness of Hinduism and Buddhism in certain regions and periods of time. This closeness is also implied by the mutual similarity of Hindu and Buddhist consecration deposits dating from the 8th to the 14th century AD and originating from the same region.

See Chapter 7.4 of this dissertation.

VII

One should try to refrain, at least in scientific publications, from offering far-fetched interpretations of a Hindu temple and Hindu temple rituals and presenting them as the general or current view (see Kramrisch 1946, Michell 1988). It should be remembered that the understanding of a temple and temple rituals by a highly educated priest is different from that of an average believer. The latter is usually much more ‘down to earth’.

VIII

The presence of varying but still remarkably similar construction rituals, of which the archaeological finds give evidence may be seen as yet another characterizing feature of the ‘Sanskrit cosmopolis’ as defined by Pollock (1996).

IX

The distribution of consecration deposits reflecting prescripts contained in Indian architectural and ritual texts over the regions of Southeast Asia is rather patchy. It would be interesting to see whether the same distribution pattern is repeated with regard to other archaeological remains, such as temple architecture and images of deities.

X

The difference between unusual and normal lies in our own cultural background. A multi-armed goddess adorned with a garland of skulls is considered a strange sight, while a long-haired figure of undefined gender and endowed with a pair of wings seems perfectly all right.

XI

Learning to speak a 'dead' language such as Sanskrit is a perfect, although not a very orthodox, tool for the study of the ancient text in question.

XII

Sadly enough, due to the lack of finances, the beings most interested in the ancient palm-leaf manuscripts nowadays are the termites.

XIII

Een onderzoek zonder liefde voor je vakgebied is een onderzoek.