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## REZENSIONEN / COMPTES RENDUS / REVIEWS

LUDVIK, Catherine: *Sarasvatī: Riverine Goddess of Knowledge; from the manuscript-carrying Vīṇā-player to the weapon-wielding defender of the Dharma*. Leiden/Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2007. ISBN 978-90-04-15814-6; xviii, 374 S., Ill. (Brill's Indological Library 27).

LUDVIK, Catherine: *Recontextualizing the Praises of a Goddess: From the Harivaṁśa to Yijing's Chinese Translation of the Sutra of Golden Light*. Kyoto: Scuola Italiana di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 2006. ISBN-13: 978-4-900793-24-8; viii, 115 S., 2 plates (Italian School of East Asian Studies Occasional Papers 10).

Catherine Ludvik's *Sarasvatī* is a substantial volume, both in the scope of its survey, and the detail of its investigations. She has set herself the task, she tells us (p. 2) to attempt an "in-depth, comprehensive, and critical treatment of [her] sources in their respective historical, political, and social contexts." She denies that she has limited herself to "collecting textual references to Sarasvatī and listing her images," and states that she has "studied, for instance, developing themes/stories by examining their sources and each of their retellings within groups of texts." She goes on to claim that she has "addressed why and how changes in the conceptualization of Sarasvatī occur, as evidenced by textual and art historical material, in the socio-politico-historical circumstances of the times." If indeed this is what she had been able to accomplish, it would have been splendid. But regrettably, despite the many merits of her work, and they are many, it appears in the end rather more like a vast collection of sources, with individual comments offered, sometimes in great detail, but little overall narrative, nor cohesive fusion to hold the work together, other than its obvious central focus on the figure of Sarasvatī. At the end, CL has advanced little from the basic assertions she makes at the outset concerning the nature or rather natures of the goddess.

The volume is divided into four parts: Vedic Sarasvatī, Epic and Puranic Sarasvatī, Buddhist Sarasvatī, and Images of Sarasvatī. Each section is then subdivided, such that there is a chapter on the *Ṛgveda*, another on the *Atharva*, *Yajur*, and finally on the Brāhmaṇas. The second part treats the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas, the third deals in detail with Sarasvatī in the *Suvarṇa-bhāsottama-sūtra*, while the fourth on images is divided between early images (treated by site) and images related to the depictions of the goddess in one

Chinese translation of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama-sūtra*. Each part ends with a “Retrospective,” which however is generally an overview of the main topics treated immediately previously, with little or no added interpretation. Each Part is divided, as noted above, but very often subdivided again and again, such as we have Part One on the Vedic Sarasvatī, Chapter One Ṛgveda, 5. Inspired Thought, 5.3 Common Imagery, and 5.3.2 Water. Water moreover appears also as the second general subdivision of the chapter on the *Ṛgveda*, itself further subdivided. Such classification and data collection leads one to the suspicion that this is investigation by exhaustive listing.

The overall structure of the book, and the section on the Vedic Sarasvatī in particular, put one in mind of the style of scholarship favored by Jan Gonda. I am afraid that I am not qualified to judge the quality of the treatment of Vedic materials here and whether the author is able to bring to bear the same mastery that Gonda did, but since she makes frequent acknowledgment of the assistance received from Werner Knobl, this should stand as some testimony to philological reliability. This approach, however, leaves one with the impression that while the book is of great use as a resource, it will not contribute significantly to thematic or conceptual studies, or goddesses, for instance, or gender, or indeed river worship, music, or even wisdom.

The author’s passion for her subject is evident, and she makes no attempt to hide it. But sometimes this leads to rather odd formulations such as the following on p. 108:

Given that the function of these myths is to glorify the various *tīrtha* alongside this most sacred of rivers, surely their authors intended to show Sarasvatī in the best possible light, despite the overwhelming power of the sages’ *tapas*. It is regrettable, however, that they inadvertently robbed her of her discrimination, and hence knowledge, over which she presides, in the process. Had she fearlessly refused to involve herself in Viśvāmitra’s petty jealousy and been cursed at the outset, her glory and grandeur would not have been reduced.

The author apparently knows what the authors intended and did not intend, and even what they overlooked.

In her treatment of the Purāṇas the author makes frequent reference to the published work and private communications of Yuko Yokochi, which allows her to investigate these sources more critically than they have been treated before. Not being an art historian, I am unable to judge the author’s treatment of this material in the final section of the book. A few points caught my attention, however. On p. 242 the author cites an inscription from a seventh century bronze as follows: *om devadharmoyam nivuya kulikasya / isiyā (?) gaṇiyo (?) (nī?)*/. She

then cites the translation of U.P. Shah as follows: “Om. This is the pious gift of the *gaṇiṇi* (nun) Isiyā.” There are absolutely no further remarks made about this inscription, but one instantly sees that, at the very least, several words are missing entirely: what is *nivuya kulikasya*? And what is the word *devadharmā*? Perhaps the author has not noticed that in the immediately preceding inscription treated by Shah he remarks on the donor as belonging to the Nivṛti-kula, the assumption being, I suppose, although I do not know if Shah states this explicitly since I lack access to his book, that the name of the family was transmitted in Middle Indic in what is otherwise more-or-less Sanskrit. Odd however is the expression *devadharmā*, for which we expect obviously *deyadharmā*.<sup>1</sup> In her discussion of dating of textual sources in relation to images, on p. 257, the author makes one of the classic moves one must assiduously avoid; following a rather careful and nuanced discussion of dating, she concludes with a “reasonable assumption.” By the next paragraph, this has become a fixed pivot for her dating. On p. 266, the author demonstrates her understanding of the important principle that texts may be inspired by imagery, and not only the other way around. Overall, she detects in her investigations of the imagery two traditions, one of the goddess as associated with knowledge, the other with music, distinct traditions, which from around the eighth century are merged.

When it comes to the author’s treatment of her Buddhist materials, with which I am much more familiar, there are some critical issues which it seems important to me to raise. It is important to stress that this book, and the monograph *Recontextualizing*, to be treated below, constitute a good contribution to studies on the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama-sūtra*. Nevertheless, especially seen in light of the detail which is devoted to the treatment of Vedic materials, the Buddhist sources are sometimes treated rather more loosely. My remarks may seem nit-picking to some, but I believe they highlight the author’s tendency to sometimes land either in great detail or in vast generalization, with little mediation between the two poles. When she writes, for instance (p. 148): “The three Chinese renderings of the sutra [...] reflect not only different stages or different versions in the development of the Sanskrit original, but also, within the Sarasvatī chapter, the evolving conceptualization of the Indian Buddhist Sarasvatī,” in making a generalization she avoids a particularly difficult problem. If the different Chi-

1 This is an interesting variant discussed since Lüders, for which see recently Oskar von Hinüber, *Die Palola Śāhis: Ihre Steininschriften, Inschriften auf Bronzen, Handschriftenkolophone und Schutzzauber. Materialien zur Geschichte von Gilgit und Chilas*. Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies 5 [Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2004]: 177ff.

nese translations represent in their differences not different stages of development of the text but indeed different versions, then they most certainly cannot reflect “the evolving conceptualization of the Indian Buddhist Sarasvatī.” In this respect, in her attempt to demonstrate this evolution the author sometimes ends up in arguments that look suspiciously circular.

Although the author’s discussion of herbs and bathing in the sūtra, and the background perhaps behind this, is interesting, it also suffers from the above-mentioned tension between detail and generalization. She offers (pp. 309–315), on the one hand, an annotated listing of the herbs mentioned in various versions of the sūtra, but in her discussion (p. 172) offers without the least critical word, the idea that the so-called Great Bath in Mohenjo-Daro “most probably had purificatory, and hence religious, functions,” referring only to publications of 1931 and 1938. I do not know what the Great Bath meant to the people of Mohenjo-Daro, but I feel confident in asserting that no one else does either. It is only by *assuming* a continuity with later Hindu culture that one can *verify* that very continuity with reference to the Indus Valley Civilization. This is, to be blunt, utterly pointless. Further in the same section the author speaks about the connections of Buddhism with Indian medicine. Here, unfortunately, it appears she may have been somewhat misled by Zysk, to whose work she refers. In any event, it does not appear to have been at all the case that, as she writes (p. 175), infirmaries in Buddhist monasteries cared for the laity, much less that “care for the sick became a monastic function.”

Occasionally the author’s translations seem stuck in a literalist mode, as in (p. 171): “You should protect the supreme sutra king (i.e., the *Sutra of Golden Light*), not permit that [it] disappear, and always obtain that [it] be propagated.” How about “[...] make sure it does not disappear, and always enable it to be propagated”? In a number of other places, she seems to have misunderstood the Chinese she translates. On p. 218, quoting the Chinese 說如是法，施與辯才不可思議，得福無量，諸發心者，速趣菩提， the author translates: “By expounding such a Law, you grant inconceivable eloquence-talent, [causing them] to attain countless blessings, all their heart’s desires, and swift awakening.” She has not noticed the important place here of 者, which requires us to understand: “All who make [this?] aspiration will quickly attain bodhi.” The term 發心 is a very common one meaning “make the aspiration [to awakening],” rendering Sanskrit *cittotpāda*. Other examples of seemingly ignorance of Buddhist usages appear on p. 163, where 諸有智者 is rendered “those who know,” when it plainly means “those who have wisdom.” On p. 195, 端正 in the expression 身體端正 does not mean “her body is proper” (which itself is not meaningful

to me) but rather “her body is beautiful,” nor does 身色端嚴 mean “her bodily aspect is proper and majestic,” but once again simply “her body is beautiful.” On p. 199, referring to a passage on p. 196-197 in which the goddess is compared to a lion, she suggests: “The imagery of the lion, furthermore, is associated with the warrior-ruler, for whom success is victory in battle. The goddess, whose memory ‘excels,’ in that it is ‘most victorious’ (*zuisheng* 最勝), perhaps implying that it leads to military success, is therefore herself appropriately described as an eight-armed, weapon-bearing warrior [...]” This, I am afraid, is highly unlikely: 最勝 almost certainly means nothing more than ‘superior’. This is an example of the ways in which what may seem like a trivial, indeed nit-picking, philological point can lead one astray if improperly understood. At the very least, it would be incumbent on the author in such a case to argue for her reading, rather than simply assert it.

*Recontextualizing the Praises of a Goddess* was published one year earlier than the longer monograph, and focuses exclusively on the *Harivaṃśa* hymn preserved in Yijing’s translation of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama*. Although there is inevitably some overlap with the treatment in the more comprehensive book, the monograph primarily consists of materials not covered in the other work. Here, each verse shared by the *Harivaṃśa* and Yijing’s translation is studied line by line. This is extremely helpful, and any future study of the sūtra will certainly profit greatly from this work. That said, some of the author’s tendencies evident in the larger work appear here as well. This includes somewhat wild and unjustified (I would say unjustifiable) connections, such as her attempts (p. 21) to connect the goddess in the *Harivaṃśa* to the Vedic Sarasvatī. After speaking of the epithets applied to her, the author states that when she is characterized as *brahmacāriṇī* this

connects her with the stage of life (*brahmacarya*) devoted to the study of the Vedas. The *brahman*, furthermore, is specifically the priest of the *Atharva Veda*, and the neuter noun *brahman* is the magical spell of this Veda. In the *brahmacarya* state, moreover, celibacy is enjoined upon the student, which is the vow to be taken by the goddess in the *Harivaṃśa* [...], who will remain a virgin.

I frankly cannot imagine how this is relevant here. Since when does classical Sanskrit *brahmacarya* necessarily evoke Vedic *brahman*? Earlier on the same page, in discussing epithets, the author points out that the names Kātyāyanī and Kauśikī “are endowed with Vedic resonance.” This may be, but what additional help is provided by taking the time to note that “Kātyāyana was also the name of a famous grammarian”? Only rarely, however, may one wonder about a render-

ing from Sanskrit. In verse 22 (p. 65) we find *tvayā vyāptam idaṃ sarvaṃ / jagat sthāvarajamgamam //* rendered “By you, this All, / the [living] world that either stands still or moves about, is pervaded.” Is it not simply “You pervade this whole world of the animate and inanimate”?

A final point concerns the secondary sources upon which the author draws for her study. Out of the extensive bibliography listed in the larger volume, the author refers to a mere ten works in Japanese, of which six are dictionaries, one a Japanese grammatical gloss on the Chinese sūtra (*kakikudashi* ‘translation’), one an art catalogue, one a book-length study of the sūtra (rarely referred to), and one an article (putatively by the author herself). If indeed she can read Japanese (and it appears that she lives in Japan), one might expect that she could have made use of the extensive Japanese scholarship on her central theme and related topics. In particular, for example, Iyanaga Nobumi has published extensively (also in French) on the transformation undergone by Indian deities in their journey eastward to Japan. Since this is a theme of interest to the author, covered according to her in the unpublished portion of her doctoral thesis, one might have expected to find even here some reference to the fact that such themes have been studied before. This absence reinforces the impression that the book should be seen more as a collection of sources than as a synthetic analysis or interpretative summa.

Despite what seem to be rather harsh critiques of these two works offered above, it should be stressed that in fact both are very valuable, and should be consulted by anyone with an interest in Sarasvatī, needless to say, but also Indian goddesses, and of course the *Suvarṇabhāsottama* in particular, and Chinese translations of Indian texts more generally as well. Whether those with broader interest in the Vedas, Epics, Purāṇas or Indian art history would be likely to be as well rewarded seems slightly less clear.

Jonathan Silk

MIDDENDORF, Ulrike, *Resexualizing the Desexualized: The Language of Desire and Erotic Love in the Classic of Odes*. Pisa and Roma: Accademia Editoriale, 2007. ISSN: 0392-4866. 281 S.

*Resexualizing the Desexualized* is a study of the language of desire and erotic love in the form of euphemism in the *Classic of Odes*. The author’s goal is to

survey the basic vocabulary of eroticism in the poems through an analysis of metaphor and metonymy. It is an ambitious task because of the remoteness of the texts in both time and social horizon. The author admits that many of her conclusions are ultimately unverifiable, but nevertheless introduces a depth of erudition that is rare and astonishing. Ulrike Middendorf's background includes linguistics, psycho-linguistics, cognitive psychology, not to mention the fields of sinology, mythology, and Chinese and European literature and literary criticism. Parts of the book will dazzle readers; other parts will leave them unable to judge, the conclusions being simply too speculative. But the author's effort is always well argued and fascinatingly presented.

The first chapter presents a range of sources not usually found in one book, which can only betoken many years of study and preparation. Concerning the *Classic of Poetry*, the author describes the early process of moralization and historicization of the poems, but insists on the existence of other readings that gave rise to a double hermeneutics. She assembles evidence to support the notion of euphemism as the core hermeneutic method for unraveling the meaning of the poems. She defines euphemism based on a wide range of sources as referring in general to the preservation of self-image and the manipulation of language in a way that implies more than can be explicitly stated. There is a subversion of "optimal relevance" by way of "consciously hiding difficult matter", the purpose of which is to avoid offending and to maintain respect for the audience (p. 35). There is also an aesthetic goal, which is particularly important in the case of sexual content, which as readers know have been studiously and at times preposterously controlled in traditionally accepted interpretations of the *Classic of Odes*, hence Middendorf's "resexualization" of the poems. Her tools of analysis consist of a set of metaphors and metonymies that name thematic domains and image schemas, all of which refer to recurring patterns of human experience in the poems. She uses capital letters to label the themes, e.g., LOVE IS A NATURAL FORCE (FLOOD, WIND, STORM, FIRE, p. 46), which act as rubrics under which she organizes her interpretations.

I found the second chapter to be the most useful. It is an expert study of the "literal and figurative language of sexuality in early and early medieval Chinese literature" (p. 8). The author focuses on medical and sexological texts from Ma-wangdui, from which she compiles a glossary at the end of the book. Many of the terms in those texts are problematic (such as the interesting word *zui* 最, for example, as a possible reference to the penis as an organ that "accumulates" and "assembles", as in sucking in the woman's essence during intercourse). She breaks the language down into categories such as genitals, intercourse, and emo-



tional states. For her core categories, she employs the set of conceptual metaphors and metonymies referred to above, such as THE PENIS IS A MALE ANIMAL, which contains sub-metaphors such as THE PENIS IS A BULL or a CROWING COCK. Thus we have *mu* 牡, ‘the male’, ‘bull’, *tu* 兔, ‘male rabbit’, or *mingxiong* 鳴雄, ‘crowing cock’, or MALE AQUATIC ANIMAL, e.g., *gui* 龜, ‘turtle’ (pp. 67–68). In contrast, THE FEMALE GENITALS ARE AN ANIMAL includes MAMMALS, *ma* 馬, ‘horse’, and *pin* 牝, ‘the female animal’, or THE FEMALE GENITALS ARE PLANTS, such as the internal depths of the vagina in the Mawangdui called *gu shi* 穀實, ‘grain fruit’, and *mai chi* 麥齒, ‘wheat teeth’ (p. 79).

Once Middendorf establishes the basic semantic range and categories, she then proceeds to the *Classic of Odes* itself. Her goal is to provide a framework for the “anatomy of desire and sexual love in the *Odes*”, for which she uses ten subheadings: 1) beautyscapes and sexual exemplars, 2) gazes, fetishes, fantasies, and dreams, 3) waters, wombs, and desirous women, 4) fruit trees, creepers, and plant pickers, 5) mountains, tall trees, and phallic icons, 6) weapon bearers and carriage drivers, 7) rapers, hunters, and hungry men, 8) margins, spaces, and places, 9) atmospheric phenomena and weather, and 10) homoerotics (some of which derives from Friedrich Bischoff’s controversial but also fascinating work *The Songs of the Orchis Tower*). I will provide a sampling of interpretations to give an idea of the results of Middendorf’s research, some of which are quite plausible, some as I said extremely speculative.

For the famous first poem of the “Airs”, for example, the images of picking and plucking seem, as Middendorf says, to euphemize sexual activity, as in “to the left, to the right, one plucks them” 左右芼之 (p. 127). But linking the verb *mao* 芼 etymologically to a technical term in the Mawangdui text *Yangsheng fang* 養生方 meaning to “remove the (pubic) hair” is perhaps an interpretation that not many scholars will be willing to accept – the author herself only suggests such a meaning. In general, I take such interpretations as the sign of a bold willingness that does no harm. Some of her examples allow for what we might call a safe translation followed by a daring one, as in “Oho! Beautiful he is, / the clear forehead is lovely”, for which her “tentative” translation is “Oho! Enrapturing beauty, / his essence rises to abundance”. Here, for example, she takes the line 清揚婉兮 and rereads *qing* 清 as *jing* 精, essence (though I am representing only a small portion of her interpretation of this poem; *Mao* 106, p. 136). These examples fall under the rubric of “beautyscapes and sexual exemplars”. Under “waters, wombs, and desirous women”, we have “The bream has a red tail, / the royal chamber is like a blazing fire”, 魴魚真尾, 王室如燬 (*Mao*

10), for which Middendorf plays off the sexual metaphors in the first two stanzas of the poem, “water, branches, stems, shoots, and hunger”, to derive an interpretation of the “fish, fishtail, chamber, and fire” in the third stanza. Thus “red (erect) tail” is “the male member in arousal”, whereas “royal chamber” is the “bedroom, or vaginal channel, like ‘blazing fire’” (p. 155). Under “fruit trees, creepers, and plant pickers”, we have “Ge tan” 葛覃 (*Mao* 2), “The Kudzu Expands”, which portrays successful intercourse: “How the kudzu expands, / it spreads into the middle of the valley, / its leaves are luxuriant. / The yellow birds go flying, / they settle on the lush trees, / they sing in unison” (p. 168). Though sexual imagery is missing from the surface, the author thinks we can take the spread into the middle of the valley as the “happiness of consummation”, which is mirrored by the birds singing. The birds flying, moreover, is like “merry lovemaking,” as based on the metonymic concept of “MOTION FOR SEXUAL INTERCOURSE” that she has introduced previously. Under the category of “atmospheric phenomena and weather”, we have the poem “Feng yu” 風雨, “Wind and Rain” (*Mao* 90), which perhaps alludes to unsuccessful intercourse and even dysfunction. The traditional interpretation is that the poem expresses longing for a noble man who remains true even in an age of disorder. The re-sexualized version of the poem offers the notion that the opening lines, “Wind and rain are cold, / the cock crows wildly,” or the words of the second stanza, “Wind and rain are chill, / the cock crows [in a] frenzy” (where I have added the words in brackets) refer to “stimulation and ejaculation” that are cold and chilled. The cold wind further refers to arousal without involvement, as in the situation of the man aroused but the woman sad or unreceptive. Cold rain perhaps even refers to “cold semen”, which signifies infertility and inability to impregnate the woman (pp. 185–186). The above is a mere digest of examples found in the book; again, my representation fails to evoke the complexity of Middendorf’s exegesis.

A further test of the author’s approach might be to apply her methods to other works such as the *Lyrics of Chu*, *Chu ci* 楚辭, or even the erotic poetry of someone like Li Shangyin 李商隱. First, are there commonalities between the *Odes* and the *Lyrics of Chu*, and, second, what is the history of euphemism between the *Odes* and someone like Li Shangyin? The study of euphemism in general in China is a rich field (it is also tied to reticence, a highly cultivated type of behavior that still rules in the realm of sex and love in China). Even the supposedly most explicit texts like the art of the bedchamber evoke an overarching atmosphere of sex as ritualized behavior, which is one of the most fascinating features of these ancient texts. Ritualization is a form of euphemism and

sublimation. Sex as ritualized act constitutes sex as something controlled and choreographed, such that cultured sex always prevails over animal nature. The texts are written from a male perspective, with the man being the main one who is in control. This also means that he is the one who easily loses control, as literature and history for centuries of Chinese history have portrayed. I would still like to understand more about the context of the bedchamber texts (who read them; how widespread were they) and why they did not end up side-by-side with texts like the *Book of Rites*, which they parallel in so many ways. Perhaps the simple answer is that using things like euphemism to ritualize or domesticate the so-called animal nature of sex cannot achieve the desired effect. Sexual desire, no matter what culture or era, represents a zone of taboo, where taboo and prohibition (as in rules against illicit sex) are simply no more than attempts to control the uncontrollable.

Keith McMahon

SHITAO. *Aufgezeichnete Worte des Mönchs Bittermelone zur Malerei*. Aus dem Chinesischen übersetzt und kommentiert von Marc Nürnberger. Mit 20 Abbildungen ausgewählt und erläutert von Helmut Brinker. Mainz: Dietrich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2009. ISBN 978-3-87162-068-3. 270 S.

Shitao ("Stein-Woge") ist einer der dreissig Künstlernamen des um 1630 geborenen chinesischen Malers. Die Themen des bildnerischen Gestaltens hat der Sinologe Dr. Marc Nürnberger übersetzt und kommentiert. Die Erläuterungen zu den zwanzig Abbildungen stammen von Professor Dr. Helmut Brinker, dem bekannten Experten für chinesische und japanische Malerei und Plastik.

*Kugua Heshang huayulu* – "Aufgezeichnete Worte des Mönchs Bittermelone zur Malerei" sind in achtzehn Absätze gegliedert:

1. Absatz: "Der All-Eine-Pinselstrich". Shitao definiert diesen Begriff minutiös; er postuliert: "Die Menschen vermögen mit Hilfe des All-Einen-Pinselstrichs alles zu umfassen, selbst restlos das, was jenseits der äussersten Ränder der Welt liegt." Shitao veranschaulicht die zahllosen Positionen beziehungsweise Bewegungen des Pinselstrichs und fasst sie in Richtlinien.
2. Absatz: Hier wird dargelegt, dass die Alten die Richtlinien nicht als gegeben betrachteten und sie zu ihrer Zeit auch nicht davon eingeschränkt wurden. Der Kommentar hält die paradoxe Formulierung von Shitao fest: "Diese Richtlinie ist keine Richtlinie – wird schlechthin zu meiner Richtlinie."

3. Absatz: "Verändern und Wandeln". Da ist zu lesen: "Wenn jemand sagt, die Höchsten Menschen haben keine Richtlinien, dann heisst das nicht, dass keine gegeben sind. Wenn eine Richtlinie als Nicht-Richtlinie gegeben ist, dann ist sie die höchste Richtlinie."
4. Absatz: "In Hochachtung empfangen". Der Autor veranschaulicht seine Überlegungen wiederum folgendermassen: "Der All-Eine-Pinselstrich birgt die Zehntausend Dinge in seiner Mitte. Das Bild empfängt die Tusche, die Tusche empfängt den Pinsel, der Pinsel empfängt das Handgelenk, das Handgelenk empfängt das Herz."
5. Absatz. Dieser Absatz unterscheidet zwischen der Tuschebeherrschung und der Pinselbeherrschung und betont, dass die Kombination der beiden den wahren Künstler charakterisiert.
6. Absatz: "Das Bewegen des Handgelenks". Die Pinselbeherrschung wird hier erweitert. Da heisst es: "Wenn das Handgelenk leer und himmlisch wirksam ist, dann können die Bilder Wendungen nehmen und sich verändern."
7. Absatz: "Das Himmlisch-Irdische Urtreiben". Die kreative, künstlerische Tätigkeit wird konturiert, und zwar wie folgt: "Selbst angenommen, dass der Pinsel nicht als Pinsel wirkt, die Tusche nicht als Tusche, und der Pinselstrich nicht als Pinselstrich, ist doch mein Ich gegenwärtig gegeben."
8. Absatz: "Berge und Ströme". Hier wird das Himmlisch-Irdische Urtreiben spezifiziert. Das heisst, Berge und Wasser sind Gestalt und Stellung von Himmel und Erde. Der All-Eine-Pinselstrich vermag diese Dualität zu erfassen.
9. Absatz: "Die Richtlinien der Texturstriche". Diese Definition ist eine Aufforderung zur Selbstkontrolle des Künstlers. Wichtig ist der Grundsatz der Alten, bei Leere und Fülle Mass zu halten.
10. Absatz: "Grenzlande". Shitao zitiert zu Anfang das Verspaar des Mönchs Chumo (9. Jh.): "Wenn man an den Yangzi kommt, wo Wu endet / Und am anderen Ufer sich die Berge von Yue in grosser Zahl erheben." Dementsprechend werden Lande in drei Schichten geteilt; die erste Ebene ist die Erde, die zweite sind Bäume, die dritte sind die Berge. Die Kraft des Pinsels ist durchdringend und schafft die Einheit.
11. Absatz: "Gehwege". Dieser Absatz verweist auf unzugängliche Höhen und erinnert an die im Meer gelegenen Berge im Golf von Bohai, Penglai und Fanghu. Die Kraft des Pinsels zaubert sie herbei in senkrecht aufragenden Felszacken und erfreut das Menschenherz.
12. Absatz: "Haine und Bäume". Shitao legt seine Richtlinie für das "Niederschreiben von Pinien, Zedern, bejahrten Akazien und Machandel" dar, und zwar so, dass ihre Stellung Helden gleicht, die sich zum Tanz erheben und sich wirbelnd ihren Gefühlen frei Lauf lassen.
13. Absatz: "Meereswogen". Hier demonstriert der Autor den Gegensatz von Berge und Meer. "Das Meer rollt in gewaltigen Wogen dahin, Berge tauchen ab und verbergen sich." Pinsel und Tusche vermögen das wahrzunehmen und solche Spannungen zu gestalten.
14. Absatz: "Vier Jahreszeiten". Wie manifestieren sie sich in der Natur, wie erscheinen sie in künstlerischer Form? Shitao führt Verspaare aus dem 5. und 8. Jh. an, aus dem 11. Jh. zitiert er: "Noch muss ich nicht dem Sonnenuntergang zürnen / Ist doch am Horizont ein zarter Wolkenstreifen." Und er hält dazu fest: "Ich wähle die Herzensabsicht eines Gedichtes und mache daraus die Herzensabsicht eines Bildes."

15. Absatz: "Sich fern vom Staub halten". Da werden ethische Grundsätze veranschaulicht. Sich fern vom Staub halten, ermöglicht allein das Denken; und das Wertvollste bei der Malerei ist das Denken. Dies die Quintessenz der Ethik.

16. Absatz: "Das Gewöhnliche abstossen". Hier wird abschliessend formuliert: "Wird die Dummheit entfernt, kommt Weisheit auf. Wird das Gewöhnliche abgetan, stellt sich Klarheit ein."

17. Absatz: "Und Schriftzeichen zugleich". Neugier weckt dieser Titel. Es ist dies ein Partikel der Aussage: "Der All-Eine-Pinselstrich ist die vor Schriftzeichen und Bildern gegebene ursprüngliche Wurzel." Und der Kommentar erläutert: "Bilder und Schriftzeichen gehören der Welt des zu Wandelnden an."

18. Absatz: "Die Aufgabe vollbringen". Der Satz "Meine Aufgabe sind Berge und Wasser" wird diskutiert, und in der Folge verstehen wir, dass Berge eine Metapher sind für Beruhigbarkeit und dass Wasser eine Metapher ist für Bewegbarkeit. Die Dichotomie wird übertragen auf Altertum und Gegenwart. Und Shitao statuiert für sich: "Da die Aufgabe nicht im Altertum liegt, nehme ich mir das Masshalten zur Aufgabe. Die Aufgabe liegt nicht in der Gegenwart, daher nehme ich mir deren Uneingeschränktheit zur Aufgabe."

Auf diese aspektreichen Ausführung des Mönches Bittermelone folgen zwanzig Bilder mit fundierten, faszinierend formulierten Erläuterungen von Professor Dr. Helmut Brinker. Schon im ersten Bild, ein Detail einer Handrolle von 1674, erwähnt Professor Brinker die von dramatisch Helldunkel-Kontrasten erfüllte Landschaftskulisse. Shitao, in schlichter weisser Mönchsrobe, sitzt auf einem Felsen unter einer Kiefer. Es ist das einzige bekannte Selbstbildnis und eines seiner frühesten Werke überhaupt. H. Brinker deutet das Pflanzen junger Kiefern im Winter 1674 als frommen Tribut an die religiösen Ahnen.

Zu einem Detail einer Handrolle (1667) mit dem Titel "Die Sechzehn Luohan" erläutert Shitao seinen künstlerischen Ansatz bei religiösen Themen:

Ich sage immer, wenn ich Arhats i.e. Luohan und andere buddhistische und daoistische <Figuren>bilder male, bin ich in einem Augenblick oben auf dem Himmel, in einem andern im Drachenpalast <des Gottes der Meere>, im nächsten im Westlichen Paradies <des Buddha Amitäbha>, im folgenden im Östlichen Paradies – und während der ganzen Zeit manifestiert sich meine transzendente Buddha werdende Natur des Geistes der Tusche auf dem Papier [...].

Aufgrund der vielen Zitate des Malers vermittelt H. Brinker eine suggestive Biografie des Künstlers. Shitao sei ein vom Chan geprägter Mensch, der nach innerer Leere strebe.

Hinweise auf die traditionelle Schriftkunst und Malerei erklären dem heutigen Beschauer die seit dem 11. Jh. von chinesischen Literati geprägte Formulierung: "Gedichte sind Gemälde ohne sichtbare Gestalt. Gemälde sind gestaltete

Gedichte.” Das Einfühlungsvermögen des Kunsthistorikers fasziniert den Betrachter, wie etwa bezüglich der Malerei “Auf der Suche nach Pflaumenblüten”. Da heisst es:

Hier ist das Tempo des borstigen Pinsels so rasant, dass dieser an manchen Stellen das Papier nur noch oberflächlich trifft, gleichsam ‘überfliegt’, eine eilige graue Tuschespur zu hinterlassen, die den hellen Papiergrund durchscheinen lässt. Shitao vermittelt den Eindruck unbändiger, wild wuchernder Natur, in der die mit spitzem Pinsel zart umrissenen Blüten präzise und liebevoll eingebettet erscheinen.

Von der träumerischen Natur des Malers zeugt das Albumblatt “Tao Yuanming geniesst Chrysanthemenduft”. Da steht links von der Bildmitte im Profil der versonnene Poet aus dem frühen 5. Jh. Für das Literatengewand wird “trockene” Tusche und ein rauer, abgenutzter Pinsel gebraucht. Im Kontrast dazu ist das Gesicht mit spitzem Pinsel gemalt – das Auge, die Nase, die hohe Stirn, der strähnige Vollbart. Ich erinnere mich hier an die erste Strophe eines Frühlingsgedichts von Tao Yuanming: “Im Kreise schreitet sacht die Zeit / mit immer gleichem Schritt. / Schon trag ich Frühlingshauch im Kleid / auf meinem Wege mit.”

In einer Tuschelandschaft aus dem Jahre 1697 setzt sich Shitao eindeutig mit dem berühmten Yuan-Meister Ni Zan (1301–1374) auseinander. H. Brinker verweist auf eine Äusserung Shitaos, wo dieser das Credo Ni Zans referiert: “Was ich als Malen bezeichne, ist eigentlich nichts anderes als ein absichtsloses Niederschreiben ungezwungener Pinselstriche. Ich schreibe nicht nach formaler Ähnlichkeit, sondern betreibe es ausschliesslich zu meinem Vergnügen.” H. Brinker bezeichnet dieses Prinzip als “ungefilterte Spontaneität”.

Stichworte dieser Art ergeben sich auch bei der Hängerolle “Erinnerungen des Dadizi aus Quigxiang an die Sechsdreissig Gipfel” (um 1697). Der Name Dadizi ist das daoistische Pseudonym von Shitao, der sich gegen Ende des 17. Jh. öffentlich zum Daoismus bekannte. H. Brinker interpretiert die steil aufragende Bergwelt als eine Landschaft des Geistes, die das schwebende Loslassen des eigenen Ichs visualisiert. Das Ziel des Daoisten ist, inmitten der Unpersönlichkeit der Berge und Felsen, Wälder und Tiere “sich selbst zu verlieren”.

“Gestaltlose Leere”, das klassische Thema der Literatenmaler, pinselt Shitao um 1700 locker auf eine Hängerolle. “Bambus, Orchis und Felsen” ist der Titel. Seit Jahrhunderten ist der Bambus ein Symbol für fundamentale ethische Werte. Die duftende Orchis mit geschmeidigen, dünnen, langen Blättern reizte Poeten und Kalligrafen zu spielerischen Kompositionen.

Das Stilleben "Lotos in einer Vase" ist mit wässrigeren Tuschewischern und akzentuierenden Pinselzügen gemalt. H. Brinker erwähnt in seiner anschaulichen Interpretation, dass Lotos in den Rahmen von Liebe, Verbindung, eheliche Vereinigung gefasst sei und als sinnvolles Hochzeitsgeschenk überreicht werde.

Das Albumblatt, datiert 1707, schliesst die Reihe der hier so feinsinnig gedeuteten Werke. Vermutlich ist dies das letzte Werk des fünfundsechzigjährigen Meisters. Der Titel lautet "Alter Ginkgo am Quinlong-Berg, Erinnerungen an Nanjing". Das Bildthema erscheint rechts nach der Mitte als morscher, hohler Baumstamm – der Ginkgo, zersplittert und enthauptet, aber nicht gefallen. Die Landschaft ist reduziert, eine Bodenwelle, ein in die Tiefe führender Weg. Oberhalb der Baumwurzel spriesst ein kräftiger Ast hervor mit frischen Blättern. Den annähernd quadratischen Block der kraftvoll strukturierten Schriftzeichen versteht H. Brinker als ein Widerstand zum morbiden Bildthema. Das Albumblatt "Alter Ginkgo am Quinlong-Berg" ist mehr als eine konkrete Erinnerung, sondern Metapher für "ewige Dauer". H. Brinkers Forminterpretationen münden in den Satz: "Es waren die Fächerform der Ginkgoblätter, das hohe Alter des Baumes und die unverwüstliche Widerstandskraft, die Dichter und Künstler in aller Welt und zu allen Zeiten immer wieder inspirierten."

Und von solcher Inspiration zeugt auch das vorliegende Bändchen inklusive literaturkritischer Anhang, Glossar zur Übersetzung und das weiterführende Literaturverzeichnis. "Die Aufgezeichneten Worte" animieren zu wiederholter Lektüre.

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