Seamless Boundaries: Lutfullah's Narrative beyond East and West. Edited by Mushirul Hasan. Annotations and Introduction also by Mushirul Hasan. pp. xxiv. 260. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2007.

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As part of a process of 'writing back', amongst other things, against the doleful influence of Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis and of the negative image of the Muslim world propagated by the publications of Bernard Lewis's later years, the distinguished Indian historian, Mushirul Hasan, has republished two volumes of Indian Muslim encounters with the British in India and in England. The first was *Westward Bound: The Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb* (Delhi, 2005), which deals with the four-year journey (1799–1803) of a deeply curious and highly intelligent Indian Muslim to Britain and the remarkable and balanced anatomy of the country he produced in consequence. The second is the book under review, which is the autobiography of another Indian Muslim under the original title of *Autobiography of Lutfullah, a Mohamedan Gentleman; and His Transactions with his Fellow-Creatures*, which covers Lutfullah's life from his birth in the family of a Sufi *pir* in Malwa in 1802 down to 1847. The text is supported by a helpful contextualising introduction by Mushirul Hasan, generous appendices explaining people, places and events, a glossary and a full index.

Unlike Abu Taleb's *Travels*, the vast majority of Lutfullah's work deals with his life in India: his mischievous childhood; his early learning of English much of which was self-taught; his family's hazardous life in the turbulent state of early nineteenth-century Central India; his work as a *munshi* from 1818 to 1835, teaching over one hundred English 'griffins' Persian, Hindustani, Arabic and Marathi; the dangers and excitements of his period accompanying Captain W. J. Eastwick, assistant to Colonel H. Pottinger, Resident in Sind; and his journey to England in 1844 as the secretary to the Nawab of Surat, who sought the return of his property which had been sequestered by the East India Company. Mushirul Hasan, in commenting on the text, emphasises the mutual respect between Hindus and Muslims it demonstrates, Lutfullah's scepticism of astrology and various Muslim practices, his good relations with the British, and his measured judgements on British life ranging from its technological advances to the position of women in society. We could add to this: the vignettes of childhood in which the young Lutfullah puts frogs in the sewing boxes of the womenfolk and sets alight his teacher's beard; the powerful picture of what the breakdown of law and order in the first two decades of the nineteenth century meant for ordinary people in Central India; the strong relationship of Lutfullah with his mother, his care for her, and hers for him down to hearing his lessons when banished from school; the description of the life of a jobbing *munshi*; and the way in which Lutfullah had little difficulty in both being a devout Muslim and engaging easily with the British and the novelties they brought. One thing, however, emerges with particular force from the latter part of the book, and that is Lutfullah's relationship with one of his pupils, Captain W. J. Eastwick, who was later to become Deputy Chairman of the East India Company and a Member of the Council of India. Eastwick, as his references for Lutfullah indicate had the very highest regard for the talent and character of his *munshi*. Lutfullah had feelings for Eastwick not far short of love. He describes his parting from him in 1841 as he took his friend, stricken with fever, to his steamer at Bombay: "I hired a good, easy carriage for his conveyance to the harbour, and having carefully put him into it, I seated myself by him and held him fast as he was shivering with his cold fit. In this state I conveyed him on board . . . I then bade him adieu with throbbing heart and tearful eyes . . . ." Thus it was appropriate, when Lutfullah came to publish his autobiography in London in 1857, that it should have been edited by Eastwick's brother, for whom he had also been a *munshi*, the orientalist Edward Backhouse Eastwick. Like Taleb's *Travels* there is much to be learned from this book from a range of angles; we are grateful to Mushirul

Hasan for being the cause of its republication. It is just a pity that the entry in Appendix II, relating to the Royal Asiatic Society, which was founded in 1823, confuses it with the Royal Society, which was founded in 1660 – all a little odd as Mushirul Hasan is himself a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society.

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Early Śaivism and the Skandapurāṇa. Sects and Centres. By Peter C. Bisschop. Groningen Oriental Studies Vol. XXI. pp. vii, 368. Groningen, Egbert Forsten, 2006.
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This volume presents a "slightly revised version" of the University of Groningen PhD thesis which the author defended in 2004, and consists of a critical edition and philological commentary on a section of the original *Skandapurāṇa* (hereafter SP). As many readers of this review will know, a group of scholars based in Groningen have for the last decade and a half been engaged in an ongoing research project on this text, for which a number of remarkably early manuscript witnesses survive (the earliest of which, Bisschop's S_1, is dated to 810 CE). These early sources, of Nepalese provenance, had previously been edited by Kṛṣṇaprasād Bhaṭṭarāī under the title *Skandapurāṇasya Ambikākāṇḍaḥ* (Kathmandu, 1988). As a result of the Groningen team's efforts, it has been definitively established that the tradition which these sources transmit is that of the earliest extant integral text to refer to itself as the SP. They have also identified testimonia and a growing body of textual parallels, and have unearthed further manuscript sources not used by Bhaṭṭarāī, containing later versions of the SP closely allied with the Nepalese texts. These later sources, already showing the effects of the speciation that marks the subsequent massive expansion of the SP, refer to themselves as the *purāṇa*'s *Revā-* and *Ambikā- kāṇḍa*s, and are recorded with the sigla R and A in the project's publications. There is only a single R ms., but at least seven closely related A MSS have so far been identified and used.

In the volume under review, Bisschop adds considerably to this text-historical picture through his study of the SP's geographical imagination, particularly its description of the network of places of Śaiva pilgrimage (*āyatana*s) acknowledged in the text. The description of these sites and the merit that one accrues in visiting them are set out in the Nepalese sources in a largely stereotyped form: the place and its Śaiva shrine are named, and the reward the pilgrim receives (largely postmortem) briefly detailed. The departures from this basic template are interesting and significant: the places where the SP's compilers depart from this pattern and include additional mythic or descriptive material may *ipso facto* be understood as especially important for the Śaiva religion at the time of the SP's composition. Even more important, however, is the fact that the materials edited by Bisschop change considerably from the Nepalese version to the later R and A texts. This is in keeping with the massive expansion of the latter portion of these later versions, unlike the *Skandapurāṇa* volumes published to date where the R and A texts shows only trivial differences, mostly scribal corruptions. As a result, a single chapter of 191 verses transmitted in the Nepalese MSS has been expanded into 411 verses divided over five *ādhyāya*s in R and A (p. 5).

Faced with this situation, Bisschop has opted to edit two distinct texts on the *āyatana*s, one deriving from two of the extant Nepalese texts (SP_s) and the other a reconstruction of the presumed common ancestor of the R and A MSS (SP_{RA}). The first of these closely follows the text as published by Bhaṭṭarāī while the second is here edited for the first time; Bisschop defends his editorial reconstruction of an already corrupt RA archetype as a text with stipulable linguistic and metrical idiosyncrasies, to my mind convincingly (pp. 53–59). Equally convincing is his argument (pp. 8–12) that SP_{RA} represents not