

symbolism associated with them, while at the same time, she tries to embed her findings in larger cultural patterns, variegated forms of local belief, and neglected traditions.

As was said, the book is mainly about seashells and coral. Conchophiles who wish to find out why and how the well-to-do adored nautilus shells and similar specimens will discover many fascinating details in Grasskamp's account. Chinese poets used shells as drinking cups. They appeared in court banquets for entertainment. They were framed. Artisans used tri-dacna material to carve beautiful objects. Shells were "clever" items: they inspired scientists to think about mathematical functions. One finds them in Tang tombs, they can be related to cosmology, in later periods one encounters "clam-castles" and different "shell-scapes". Shells produce pearls, they give birth, they are like houses, they are reminiscent of a bird's nest and a female womb. Perceptions of molluscs went along with notions of the moon and the Yin element. Aldrovandi linked shells to birds, some old Chinese texts suggest that birds transformed into shells. There is a kind of "Wolpertinger" with shell elements on Johann Walther's illustration of the *Idstein Grotto*; it reminds us of cave creatures and other beasts in old China. All this is meticulously explained by Grasskamp.

A recurrent motif is women with or in a shell. That involves Venus, Galatea, and Chinese art and lore. Women not only transform into were-tigers and foxes, but also into water creatures. Witchcraft and seduction, carnality and prurience, manifest in subtle ways – there are many pictorial examples, which Grasskamp mostly took from European sources. Clearly, this is a very special panorama. Indeed, some illustrations are full of "small" elements that one may wish to explore in greater detail, as for example, the presence of halcyons.

Regarding corals, J. Malcolm Shick published a wonderful monograph on their natural and cultural history. This is mostly based on European material and came out in 2018 (London: Reaktion Books). Grasskamp also explores the Chinese side. Her studies, notably her *Objects in Frames* (Berlin: Reimer, 2019), provide fresh information. Reading her works, one is tempted to look for more: Chinese medical compendia discuss coral, artisans carved "coral-scapes", figures showing Chinese deities are made of coral, Qing texts mention blue/green and black coral, besides the red varieties, etc. Without doubt, an economic history of Euro-Asian trade in coral would be helpful as well. However, that is a different matter. To conclude, *Art and Ocean Objects* is a pleasant item. It will inspire scholars to explore the story of marine products in new ways; it is a lively contribution to the field of Euro-Asian (art) history and cultural exchange.

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**Jérôme Ducor and Henry W. Isler (ed. and trans.):
Jizang: Le sens des arcanes des Trois Traités, contribution à
l'étude du Mādhyamika dans le bouddhisme
d'Extrême-Orient**

411 pp. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2022. €39. ISBN 978 2 600 96383 8.

Rafal K. Stepień

Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria
rafal.stepien@oeaw.ac.at



Jérôme Ducor and Henry W. Isler's French-language annotated translation of what they title *Le sens des arcanes des Trois Traités*, or *Profound Meaning of the Three Treatises* (*Sanlun xuanyi* 三論玄義, T.45.1852) by Jizang (吉藏 c. 549–623) is the first translation – indeed, the first book-length study – in any European language of this pivotally important Chinese Buddhist text. Far more than merely what Ducor modestly terms a “traduction française d'un ouvrage chinois bouddhique de la fin du VI^e siècle accompagnée seulement de l'information indispensable à la compréhension de ce texte relativement difficile” (p. 11), then, what this book represents is a meticulously researched, copiously annotated, and fluently translated entry-point into a notably under-researched current of Buddhist thought standing at the very frontier of Indian and Chinese Buddhist visions.

Alongside Sengzhao (僧肇 374–414), Jizang was one of the two most prominent exponents of the Sanlun or Three Treatise (三論) school, the Chinese development of the Indian Madhyamaka school founded by Nāgārjuna (龍樹 c. 150–250). Alongside his commentaries to Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* or *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way* (中觀論疏, T.42.1824), the **Dvādaśamukhaśāstra* or *Twelve Gates Treatise* attributed to Nāgārjuna (十二門論疏, T.42.1825), and Āryadeva's (提婆 third century) *Śatakaśāstra* or *Hundred Verse Treatise* (百論疏, T.42.1827), the *Sanlun xuanyi* ranks among the most important of Jizang's many collected works.

The book begins with an “Avant-Propos” by Isler (pp. 7–9) and a “Préface” by Ducor (pp. 11–12) explaining the genesis of this book, which is sufficiently noteworthy to merit brief recapitulation here. The book's origins lie in doctoral work undertaken by Isler between 1979 and 1983 under the supervision of the late Buddhistologist Jacques May. Following May's death in 2018, his widow Hyung-Hi Kim May suggested publishing the work, but the outdated nature of its critical apparatus led Isler to approach Ducor for assistance. As Ducor explains, “j'ai ainsi entièrement repris la traduction sur le chinois, y compris l'annotation, et renouvelé la bibliographie tout en composant une nouvelle introduction ainsi qu'un index général et en révisant l'index des caractères chinois établi par Henry [Isler]” (p. 11). This treatise of Jizang, then, arrives within these covers as a work “à quatre mains” (p. 8): effectively a joint effort by Jizang, May, Isler, and Ducor.

Following these prefatory comments, a detailed “Introduction” (pp. 13–70) provides background information on “L'auteur et ses œuvres” (pp. 13–26), “Les œuvres de Jizang” (pp. 26–30), and the “Chronologie de Jizang” (pp. 31–2), collectively comprising a brief biography and chronology of Jizang and summary of his works based on both classical canonical sources and the latest scholarship in European and East Asian languages. Sections then follow on “Le sens des arcanes des Trois Traités” (pp. 32–7), explaining the title and structure of the *Sanlun xuanyi*, “Les Trois Traités qui sont quatre” (pp. 37–47), introducing the three treatises of this Three Treatise school along with the *Da zhidu lun* (大智度論 / **Mahāprajñāpāramitā śāstra*), “Le Mādhyamika et l'école des Trois Traités” (pp. 47–57), trying to assess the validity and value of treating Sanlun (and for that matter Madhyamaka) as an “école” (宗), “Le Médialisme” (pp. 57–67), summarizing the major tenets of Madhyamaka/Sanlun, and lastly a survey of “Le texte : commentaires et éditions” (pp. 67–70).

The bulk of the book is then comprised of Ducor and Isler's translation of Jizang's *Sanlun xuanyi* (pp. 73–255). Although the Chinese-language original includes a few markers of global structure, Ducor and Isler go much further in dividing the text's contents into as many as eight levels of divisions and sub-divisions. This evidence of a concerted effort to render the text as comprehensible as possible to the modern reader is reinforced by the use of copious extra-textual editorial amplifications (marked with []), and above all by no fewer than 771 footnotes accompanying the translation. Citing a wide range of classical primary and commentarial sources as well as modern scholarship in Japanese, Chinese, French, English, and German, these notes provide troves of relevant information.

As for the translation itself, this is fluent, accurate, and mercifully unimpaired by copy-editing errors. Specialists may prefer a different rendering of this or that passage or phrase, and I myself occasionally wished for a note here and there mentioning a possible alternative reading, but overall I would rate the translation and notes amply erudite for use by scholars and satisfyingly readable for interested non-specialists.

The book concludes with an “Index des caractères chinois dans le texte du canon de Taishō” (pp. 257–88), which includes pinyin transliteration alongside French translation, a “Bibliographie et abréviations” (pp. 289–327), which, however, inexplicably lists some (but not all) edited works under title rather than editor/s, an “Index général” (pp. 329–61), which includes alphabetized entries of technical terms in both Chinese and Japanese transliteration, and lastly the Taishō-edition text of Jizang’s *Sanlun xuanyi* (pp. 363–405). While the character index admittedly enables readers to approximately locate a given character or multi-character term in the original text without needing to consult any sources beyond the book in their hands, I consider it a largely superfluous inclusion given the ease of online access to the electronic version of the original text. It is also arranged according to the traditional but rather cumbersome method of Kangxi radical number and stroke count, is not supplemented by an arguably more useful alphabetic character index to the original, and is slightly marred by some imperfect concordances between index and text. But these are small gripes.

Overall, the book under review makes a significant contribution to the study of Buddhism. Its translation deftly marries accuracy with eloquence, while its scholarship is extensive and astute. *Le sens des arcanes des Trois Traités* will become required reading for any Francophone studying Jizang, *Sanlun-cum-Chinese Madhyamaka*, and the history of philosophy in Chinese Buddhism.

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Karl Reichl: *The Oral Epic: From Performance to Interpretation*

(Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture.) xii, 269 pp. London and New York: Routledge, 2021. ISBN 978 0 36776131 8.

Anne E. McLaren: *Memory Making in Folk Epics of China: The Intimate and the Local in Chinese Regional Culture*

(Cambria Sinophone World Series.) xxxviii, 300 pp. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2022. ISBN 978 1 162196665 4.

Vibeke Børdahl

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen University, Copenhagen, Denmark

Karl Reichl’s recent book *The Oral Epic: From Performance to Interpretation* (2021), by its title underlines the oral and performing aspect of epics and clearly signals the focus of the study: the *epic as performed* art. Only the singers of the long heroic tales can supply