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The Dating of the Historical Buddha. Die Datierung des Historischen Buddha, Part I (Symposien Zur Buddhismus Forschung, IV. I), Edited by Heinz Bechert. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991, XV: 525 pp.

Although many dates have been proposed in the past for the death of the historical Buddha, the two most commonly accepted now are 543/44 and 483/86 B. C.; the first by most Buddhists and the second by most modern scholars. Both dates are based originally on the accounts provided by the ancient chronicles of Sri Lanka, *Dipavaṃsa* and *Mahāvāṃsa*; and the cornerstone is the date of Aśoka. Actually, the second date is a corrected version of the first after a critical examination of the sources. Most modern scholars have found the second date, based on the so-called "corrected long chronology," unproblematic.

But in 1988 a Symposium was held under the sponsorship of the Akademie der Wissenschaften (Academy of Sciences) in Hedemunden near Göttingen to open the question again. The volume under review originates from this Symposium. Fifty-two scholars contributed to the Symposium. Of these fifty-two, there were thirty from Germany, including sixteen from various seminars at Göttingen, and four non-European guests who probably happened to be there. Among other European participants there were two each from France and Norway, and one each from Sweden, Austria, Belgium, and U. K. There were five from Japan, three from U. S. A. and one each from Israel and Nepal.

The present volume is the first of two (or three?) parts of the publication of the results of this Symposium. In the present volume there are thirty-eight papers and an Appendix consisting of an extract from Lamotte's *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*. Seven of the papers are in German and two in French. The rest are in English. Apart from the Introductory Essay by the editor of the volume, Heinz Bechert, the number of 37 papers have been arranged thematically under eight sections as below:

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Although the body of the volume consists of thirty-eight papers, its spirit is represented by three papers of Heinz Bechert (pp. 1-21; 222-236; 329-343), the first of which is the Introductory Essay. It is the result of an idea nourished by him for

more than ten years. In a paper read at the conference seminar of Indological studies in Stockholm in 1980, he formulated the view that the “corrected long chronology” cannot be upheld any longer. A summary of his view was also presented at the 2nd conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies at Nalanda in January, 1980. Bechert’s paper was subsequently published, thanks to the encouragement he received for its publication from Eggermont (Bechert, 1983: 29-36).

In his Introductory Essay, Bechert opens with a statement:

There is *no* information on the dates of the historical Buddha, the founder of the Buddhist religion, which has been unanimously handed down by *all* major Buddhist traditions and *universally* accepted by scholars, nor have scholars been in a position to arrive at a *general agreement* concerning this question. (italics mine) (p. 1).

But two pages later, having recognized that this “corrected long chronology” has served as something of a bed-rock for Indian chronology, Bechert appears to take a second look at this categorical statement and remarks that,

Notwithstanding a very small number of exceptions, we meet with this “corrected long chronology” in practically *all* the modern handbooks of Indian history, world history, history of religion etc. published in Western countries or in South Asia during the last hundred years. *It is generally presented as an established fact..*” (italics mine) (p. 3)

As part of the “Concluding Remarks” of his Essay, Bechert accepts:

We cannot provide the historians with a new chronology of the Buddha’s dates which would be approved by all or by most experts. We may state that this symposium has at least made it clear that the “general agreement among scholars that Buddha died within a few years of 480 B. C.” has become a thing of the past. The chronology is only one of the several chronological hypotheses, the validity of which was argued for in one contribution only. The majority of the contributors—including those who have analysed indirect evidence—suppose that the date of the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa occurred considerably later than 480 B. C. but they could not agree how much later the event would be dated. (italics mine) (p. 20)

Referring to “the origins of chronological information and its use by historian, (sic ?)” and citing “examples of the fabrication of chronological constructions and synchronism” in the case of Sri Lanka, Bechert finally ends the “Concluding Remarks” of his Essay:

It seems that, as a consequence of our findings, various assumptions concerning the now generally accepted Indian chronology before Alexander's campaign should be reconsidered. This refers to historical dates as well as to those reflecting cultural developments and literary works, and *it includes the problem of the chronological relations between early Indian and early Greek philosophy and their possible mutual influence which will be discussed by W. Halbfass in his contribution to the second volume.*" (italics mine) (p. 21)

In his second contribution, evaluating the Indian tradition, Bechert states (pp. 234-235):

From the material available for evaluation the conclusion seems to force itself on us that there is *no substantial evidence* at all in favour of the corrected long chronology, while *there are many arguments which point to a later date on the Nirvāṇa.*

If this is the case, the question arises whether the short chronology should be accepted, because it is clearly the earliest Buddhist Chronological Tradition. However, one hundred years, A. B. is a suspiciously round figure. In an earlier contribution, I argued that *it is not impossible* that Aśoka decided to have his consecration performed after his conversion to Buddhism on the auspicious occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the *Nirvāṇa*, which happened to fall within this period of time. However, I think that *this suggestion is unlikely in the highest degree*, because we have no evidence for the handing down of exact chronological information in India before the Maurya period, and because Aśoka was not yet deeply influenced by Buddhism at the time of his consecration. Therefore, this date of one hundred years handed down in the relevant Indian texts in (sic.) *nothing but another round figure without historical value.*

Thus, the *only way* to fix the date of the *Nirvāṇa* seems to be the use of *indirect evidence*. Possible methods have been listed in the introductory essay, and they have been made use of by several co-authors of this volume. From all available evidence, it seems to be that the *Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha must have taken place sometime before Alexander's Indian campaign.* However, I doubt that the information which has been handed down would allow us to determine, with any reasonable degree of certainty, the decade or two decades in which this event took place. On the other hand, the indirect evidence which has been presented during the Symposium has given sufficient reason to suppose that the Buddha's *Parinirvāṇa* must be dated considerably later than calculated by the corrected long chronology, viz., in

the 4th century and probably after the first decade of that century. I would like to refer in particular to the reasons put forward by Wilhelm Halbfass, Hermann Kuke, and Georg Von Simson. From these, the conclusion one must come to is that Buddhism was still a rather young movement at the time of Aśoka. As I suggested above, the existence of Buddhist mythological lore at the time of Aśoka by no means disproves these arguments, because such beliefs originate very soon after the demise of Indian religious leaders even today, and this is to be expected all the more for that early period. And in fact, von Simson's conclusions are corroborated by the evaluation of the archaeological material presented by Herbert Härtel. (*italics mine*)

In the last paragraph of the "Conclusion" of his paper, Bechert states:

Some authors, e. g. H.W. Schumann and K. R. Norman, do not reflect my views correctly when they cite me as favouring the short chronology, i.e. ca. 368 B. C. *In 1982 I expressed the view "that any suggestions of this kind (i. e. accepting the short chronology) may be premature. Later on I clearly stated that there is no basis for accepting the short chronology as a historical date.*

In the *Preprints* I have suggested that "the Buddha's *Nirvāna* may be dated between about 80 and 130 years before Aśoka's coronation, i. e. not a very long time before Alexander's Indian campaign, i. e. between ca. 400 B. C. and ca. 350 B. C. *After the symposium, I still subscribe to this supposition. I would think that a somewhat later date is not inconceivable, but I consider Alexander's Indian campaign as the definitive terminus ante quem. According to my understanding, the symposium has not produced unambiguous evidence which would allow us to make a more exact statement. It also remains rather unlikely that such evidence will be discovered in the foreseeable future.* (*italics mine*) (p. 236)

To restate, it is clear from the excerpts quoted above that Bechert would firstly, reject all the theories of early dates which include not only the dead ones, but also, and particularly, the very live ones, i. e. not only 544/43 B. C., but the "corrected" version of it, 486/483 B. C., which incidentally finds support in the "Dotted Record" too. Secondly, he does not find any basis for accepting the "short" chronology as a historical date. Thirdly, he is convinced that "the *parinirvāna* of the Buddha must have taken place sometime before Alexander's campaign, i. e. between ca. 400 and ca. 350 B. C. and, while "a somewhat later date is not inconceivable," he considers Alexander's Indian campaign as the "definitive terminus ante quem."

Whether or not the Symposium succeeded in its objective, Heinz Bechert deserves full credit for planning and conducting it. I only wish he had a few more

scholars from among those who believed in the traditional dates, even if it meant a less homogeneous Symposium. I cannot help also noticing a hidden Eurocentric motivation in Bechert's endeavour, indicated by the obsession with Alexander and the miracle of Greek civilization.

Time and space will not permit me to cover fully all the contributions. I will have to be selective. But the conclusions arrived at by some, and the circumstantial ambiance created by others, do not help confirm Bechert's claim that the Symposium, declared the "corrected" long chronology "as a thing of the past."

Leaving aside two papers in the last section (VIII) dealing with the Axial Age theory, which appear to me as unnecessary inclusions, it is clear by and large that the nine papers of Sections V to VII, dealing with the East Asian and Central Asian traditions on the one hand and those of the late Indian and Tibetan Buddhism on the other (see pp. 399, 409-10, 415, 437, 447-48, 456, 485, 489, 499), are either uncommitted or support one or the other versions of long, and longer, chronologies. Chinese sources favour not only the so-call "corrected" and "uncorrected" versions of the long chronology, but even provide extended versions of it. Franke has noted that Chinese secular histories have, as a rule, never mentioned the Buddha and his presumed dates. This is above all true for the annalistic histories (p. 447). Durt has stated that "the Korean and Japanese Buddhist sources do not contain any original material for objective dating of the life of the Buddha" (p. 485). And Grönbold remarks that "In the Buddhist Tantric texts there was neither inclination nor necessity to calculate the date of the historical Buddha." (p. 399).

Section IV (pp. 329-84) deals with the spread of the Theravāda chronology and its implication. The first of its five papers is again contributed by Bechert. He states:

As we have seen, the Theravāda chronology is attested for the first time in an inscription of the first century B. C. By the time of the composition of the Mahāvamsa, it was already accepted as the Buddhist chronology in Sri Lanka. It came to be used as the Buddhist chronology by all followers of the Theravāda tradition, including Buddhists in Burma, Thailand, and other Asian countries. However, it was also known and used by Buddhists of other denominations, as mentioned in the Introductory Essay (above, pp. 16 f). There it has also been mentioned that the Theravada chronology was recommended by the World Fellowship of Buddhists for acceptance as the standard Buddhist chronology.

The chronology of the "Dotted Record," which has been referred to in various sections of this volume, should also be mentioned in this context, because there is no doubt that it originated from the Theravāda tradition. If calculated in the Christian era, a few years either side of 485 B. C. is recorded in this document for the Buddha's *Parinirvāṇa*. This means that it differs from the Theravāda chronology by approximately 60 years. The explanation of this difference remains disputed. As long as Wickremasinghe's chrono-

logical hypothesis of an earlier Buddha era of 483 B. C. in Sri Lanka was widely accepted, it was easy to bring the Theravāda chronology and that of the "Dotted Record" into agreement. After this hypothesis was disproved (see above, p. 223), it became more difficult to explain the correspondence of the "corrected long chronology" and the "Dotted Record". (p. 341)

However, Bechert appears more interested in the chronological miscalculation in the Sri Lankan sources and the debate over apparent traces of short chronology in *Dīpavaṃsa*, thereby emphasizing only the negative aspects of the basis for the Theravāda chronology. In this connection he has given special importance to questions raised recently by W. H. de Zoysa of Sri Lanka, who proposes 384 B. C. as the "correct Buddhist era." A detailed presentation of his theory is made by Keifer Pulz (pp. 363-77).

Mallebrein examines the evidence of the Bodh Gayā inscription, which indicates continued use of the Theravāda chronology in India. Mahes Raj Pant provides information on the date of the historical Buddha according to Nepalese tradition, and states:

From this it is quite clear that to find out the year of the *parinirvāṇa* we have to subtract 1811 from the given Śaka year 1194. In doing so, we get the result (1194-1811=617) that the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* took place 617 years before Śaka Saṃvat started. As Śaka Saṃvat starts 78 years later than the Christian era, to get the year of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* in the Western calendar one should subtract 78 from 617, which gives the result of 539 B. C. This, of course, is five years earlier than the date generally accepted. (p. 361)

Out of the remaining three sections of the volume, number I has four papers dealing with the history of research on the date of the Buddha. In the first, Hartmann, analysing studies published in Western languages (pp. 27-45), remarks on the contributions of Indian scholars:

Not all their contributions are marked by the methods of critical research, and it is difficult at time to clearly differentiate articles which can be still be considered scholarly from those which are either unscientific or written from the standpoint of a believer be he a Jain or Buddhist. There are some which are better not taken too seriously, but generally it can be observed that the treatment of questions of Buddhist history rather differs from the way in which some Indian scholars deal with other historical and semihistorical periods and events of their own past like, for instance, the age of the Ṛgveda or the Mahābhārata war. Again, this can be easily explained by the fact that Buddhism is absent from India and that Buddhist matter seem to have little direct bearing on Hindu culture and the Hindu conception of its own past. Therefore, no urgent need is felt to search for indications which might help

to date back to time immemorial events connected with the establishment of Buddhism. (p. 27)

It is true that the problem of the date of the Buddha has not in India attracted the required attention it deserves. But, in my opinion, this is not because "Buddhist matters seem to have little direct bearing on Hindu culture and the Hindu conception of its own past." This Hindu-Buddhist dichotomy in life and culture of India is uncalled for. Also, I think Hartmann's statement about Indian scholarship is unfair on the whole. This not only shows bias in the author but also a selection, wittingly or unwittingly, of some of those studies which do not belong in the category of critical scholarship in India itself, and which are generally not taken seriously. It is like creating one's straw man and shooting at it, examples of which are noticed elsewhere in the volume, too.

The quality of Gustav Roth's survey of Hindi writings (pp. 49-54) is marred by his selection of authors. It is unfortunate that while he devotes five out of six pages of his paper to one scholar, Pandit Bhagvad Datta, who was respected for his knowledge of the Aryasamaj, he omits to mention even the names of many other historians whose writings in Hindi were marked by critical and balanced scholarship and which found acceptance in modern scholarship.

Braun's short contribution (pp. 45-48) is made with the limited objective "to clear up some misunderstandings about the *Mālāṅkāravatthu* and to outline its position in the history of Burmese Buddhism." I wish a fuller treatment of the history of Burmese research and acceptance of the so-called Theravāda chronology had been presented to the seminar. Similarly, it is surprising that Hajime Nakamura too, contributes an equally short paper (pp. 55-57) to give an account of Japanese research on the problem, which hardly does justice to Japanese scholarship. In a work like the present volume the subjects and authors could be assigned and planned better, and provided a fuller, more representative and thorough coverage than has been made available to readers.

Section II, which consists of the largest number (ten) of papers, deals with the problem in the contexts of Indian cultural history. The first paper of this section is by Harbert Härtel, on "The Archaeological Research on Buddhist Sites." This paper is important not only because its author is the only archaeologist in the group but also because his paper has influenced five or six scholars to change their minds on the issue. Härtel "scouts" through the ancient Buddhist sites of Kuśinagara, Bodh Gayā, Rājagṛha, Sārnāth, Kauśāmbī, Śrāvastī, Vaiśālī, Lumbinī, and Kapilavastu (Tilaurākot and Piprahwā-Ganwariā) and doubts "if all the places where the Buddha lived, or which he is said to have visited, existed already in the 6th century B. C." Härtel adds, "as the argumentation is open to attack, I wish to express my firm conviction that the shorter dating of the NBP will finally prove correct. From this point of view and under the consideration that we possibly have to date the first settlement of one or the other place in question later than the sixth century B. C., then the dating of the Buddha in the fifth to the fourth century B.C."

is quite probable' (italics mine) (p. 80).

As noted, Härtel was the only archaeologist representing the discipline in the Seminar. None of the archaeologists, it may be noted, who have actually worked at the above-mentioned sites and reported their results, and even others who have first hand experience of scientific excavations and explorations in the relevant regions of Bihar, U. P. and Nepal, upon whose work-results Härtel has based his study, are not quite so sure as he is. And, to the best of my knowledge, the only site in India Härtel himself worked was Sonkh near Mathura, which is just outside the core relevant region under discussion. I have been fortunate in not only personally visiting almost all the relevant sites the regions of eastern U.P., Bihar and Nepal but also in actually directing and participating in the scientific excavations of such sites in the region as of Kumrahār (Pātaliputra), Vaiśālī, Rājghāt (Vārānasi), Prahlādpur and Ayodhyā, and I have directed a village-to-village archaeological survey of some of the eastern districts of U.P. On the basis of my knowledge and experience, I am afraid I cannot support the conclusion arrived at by Härtel.

Now, among the sites listed by Härtel, two important ones, Sārnāth and Kuśinagar, have not yet been scientifically excavated to the natural soil. At Lumbinī also it is not clear whether the excavations down to the natural soil were scientifically done in any considerable area. At Bodh Gayā, where, as Härtel has noted, no trenches could be dug "at the temple itself to determine the older use of this place," excavations were recently (1981-85) carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India at a mound adjacent to the temple known as Taradih. It is proven now that this region was "a very old settlement area reaching back to chalolithic times"—as Härtel admits (p. 64).

Again, of the remaining sites listed by him, Härtel appears to be incorrect in his information, with the result that his following statement regarding Rājagrha is misleading:

Quite a surprise lies in the fact that an old age for Rājagrha could not be proved anywhere. The existing radiocarbon dates lie at 245 ± 105 , 260 ± 100 , 265 ± 105 for habitation and defense. The wall from New Rājagrha, allegedly of Ajātaśatru's time has been built between 400 and 300 B. C. according to all calculations. As it remains unexplained whether some of the associated wares found again together with the NBP have an earlier origin, the time of the rise of Rājagrha can best be pushed to 500 B. C. after these results. Whatever may come, Rājagrha belongs basically to the younger ancient cities of India. (p. 65)

But the carbon dates to which Härtel has referred belong to the samples from period III-A at the New Rājagrha excavated by R. Singh of Archaeological Survey of India and *not* from the Old Rājagrha. Härtel has mixed up the old and the new in Rājagrha.

Regarding Kauśāmbī he admits that:

Archeologists agree that the early habitation levels are dating back to a period *just prior* to the advent of the Northern Black Polished Ware, i. e. at the time when the fortifications were built." (*italics mine*) (pp. 66-67)

But after referring to the "heated debate" on the dating of the fortification, he adds:

In the light of the pottery and associated finds a date not earlier than sixth century B. C. is in all probability very near to the truth." (p. 67)

According to Härtel, the same is the case with Śrāvastī, which he says is in all probability not older than the sixth century B. C.

In regard to Vaiśālī, he agrees that:

The pottery situation above the natural soil is quite similar to the one reported from Śrāvastī, both starting in the NBP period with stray finds of Late specimens of PGW. (pp. 68-69)

But, unlike his statement for Śrāvastī date, he states that,

The date of this earliest habitation at Vaiśālī is to be fixed rather around 500 B. C. (pp. 68-69).

Lastly, discussing the identity of ancient Kapilavastu, Härtel takes into account the results of work of the sites of Tilaurakot and Piprahwa-Ganwariā. But, as in the case of other sites, here, too, he does not agree with the excavator's dating of its earliest period, as 800-600 B. C. In his opinion, "here also nothing is perceptible which could have allowed a dating of Ganwariā older than 500 B. C." In this case Härtel's comparison of "an interesting circular wall" found in the first occupational layers" at Ganwariā with a similar wall in his own excavation at Sonkh (Mathura district), which is to be dated according to him in the earliest Mauryan time, is hardly justified. How casual Härtel is in making such comparisons based on similarities may be noted from his estimates of dating of Śrāvastī and Vaiśālī (pp. 68-69). The negative picture presented by Härtel is essentially based on an understanding of the NBP dates which is not correct, or is at best only partial. He has only conveniently selected the lower limit of the NBP chronology, the early phase of which would belong in the 7th-6th centuries B. C. and the late phase would begin in the 4th-3rd century B. C. His observation that "the majority prefers lower dates" is misleading.

Most of the participants in the Seminar who, to the best of my information, were not archaeologists, appear to have taken Härtel's analysis for granted. Thus, apart from Bechert in his Introductory Essay (p. 14) and again in his second paper

(p. 235), Von Simson (p. 99), Kulke (p. 107) in Section II and Bareau (p. 221) in Section III, were lured by it to give up their earlier views. The space does not permit me to go into further details of the archaeological evidence here, but I will discuss them soon elsewhere.

In his paper entitled "Der Zeitgeschichtliche Hintergrund der Entstehung des Buddhismus und seine Bedeutung für die Datierungsfrage," Von Simson concludes (English Summary):

One of the possible ways of approaching the question of the date of the Buddha is the analysis of the economic and cultural milieu in which his religious movement started. The origin of the Buddhist Sangha is in this paper seen in connection with the emergence of cities in the Central Ganges Basin. Decisive of the development of early Buddhism seems to have been its support by rich landowners, merchants, financiers, physicians, etc. who belonged to an urban milieu where rational thinking had got the upper hand over brahmanical ritualism and where discussions among competing movements not bound by tradition were usual.

There is some reason for the assumption that the Buddhists did not belong to the earliest among these new groups bound to an urban milieu. Especially the Buddha's concept of the Middle Way between the more radical attitudes of the earlier period. If this is true, the Buddha should not be placed at the beginning, but some time after the emergence of cities in the area. In the light of archaeological evidence (see H. Härtel's contribution to this volume above, (pp. 61-89)), this would suggest a rather late date for the founder of the new religion. (p. 99)

Concluding his paper on the significance of the Buddha's date for the history of North India, Kuke states:

Another interesting result of these deliberations would be the realization that, according to a later date of Buddha, the process of state formation, beginning with the rise of the mahājanapada kingdoms in the early fifth century and leading to the emergence of the Maurya empire in the late fourth century, occurred within one and a half centuries, certainly a tremendously short period for such a far reaching socio-political development. In view of this discernment it may be necessary to reassess the possible impact of Alexander's short appearance in Northwestern India on this last stage of state formation in early India, leading from kingdom to empire.

Buddha's Nirvāṇa may not be any longer the "earliest certain date of Indian history." However, it would be wrong to conclude that therefore Alexander's Indian campaign has to be regarded as India's earliest historical date, as often assumed mainly by European historians. The earliest historical date of Indian history now certainly is the conquest of Gandhara and the

Indus valley by Darius around 520 B. C., a date which, so far, we had been used to associate with the life of Buddha and the rise of Magadha. (p. 107)

There are two papers in this section which deal with the date of Mahāvīra and his synchronism with the Buddha. Mette observes in his paper that "all attempts to throw light on the beginnings of Jainism have to rely on early Buddhist literature" and that "Buddhist remarks which appear to refer to Jainism, possibly reach back in the past, to a time when the person of Mahāvīra had not yet reached its later importance" (p. 137). Eggermont states that "Mahāvīra died in the month of Phalgunā 252 B. C. in the 15th year of Aśoka's reign at the age of 62 years" (p. 151). This is in keeping with 261 B. C. as the date of the Buddha's death, given by him in his paper in Section III (pp. 237-251). Both the Buddha and Mahāvīra would thus be contemporary to Aśoka! This is sufficient to give a shock treatment to those who believe in the earlier dates; no wonder Bechert received encouragement in the initial stages of his pursuit of the problem, as acknowledged by him (p. 7).

There is an interesting long paper in this section (pp. 152-82) by Gananath Obeyesekere which deals with the myth, history and numerology in the Buddhist Chronicles. While I am not inclined to attach significance to numerology in the discussion—for I believe *arka-jyotiṣa* is a foreign gift to India late enough for our consideration of the date of the Buddha—I also do not subscribe to the philosophy of suspicion suggested by Obeyesekere. But I would like to draw attention to his conclusion, which is worth consideration:

Once the chronological imperative in the Theravāda Buddhist construction of history is formed, it motivates the later recording of historical events. They too must be given chronological specificity. As Bechert points out, this concern with chronological specificity, generally co-exists with accuracy from the reign of Devānampiyatissa onwards. Prior to this reign there is chronological specificity but not accuracy as I noted in respect of the post-parinirvāna events. Even in the period after Devānampiyatissa, where records were, for whatever reason, not available, chronological specificity was retained but not accuracy. This is where Dhātusena's patriline comes in: since accurate records were not available, the gap in chronology was filled by category numbers. Rhetorical devices took the place of chronological accuracy, but these rhetorical devices did not violate the norm of specificity. That the *Mahāvamsa* concern with chronological specificity was successful is very clear from the fact that modern historians have been seduced into thinking that chronological specificity indicates accuracy. (p. 182)

The last three papers in this section, by Von Hinüber, Lienhard and Halbfass, all dealing with the indirect evidence of linguistics and literature—Indian and

Greek—throw interesting light on the discussion and help create an ambiance hostile to the long chronology.

Although Hinüber admits that “languages do not develop at an any predictable let alone regular pace,” and “it is impossible to use linguistic evidence alone in solving chronological problems” (p. 183), he concludes his paper with the statement:

Here, we are confronted with the result of a complicated linguistic process, the working of which cannot be observed directly. Starting from the normalized language of the Buddhist religious literature, we have to work our way back almost exclusively by help of the inner evidence deduced from the surviving texts to uncover the beginning of this process during the lifetime of the Buddha. The duration of this gradual development, which at the same time is a function of space and time, can hardly be estimated, if only approximately. Therefore, the inscriptions of Aśoka stand as the first datable testimony of Middle Indic as long as the date of the Buddha has yet to be found. (pp. 192-93)

Discussing the indirect evidence of classical poetry, Lienhard concludes:

Applying the Long Chronology, we would place early kāvya as it was known to these Buddhist authors somewhere between 580 and 530 B. C., which definitely seems to lie too far back in time. A better, more probable date can be concluded by applying a “shorter chronology” and fixing Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa, as André Baret does, around 400 B. C. with a margin of about twenty years added or deducted. This would move early kāvya to the period of ca. 500-450 B. C. and allow us, in a much more convincing way than the Long Chronology does, to accommodate the beginnings and the development of a new poetry which, from the latter part of the Late Vedic period onward, lead to the formation of early kāvya.” (p. 196)

Halbfass examines the early Indian references to the Greeks and the first Western reference to Buddhism and asks,

But how do we account for Megasthenes’ own apparent silence concerning Buddhism, in view of the fact that he visited Pāṭalipura and should, if we accept the traditions about this city, have noticed conspicuous Buddhist monuments and, moreover, have heard about Buddhist life and thought? Dihle says that for Megasthenes the Buddhists were still too insignificant to be mentioned separately. However, this would be rather strange—‘*chose étrange*’, as Henri de Lubac notes—if, indeed, Buddhism had already been alive and growing, and enjoying the patronage of various rulers in this area,

for a period of two centuries. Could it really have been that inconspicuous and insignificant that Megasthenes either overlooked it or provided that he heard about it, chose not to mention it all? Of course, we are not entirely certain that he never mentioned it; and at any rate, the value of such an argumentum a silentio (sic) would be limited. But the fact itself that the extant fragments do not provide clear references is remarkable. *Although it does not allow us to draw precise and definitive chronological conclusions, it could be used for a cumulative argumentation in favour of a later date for the Buddha. At the very least, it would seem to be easily compatible with the assumption that Buddhism was not yet two centuries old at the time of Megasthenes, that it had not yet produced distinctive monuments and institutions, and that, instead, it was still rather young and not yet fully visible when Megasthenes visited the city of Pāṭalipura around 300 B. C. (italics mine) (pp. 207-8)*

Since Halbfass himself acknowledges the weaknesses in his speculation I need not discuss his points further here, except to note that if by “distinctive monuments” those in durable material like stone are meant, the question of their existence before Aśoka, does not arise, a fact well known to art historians and archaeologists.

Section III includes seven papers. We have already referred to papers of Bechert and Eggermont. But one may note with surprise that André Bareau, who had so clearly expounded and supported the so-called “corrected” long chronology in his earlier contributions, and agreeing even in his present contribution to this volume that “the Aśokan inscriptions of Rumindei and Nigli Sagar prove that, in 250 B. C. Buddhist mythology and devotion had reached a very high stage of development,” has taken for granted the archaeological evidence as put forth by Härtel and states without a question:

However, the recent and important results of the archeological work in the Gangetic region prove, as an eminent professor has clearly shown during the symposium, that the Bhagavant’s life could not have begun much before the middle of the 5th century B. C. (italics mine)

Therefore, if we set the date of the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa around 400 B. C., within a margin of about twenty years added or deducted, we are probably not very far from the historical truth. (italics mine) (p. 221)

In perhaps the longest paper of the volume (43 pages) Akira Hirakawa makes a detailed evaluation of the sources on the date of the Buddha and states in the end that:

Most of the sources in the Tripitaka claim that King Aśoka lived about one hundred years after the death of the Buddha. It is safe to surmise that among the Buddhists in India, the theory that the Buddha's death occurred on hundred years before the time of King Aśoka was predominant. This dating is supported also from the perspective of the development of the Sangha, and we can conclude that this theory is the most reasonable. (p. 295)

In his second short contribution to the volume Hajime Nakamura concludes that the Buddha was born in 463 B. C. and died in 383 B. C.

K. R. Norman examines various aspects of evidence related to the dates of both the Jina and the Buddha and sets out to conclude systematically as follows:

1. All Buddhist schools agree in their accounts of the First Council in 1 A. B.

2. All Buddhists schools agree, in general terms, in their accounts of the heresy of the Vajjis (Vrjjis) and the holding of the Second Council (except for the number of heresies). The Mahāsāṅghikas also include the story in their *Vinaya*, so they cannot have been heretics. All sources date the event 100 A. B., but this is unlikely. The accounts in the Pali chronicles and the *Samantapāsādikā* state that all the theras concerned had seen the Buddha. If this is true, then the council can scarcely have been later than 65 A. B.

3. The Vajjis were presumably expelled from the order, and we hear no more about them. Their expulsion was confused by the Theravādins with a later schism, that of the Mahāsāṅghikas. That schism was caused by Mahādeva's five points. Some Northern accounts date from this schism c. 137 A. B. and connect the occurrence with the Nandas. This must have been c. 325 B. C. If we assume that the number 137 means 37 (i.e. and indeterminate small number, say 20-25) years after the date of the Second Council, then we get a date for the Buddha of c. 410 B. C.

4. If we assume that the list of five *Vinaya-dharmas* is a list of teachers and pupils, rather than a list of successive chiefs of the *Vinaya*, and take an average of 30 years for their difference in ages, then we get a date of c. 415 B. C. for the death of the Buddha.

5. The Jain tradition gives a date of 155 years after the death of Mahāvira for the coronation of Candragupta, which we can date c. 320 B. C. We have a firm connection between Sthūlabhadra and Candragupta's immediate predecessor Nanda, and we have a date of 170 years after the death of Mahāvira for the death of Sthūlabhadra's predecessor, the sixth Jain patriarch Bhadrabāhu. He therefore died about fifteen years after

Candragupta's coronation. By taking an average figure of 15 years for each of the six patriarchs we can date the death of Mahāvira 75 years before the coronation of Candragupta, i. e. c. 395 B. C.

6. We shall probably not be far out if we assume that both Mahāvira the Jina and Gotama the Buddha died within the period of ten years either side of 400 B. C. (pp. 311-12)

Finally in the last contribution of section III, Gen'ichi Yamazaki discuss the list of Patriarchs in the Northern and Southern legends, and on the basis of his study fixes "the Nirvāna year at around 486 B. C.," with the rider that "as this is a rough calculation errors of a few years would naturally be unavoidable" (p. 320), and states in his Appendix A, that "the period of two centuries from the days of Bimbisāra to the building of the Maurya empire was not long but quite natural" (p. 325).

It is not surprising to note several linguistic inadvertences, spelling and grammatical mistakes in a book of such length and with such a diverse background of contributors. To give only a few examples: p. 37, "intends to *established*" for "intends to *establish*"; p.44. "He *than* demonstrates" for "*then* demonstrates"; p. 71, "Kapilavastu should, therefore, be sought not very *farm* from it" for "Kapilavastu should, therefore, be sought not very *far* from it"; p. 80, "the scouting through the Buddhist sites has, *rouse* doubt in our mind" for "the scouting through the Buddhist sites has, *roused* doubt in our mind"; p. 325, line 2; "in" for "is"; p.361, line 18, "earlier" for "later."

Lastly, I must again express my appreciation for Heinz Bechert's continued endeavour for almost a decade to rediscover and settle, if possible, for good, the date of the historical Buddha. Even if he has not been able to deliver the goods he has certainly succeeded in forcing others to give second thoughts to their convictions.

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