one being subsumed into the other or of Christianity being seen as simply an imitation of Buddhism. As is well known, the first generation of Jesuit missionaries in Japan widely used such Buddhist terms as Dainichi 大日 and Tenjiku 天竺 in their missionary efforts and were thereby regarded by local people as a new sect of Buddhism. Buddhist monks in Japan and China, such as Yunxi Zhuhong 雲棲袾宏 and Sessō Sōsai 雪窓宗崔, criticized Christianity as an imitator of "Brahman infidels 梵天外道", and claimed that Christian teachings were plagiarized from Buddhist texts.[4] In addition, it has been pointed out that missionaries in Japan were acutely aware of superficial similarities between some key concepts of Buddhism and Christianity, such as Heaven and Hell, sin and glory.[5] Although relatively few sections of *Dispelling the Darkness* deal with this point, the authors state that Desideri does not translate specific Christian terms such as Jesus Christ, Mary, and Christian into the Tibetan language; instead, he provided transliterations of these terms. The use of both translation and transliteration is also common in the texts of missionaries in Asia, which provides a clue as to how to find the subtle boundary between accommodation and differentiation.

It would be more difficult to answer the question of how to evaluate the historical significance of Desideri's Tibetan writings. According to *Dispelling the Darkness*, Desideri made very few converts in Tibet and no reference to Desideri's presence or his influence is found in any Tibetan historical source from the period. The careful deciphering and rendering of Desideri's Tibetan texts in this book will undoubtedly inspire many scholars, and future research should answer this question.

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Political Violence in Ancient India

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The history of humanity spread over several millennia, from the cave man to the astronaut, has witnessed several transitions – from hunting-food gathering to food production; from pastoralism to settled agriculture; from mere subsistence economy to surplus generation; from a relatively egalitarian pre-class to an extremely stratified and complex class society; from simple nomadic bands and clans to tribes; and from tribal chiefdom to state formation. Which society of the world during these long histories of varied transitions has not witnessed wars, violence, pillage, plunder, killing (of both humans and animals) and torturous exploitation of human labour by humans? Our willful amnesia cannot wish them away.

The need to remind ourselves of such ghastly histories may perhaps be located only in some deliberate and motivated attempts to reconstruct them periodically, which have also been happening all through human history. The monograph under review is an exercise in setting the record straight. It begins in the twentieth century and ends in the twenty-first. The author shows how some of the makers of modern India such as Nehru, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Savarkar sought to search for its ancient roots and made a case for and against violence, drawing inspirations from Aśoka and Buddhism, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and Candragupta Maurya and Cāṇakya. Perhaps a better rationale for reminding us about the perils of amnesia would have been to extend the exploration backward into the reconstructions of Indian pasts

[4]Nishimura Ryō 西村 玲, *Kinsei Bukkyō ron* 近世仏教論, Kyoto: Hozo kan, 2018, esp. p. 139.

[5]Gonoi Takashi 五野井 隆史, *Nihon Kirishitan shi no kenkyū* 日本キリシタン史の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2002), pp. 108–21.

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in the nineteenth century, when James Mill, Max Mueller, and several others were busy in creating myths of the "Hindus" being peace loving, non-violent, compassionate, spiritual, tolerant, truthful and static (accounting for the later day "Hindu" rate of economic growth). Further, somewhat mischievously, this image was juxtaposed to that of the "Muslims" who were demonized as zealous bigots, violent, brutes, deceitful – a characterization that has persisted till this day in Savarkar's idea of India, which is now being enthusiastically pushed by chauvinists in the name of "Hindu" culture.

Of the five main chapters of the monograph, the first three titled "Foundation", "Transition" and "Maturity" respectively and covering twelve centuries (*circa* 600 BCE–*circa* 600 CE) are chronologically stratified – the dividers being *circa* 200 BCE and *circa* 300 CE. Chapters 4 and 5 are somewhat thematic and captioned "War" and "The Wilderness" respectively. Texts forming bases for reconstruction of the themes comprise selections of inscriptions, some monumental and art remains, coins and literary compositions of different genres, but mostly in Sanskrit. Apart from the obvious preference for the Aśokan inscriptions, most of the dynastic inscriptions (of the Śakas, Sātavāhanas, Ikṣvākus, Vākāṭakas and Guptas – Kuṣāṇa inscriptions have been rarely invoked) selected may be classed as *praśasti*/s (Khāravela's Hathigumpha, Rudradāman's Junagadh/Girnar, Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi's Nasik and Samudragupta's Allahabad inscriptions).

As for the literary texts, the indispensability of the encyclopaedic *Mahābhārata* and the other epic, *Rāmāyaṇa,* and theoretical treatises such as the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, the *Manusmṛti* and the *Nītisāra* attributed to Kāmandaka can be easily anticipated for a study on the history of ideas. Invocation of select canonical texts of the Buddhists and the Jains, particularly the *Jātakas,* also does not surprise. However, the focus on texts that would broadly be categorized as *belles-lettres*, *viz.,* several plays of Bhāsa, Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, *Aśokāvadāna*, Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntala* and *Raghuvaṁśa*, Viśākhadatta's *Mudrārākṣasa*, and *Pañcatantra* is innovative, add to the repertoire of texts useful for studying the political apparatus and, therefore, should be welcomed. But occasional sprinkling of Tamil Saṅgam texts (ch. 4) and Bhartṛhari's three *śatakas* (p. 237) do not contribute anything substantial. Though some inscriptions are in Prakrit, the bulk of aforesaid literary compositions are in Sanskrit. Overall, the study essentially remains a treatment of Sanskritik intellectual and cultural traditions of north India and the central Deccan.

The thesis of this 600-page tome is very simple. "This book is a history of ideas … (it) is also a political history in which political ideas are given central place", claims the author (pp. 14–15). Out of seven constituents of the state (*saptāṅga-rājya* according to political theorists of twelve hundred years studied), its main focus remains *only* on kingship and its relationship with manifestations of violence – force, punishment, killing, and the royal hunt. Non-violence has never been absolute, not even for the Buddha and Mahāvīra for whom *ahiṁsā* was a matter of faith and constituted their cardinal doctrine. Their *cakkavatti (cakravartin)* king was expected to be a moral, righteous, kind and compassionate ruler and implement the *dhamma*, but deviants from such an ideal were also accepted as followers. The *Bhagavadgītā* has been invoked by both pacifists and warmongers. Kings battled between trappings of royalty as well as higher bliss promised for a renouncer. Force invoked by the king for the fulfillment of duty of protecting the *Varṇa-Āśrama dharmas* constitutes the *dharma* view of politics. Contrarily, unscrupulous kings pursuing tricky and divisive methods (yes, divide and rule is not the British legacy) – the four *upāyas* (expedients), *viz.*, *sāma* (conciliation), *dāna* (gifts), *daṇḍa* (force) and *bheda* (creating dissension) and aspiring to be Kauṭilya's *vijigīṣu* (king desirous of victory) through crafty strategies espoused what the author calls the *artha* view of politics and which finds more than adequate spaces in Sanskrit texts.

The relationship between kings and forest dwellers (both humans and animals) was simultaneously hot and cold. The royal hunt in these spaces was a fairly common pastime. This, as well as exploitation of economic resources of forests by the state, have been described in most of the Sanskrit texts enumerated above. Despite the strong indictment of war and declaration of its ultimate futility in the *Mahābhārata*, its aestheticization and celebration in *belles-lettres* makes interesting reading. No wonder that complete renunciation of war was never contemplated in such texts. In the long list of historical kings of ancient India, Aśoka Maurya stands alone for giving up war as an instrument of state policy. However, there is no mistaking that he was pragmatic enough to keep a close watch on the recalcitrant

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frontier and forest people and was ever ready to use force against them. The author is rightly enamoured of this emperor, who loved both humans and animals. However, since numerous disquisitions and varied Indian cultural traditions on the epistemology of the notions of truth, ethics and morality underline their relativity, a search for the absoluteness of issues discussed by her would be futile.

Defining the parameters of her methodological apparatus, the author has repeatedly underlined that the book "is a historical investigation … grounded in political history and … political processes"; that the political thought has to be "anchored to its historical context"; and that words and ideas related to violence and nonviolence cannot be divested from their "contextual analysis" (pp. 9–15). Confining the entire monograph to exploration of the questions about and debate over "one kind of violence – political violence" makes its claims of being an "historical investigation" suspect. How does one comprehend "political processes" when they are divorced from social structure and its processes, especially when the whole edifice is rooted in an iniquitous order; as well as from their material contexts? That lives of people are not compartmentalized was recognized by Kauṭilya (*Arthaśāstra* I.7.6) when he discussed statecraft from the specific perspective and goals of *artha*: "*Artha* [material well-being] is supreme because *dharma* [righteousness] and *kāma* [sensual pleasure] are dependent on it" (cited, p. 99). Even Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* concedes: "*artha* is the most important goal for the king and the prostitute, because it is the basis of social life" (cited, p. 507, n. 5). No discussion of any kind of "political violence" in ancient India can be complete unless it is "anchored to its historical context" of social violence ingrained in the fourfold *varṇa* order which had also sanctified economic violence manifested in coercive exploitation of human labour. It is, therefore, somewhat intriguing that even when "various kinds of violence" are listed, the conspectus does not go beyond "incessant inter-dynastic and intra-dynastic power struggles, warfare between states, and violent encounters between the state and forest people … celebration of the royal hunt …" (p. 11).

Another aspect of methodological apparatus that needs some reflection concerns the nature of texts invoked for reconstructing more than millennium-old debates on violence and non-violence. Despite recognizing that dates of most texts are matters of continuing debate and their composition often spilled across more than one phase, the author has candidly made her position on their temporal spread quite clear. Equally significant is her outstanding message that the brahmanical view of kingship embodied in most of the texts cannot be described as the "Indian view". Indeed, she has even questioned if there ever was a single brahmanical view. She is acutely aware of several other limitations of the texts, *viz.*, voices therein are largely those of upper-class males and, therefore, it is difficult to retrieve voices of others. And yet the overall exposition of *all* texts (primarily both epigraphic and literary) in the monograph rarely goes beyond being evocatively descriptive, almost in an anecdotal mode. Apparently, they have been taken at their face value and, at least in case of literary texts, even the line between myth and history has been blurred.

While discussing the semantics of violence and non-violence (pp. 6–9, terms such as *hiṁsā, ahiṁsā, ānṛśaṁsya*, *avihiṁsā*), the author refers to the "culture-specific set of epistemological and metaphysical ideas" forming bases of their numerous renderings in Sanskrit. Eschewing comparison between "Indian" and "western" perspectives, it makes a plea for a nuanced understanding of diverse and evolving terminology of political violence "on its own terms". Point well taken, but then, (a) comparisons with other ancient societies have indeed been invoked at places, and (b) it stands oddly against the concept of circulation of ideas in the ancient world, which has been proudly illustrated to delineate and explain the wider travel of Indic ideas – both political and military, especially in Southeast Asia (pp. 473–80).

Showing awareness of anthropological models seeking to explain transition from tribes and chiefdoms to kingdoms and empires, the author promises to move beyond what she calls "the extremes of 'statist' and 'non-statist' histories" (p. 13). Falling for the new fanciful vocabulary of "political imagination" (*à la* Sheldon Pollock), she is enthusiastic about ignoring two indispensable constituents of the *saptāṅga-rājya*, *viz.*, the army and treasury/taxation, both having great potential to unleash considerable violence affecting common people. After all, violence lies at the heart of the state. Also, the call for recognizing the existence of "autonomous spaces", another newly packaged term, as a new way of thinking about ancient states, remains an idle promise. There is hardly any meaningful discussion on this and the thesis's main focus remains on just kingship.

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The publication of this monograph in 2017 was received with great fanfare in India, both in the print and electronic media and the author has been hopeful "that a critical engagement with ancient Indian political thought can perhaps help us reflect on the problem of escalating political violence in our own time" (p. x). True, the contemporary milieu of India is marked by considerable violence. Political killings by ideology-driven political parties are rampant. Brute force and violence are also creeping into the thought, words and deeds of common people on the streets and giving a name to such violence is problematic. To illustrate, extreme violence, sometimes involving even physical death, is brazenly carried out by "Hindus" in the name of cow protection. Innocent victims are usually Muslims. This phenomenon has come to be known as "mob lynching". The incidence of violence against women and socially downtrodden people is also on the rise. Do these constitute "political" or social or religious or even economic (beef trade) violence? The author may have an answer for these phenomena but we would find it difficult to classify them.

Even in its limited objective, this is not the first book on the history of political ideas. Yet, it should be welcomed by lay readers who may be curious to know about the ancient Indian pasts. Fortunately, the author has been questioning enough to refrain from dubbing these pasts as "glorious". Apparently, this monograph is not meant for subject specialists for they are likely to be familiar with most of the contents and the overall narrative. Some of them, present reviewer included, may find it to be a product of new-fangled postmodern culturalism, which is often high on decibel level.

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Monastery, Monument, Museum: Sites and Artifacts of Thai Cultural Memory

By Maurizio Peleggi. Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2017. Pp. 280. ISBN 10: 0824866061; ISBN 13: 978-0824866068.

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Monastery, Monument, Museum is the latest book by cultural historian Maurizio Peleggi of the National University of Singapore. It discusses aspects of the social, cultural, and collective memory of Thailand through certain emblematic sites and specific artifacts. In Prof. Peleggi's words, these judiciously selected cultural landmarks and objects function as "agents and products of the transmission of religious beliefs, aesthetic principles, political ideologies, and manual and intellectual knowledge throughout the *longue durée* of Thailand's cultural history" (p. 1). In so doing, it follows French historian Pierre Nora's concept of "site of memory", popularized in his monumental collection *Les Lieux de Mémoire*.[1] It may thus refer to any place, object, or concept vested with historical significance in the popular collective memory, such as a monument, a museum, an event, a symbol, or a historical or legendary figure.

Peleggi's study is a collection of works consisting of eight chapters, four of which were published earlier as separate articles and essays (Chapters 3–6). It therefore suffers somewhat from including information that is occasionally dated; in some cases new information has not been considered. The volume is divided into three parts spanning roughly from Prehistoric times to the modern period.

[1]First published in French in seven volumes between 1984 and 1992; partially translated into English as Nora 1996.

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