PATRICK OLIVELLE:
A Dharma Reader: Classical Indian Law.
(Historical Sourcebooks in Classical Indian Thought.) xii, 410 pp.
New York: Columbia University Press, 2017. ISBN 978 0 231 17956 0.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X1800071X

A Dharma Reader makes Indian sources accessible not just to readers of classical India but to those interested in the comparative study of law and legal history, or in the intersection of religion and law. The Brahmanical Sanskrit literature on dharma (*dharmaśāstra*) was long bedeviled by mostly ahistorical treatment, and where interpreters attempted to write its history, they were hobbled by the paucity of properly critical editions of the texts and the difficulty of situating the works and their authors in place and time with any confidence. The largest scholarly landmark in this field through much of the twentieth century, P.V. Kane's multi-volume *History of Dharmaśāstra*, along with careful studies by Robert Lingat, J.D.M. Derrett, Ludo Rocher, and Richard Lariviere, clarified many points and established some historical benchmarks, but the dates offered, especially for the early works, were stabs in the dark, and did not solve the problem of the state of the sources themselves, especially the "classical" works. This situation has changed dramatically with new critical editions by Lariviere (*Nārada-Smṛti*), Rocher (*Vyavahāra-Cintāmaṇi, Dāyabhāga*), and most especially Olivelle himself, who has almost single-handedly re-edited and re-translated the major works (the four Dharmasūtras, the *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* (the so-called "Laws of Manu"), the *Vaiṣṇava-Dharmaśāstra* (alias *Viṣṇu-Smṛti*), and the *Yājñavalkya-Dharmaśāstra* (forthcoming). The other major scholastic work relevant to India's legal history, Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* (a unique treatise on political science, a topic that was subsequently swallowed up by Dharmaśāstra), has been provided with a new textual study by Olivelle's student Mark McClish, and a new translation by Olivelle himself.

All of this work has permitted a tremendous clarification of the development of Dharmaśāstra and, by analysing those works in light of other Sanskrit literature and early Indian epigraphy, of the historical development of law in India. This volume provides an attractive point of entry for students of Indian history, religion, and culture, as well as comparativists.

This volume should go a long way towards integrating Indian material into curricula of comparative legal history and legal theory. Olivelle begins by citing (and explaining for non-lawyers) H.L.A. Hart's distinction between primary rules and secondary rules, announces that his book will deal only with the second sort, and goes on to consider Hart's three types of secondary rules: rules of recognition, rules of change, and rules of adjudication. This provides the organizing rubric for the book, with rules of recognition forming the focus of Part I (on "the nature and epistemology of *dharma*"), and Part II devoted to rules of adjudication (on "courts of law and legal procedure", i.e., *vyavahāra*). (Ancient India did not have a systematic framework for rules of change; changes occurred either through royal decrees or tweaking the rules of recognition to allow new options, regional customs, or the like, a topic addressed in Part I.) This organization of the material will help those outside of classical Indian studies to make sense of what the Indian authors were up to.

As he introduces each selection, Olivelle calls attention to its distinctive features, which reflect its historical and conceptual significance. Each part of the book is

organized chronologically, directing attention to the development of the ideas and thus dispelling the ahistorical, essentialist miasma that still sometimes hovers over introductory-level presentation of classical Indian law and religion. Part I consists of chapters 1: "Early thinkers" (Āpastamba and Patañjali); 2. "Later aphoristic texts on dharma" (Gautama, Baudhāyana, Vasiṣṭha); 3. Kauṭilya's political science (*Arthaśāstra*); 4. "The innovations of Manu"; 5. "Developments after Manu" (Yājñavalkya, Viṣṇu, Parāśara); 6. "The school of Vedic exegesis" (Śabara and Kumārila); 7. "The early commentators" (Bhāruci, Viśvarūpa, Medhātithi); and 8. "Medieval commentators and systematizers". The chapters of Part II include: 9. "The beginnings" (the four Dharmasūtras); 10. "The early theorists" (Kauṭilya, Manu); 11. "The mature phase" (Yājñavalkya, Nārada); 12. "Early commentators"; and 13. "Medieval commentators and systematizers". The book includes a glossary, a bibliography, and an index.

An especially welcome feature is the substantial and representative extracts from Dharmaśāstric commentators, a genre that usually remains out of reach to non-specialists due to its technical character as well as the inaccessibility and poor quality of many earlier translations. Here is where readers really get to encounter sustained discursive argument and theorizing, in contrast with the aphoristic and verse treatises that served as the object of learned commentaries and digests. In those earlier works, the big picture or underlying theory often has to be deduced from the atomistic presentation of rules and traditional maxims. It is only the scholastic commentators, moreover, who explicitly argue questions such as the independent validity of positive law (of kings and jurisprudents) and of customary norms lacking Vedic warrant (Medhātithi, p. 122), the precise degree of authority of the epics and Purāṇa literature on questions of dharma (Aparārka, pp. 140–1, 146), and the status of "heretical" (non-Vedic) religious law such as that of the Buddhists and Śaivas (Kumārila, pp. 101–4, Vijñāneśvara and Medhātithi, p. 107, and Aparārka, pp. 148–61).

As so often with books pitched at non-specialists, a decision was taken, no doubt at an editorial level, to limit the use of diacritical marks. In the main text, they are used only for italicized Sanskrit terms and titles of works, but not for personal names. Now if one is to forgo the acute accent on *ś* and the dot under *ṣ*, one should transcribe it *sh* to distinguish them from *s*. This is done in some cases, but mostly not. We see on p. 151 alone, for example, Shaiva (for Śaiva) and Krishna (for Kṛṣṇa, with *ri* for the vowel *ṛ*), but Pasupati (for Paśupati) and Mahesvara (for Maheśvara), while the text called *Niḥśvāsa Saṃhitā* appears in full regalia (Olivelle correctly notes the alternate orthography *Niśvāsa*). Such inconsistency is visually disturbing – we see "Brihaspati (*BṛSm* 1.25.16)" – and ultimately more confusing than simply beginning the book with a note about Sanskrit transliteration and being consistent.

A greater inconvenience is the fact that all notes have been relegated to the end of the book. These notes are full of interesting and important explanatory material, which is sorely wanted while reading but difficult to track down. Flipping back and forth continually between text and notes is a headache under the best of circumstances, and these are not the best of circumstances. The running headers at the top of each page list only which part you are in and the name of the chapter, but not the number. The headers at the top of pages in the endnotes give the chapter numbers and names but not the part number, and since some chapter names occur twice (once in Part I and again in Part II), the chapter number is crucial. A header reading "Notes to pages X–Y" would have helped, but by far the best thing would have been simply to use footnotes. The notion that footnotes are unsightly or scare readers is silly. Burying the explanatory notes out of reach is far more off-putting.

This is especially a problem in the chapters presenting extracts of Vedic exegesis (chapter 6) and Dharmaśāstra commentaries (chapters 7, 8, 12, and 13). Here is where readers (both neophytes and experts) really need the guidance that Olivelle provides in the notes, for example to explain what the Hawk sacrifice and the Eighth-Day rite are, and why they come up so much (see p. 344, notes 4 and 7). The argumentation of Visvarupa (i.e., Viśvarūpa) in chapter 7 is particularly complex, and the notes are indispensable at every step.

In spite of these infelicities of format, the book is a precious resource for making accessible to non-specialists India's sophisticated tradition of law and legal thought, spanning antiquity up to about 1200 CE. Many sourcebooks make the mistake of stuffing in too many disparate excerpts that are too short and too briefly introduced to give readers a coherent or comprehensive sense of their import. Instead, Olivelle gives us substantial passages, in clear, accurate, original translation, with ample contextualization, thus conveying the trajectory of the tradition and making it fully accessible for comparative studies.

Timothy Lubin
Washington and Lee University

BORAYIN LARIOS:
Embodying the Vedas: Traditional Vedic Schools of Contemporary Maharashtra.
xvi, 271 pp. Warsaw and Berlin: De Gruyter Open, 2017. £90.99. ISBN 978 3 11 051731 6.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X18000642

With this ethnography on the transmission of religious knowledge in modern India, Borayin Larios invites us to consider how engagement with the Vedas articulates the cultural identity of orthodox Brahmins in Maharashtra. In addition to reporting on *how* these Sanskrit texts from the first millennium BCE are orally transmitted in modern Hindu traditions, *Embodying the Vedas* takes up the more slippery question of *why* the Vedas are transmitted. What's at stake for the teachers and students who devote their lives to learning and performing these ancient texts? What's in it for the parents, politicians, and religious leaders who support these endeavours? In grappling with these questions, Larios pushes beyond the familiar tropes of Vedic learning – a textual corpus of enormous size; precise memorization of every syllable and *mantra*; initiation within venerable lineages; maintenance of ritual purity – to reveal the complexities of what it means "to lead a Vedic life" (160). Through his careful study of more than two dozen boarding schools where Brahmin boys prepare for careers as priests, we discover the religious significance of contemporary Vedic transmission alongside its human and socio-political dimensions: patronage, prestige, secular education, new technologies, job opportunities, marriage prospects, and Hindu nationalism. Beyond illuminating present circumstances, this perspective reminds us that the Vedas – in common with holy scriptures around the world and throughout history – have always taken shape at the intersection of religion and society.

The idealized figure of the Brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*) looms large in this study and in the lives of Larios's interlocutors. Regionally, those Brahmins who have successfully completed the course of Vedic study gain the title of *vedamūrti*, "embodiment