

It is unclear to me how Hallaq's prescription that Orientalists should start spending more time on their own positionality than on futile Middle Eastern studies of "microhistorical" detail (p. 258) is any less Eurocentric or navel-gazing than Said's *Orientalism*. If, as Hallaq argues, the much-maligned Other needs to become the salvific alternative tradition for a planet that liberal modernity has consigned to natural and human disasters, then we hear remarkably little in *Restating Orientalism* from Muslim intellectuals of that alternative tradition out there. Until we do, *Orientalism*'s liberal biases notwithstanding, Said's account is still analytically sharper than the conservative messianism of Wael Hallaq's critique.

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SOUTH ASIA

WHITNEY COX:

Politics, Kingship, and Poetry in Medieval South India: Moonset on Sunrise Mountain.

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In this long-awaited study of the south Indian monarch Kulottuṅga Coḷa, Whitney Cox's *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry in Medieval South India: Moonset on Sunrise Mountain* promises to upstage twentieth-century classics (e.g. Nilakantha Sastri, Subbarayalu) as the gold standard of historiography on the Coḷa Empire. Through a relentlessly interdisciplinary fusion of "history, politics, and philology", Cox moves well beyond the reconstruction of regnal years and military campaigns endemic to positivist historiography in favour of a recovery of the human agency at the heart of Coḷa imperial politics – defined by Cox as the "array of customary and constitutional institutions and practices that meaningfully maintained and reproduced the asymmetrical distribution of power and access to resources". Significantly, for Cox, the *political* fundamentally includes the *textual*, entailing a recover of the monarch's discursive footprints in multiple languages and genres. Thus, Coḷa-period epigraphy and literature are rendered themselves as strategic acts, whose motivations come into sharp relief through Cox's painstaking philological acumen.

While the four chapters of *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry* are structured sequentially as chronological episodes in the life (and afterlife) of Kulottuṅga Coḷa, the book's narrative is equally punctuated by episodes of intervention in the close reading of key texts and genres. The early years of the Cola Imperium figure prominently in Cox's reconsideration of the *mēykirtti* genre of royal encomium, a eulogistic signature of Coḷa regents that precedes the documentary activity of imperial edicts. Although highly regimented in its form and function, the *mēykirtti*, Cox demonstrates, were intended as deliberate political acts, the genre serving less as a static emblem of Coḷa imperial legitimacy than as an arena for strategic choices in rhetoric that sought to intervene in extra-textual social relations. Most notably among these choices, in both Tamil *mēykirtti* and Sanskrit *praśasti*, figures the deliberate invocation of dual imperial imagery, where references to the Cālukya emblem, the boar *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, and the mythological heritage of the Coḷas

and Cālukyas in the Solar and Lunar Dynasties respectively, provide a venue for the negotiation of Kulottuṅga's ambiguous identity as that "Moonset on Sunrise Mountain" for which the book is named.

It is well known, as Cox acknowledges, that the dearth of documentary evidence from early medieval south India limits what can realistically be known about individual political acts. Nevertheless, Cox breaks methodological ground by demonstrating that observable patterns in the political aesthetic are far from accidental. For instance, Cox employs a weighted analysis of incidences of the *mēykirrti* in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam, the northern Tamil region, to identify it as a heightened arena of political activity. This evidence suggesting that the restructuring of social and political relations between the Coḷa state, local magnates, and Brahmin and Veḷḷāḷa elites would later prove pivotal to the unlikely succession and later political stratagem of Kulottuṅga Coḷa. And indeed, it is remarkably implausible in hindsight that Kulottuṅga, the erstwhile Veṅḡ Cālukya prince Rājiga, so named derisively for his Andhra origins, ought to have succeeded to overlordship of the Coḷa imperium at all, barring the complex exigencies of interdynastic politics. Whereas previous studies have applied a structuralist analysis of kinship to explain how a matrilineal descendant of the Coḷa line such as Rājiga would serve as an appropriate candidate, Cox instead locates in the instability of the 1070s a nexus of events – including the untimely death of his cousin, Adhirājendra, in 1072, and escalating tensions with the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa – that left the Coḷa political arena ripe for strategic intervention.

But perhaps the rhetorical apex of *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry* lies in its philological excavation of the political resonances in contemporary works of Sanskrit and Tamil literature, principally Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* and Cayaṅkōṅṭār's *Kalīnkattupparani*. Blurring the disciplinary boundaries of aesthetic and historical referential textual study, Cox approaches the "worldliness" of a literary work, in the words of Edward Said – its inevitable imbrication with the extratextual world – with an underdetermined methodology that leaves the precise motive and referentiality of any individual work in the hands of philological judgement. Moving beyond, for instance, Bilhaṇa's purported mendacity concerning Coḷa affairs as royal spokesman for Vikramāditya of the Kalyāṇa Cālukyas, Cox calls attention instead to subtleties in Bilhaṇa's language, such as how the analogical figuration of Rājiga and Vikramāditya's brother Someśvara reveals Bilhaṇa's fascination with the pathological excesses of royal power. Cayaṅkōṅṭār, likewise, beyond the situatedness of his Tamil *parani* as manifested in his concrete references to the places and personages of the Coḷa court, embeds a historical re-employment of Kulottuṅga's ascension to the throne within the work's rhetorical fissures, in which political chaos cohabits with the ferocity of Kālī's court with its horrific *pālai* wilderness landscape.

In its thoroughgoing interdisciplinarity, *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry* presents a compelling contribution to the history of religion in south India, particularly through its sensitive reading of Kulottuṅga's lasting contribution to the shape of Tamil Śaivism. While questioning evidence for large-scale Brahmin resettlement as a means of royal legitimation, Cox turns instead to the narrative subtleties of the *Sūtasamhitā* and the *Cidambaramāhātmya*, the latter of which he labels the single most consequential rendition of the monarch's life owing to its formative articulation of the "ritual and socio-moral order" of Cidambaram as the iconic centre of Tamil Śaivism. Of similar significance is Cox's recovery of the Coḷa intervention, during the earlier reign of Rājendracoḷa, in the endowment and worship of the goddess Cāmuṇḍeśvarī, who is figured, as accords with emic conceptions of power and agency, as a political actor in her own right.

As an iconoclastic and nuanced study of the political through its unnoticed traces, *Politics, Kingship, and Poetry* endows the field not only with a thorough

reconsideration of the Coḷa Empire and its historiography, but also with a methodological challenge. In its subtle yet persistent challenge of the structuralist norms of historiography, Cox reveals the breadth of material at our disposal as interdisciplinary scholars of the South Asian past to recover the diachronic and the agentive within events often emplotted as static, pre-given structures.

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GERALD LARSON:

Classical Yoga Philosophy and the Legacy of Sāṃkhya with Sanskrit Text and English Translation of Pātañjala Yogasūtra-s, Vyāsa Bhāṣya and Tattvavaiśārādī of Vācaspatimiśra.

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Throughout his career, Gerald Larson has shone a light on the technical complexities of classical Indian Sāṃkhya and Yoga philosophy. In his view, Sāṃkhya is one of the “truly important” intellectual achievements in India’s intellectual history (p. ix). Larson’s doctoral thesis, *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of Its History and Meaning*, published in 1969, is still one of the most authoritative studies of Sāṃkhya, and he has always argued for a hand-in-glove relationship between Yoga and Sāṃkhya as a common tradition (*samāna-tantra*). Yet, as he himself states in his new book, even after a lifetime of scholarship, “the full significance” of the *Yogasūtra* “remains elusive” (p. 1). This latest publication furthers Larson’s project of illuminating the meaning of the *Yogasūtra*, by providing a new English translation of the *Yogasūtra* and two of its commentaries, thereby presenting the “three most important texts of classical yoga” (p. 1).

As Larson explains, the *Yogasūtras* are “laconic utterances that are largely unintelligible taken solely by themselves” (p. x). Even the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* is, in Larson’s estimation, “hardly a model of clarity” (p. x). This is due to the “long tradition of oral interpretation”, the model of *guru-paramparā*, which has been lost over time (p. 1). Hence the necessity of turning to later commentaries. New translations of the *Yogasūtra* and its first commentary, the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, are always a welcome addition to the academic field. Larson relies on the Sanskrit text as constituted by Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, which is based mostly on KS Āgāṣe’s 1904 edition. However, the most significant contribution in Larson’s latest work is his “new, accessible” English translation of Vācaspatimiśra’s commentary, the *Tattvavaiśārādī* (p. x).

Vācaspatimiśra, who flourished in the tenth century CE, was a philosopher of Advaita Vedānta, and, like most of the great medieval scholars, wrote a number of commentaries on the root texts of the classical *darśanas* (schools of philosophy). As well as the *Tattvavaiśārādī*, he composed the *Tattvakaumudī*, a terse commentary on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. Larson argues that the *Tattvavaiśārādī* is not only useful in decoding the *Yogasūtra* and its *bhāṣya*, but that it influenced *all* subsequent commentaries on both Sāṃkhya and Yoga up to the present day (pp. 3–4). But from the other landmark medieval commentators (e.g. Bhojarāja or Vijñānabhikṣu) why does Larson value Vācaspatimiśra’s text so highly?