

## BOOK REVIEWS

DI COSMO, N.: *Ancient China and Its Enemies. The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002. 369 pp. ISBN 0-521-77064-5, price 47,50 GBP (hbk).

The publication under review is an important contribution to our understanding of the relations between the Nomadic societies settled in the north of China and the Chinese civilisation. This topic has been of great interest for both the traditional Chinese scholarship (starting with the information on the Xiongnu in the *Historian's Record* by Sima Qian as convincingly shown by Nicola Di Cosmo) and Western Sinology – one can just mention the two recent contributions by Sechin Jagchid and Van Jay Symons (*Peace, War, and Trade along the Great Wall. Nomadic-Chinese Interaction through Two Millennia*. Bloomington – Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1989) and by Thomas Barfield (*The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*. Cambridge, MA – Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1989). Though, much has been written on this issue and particular periods and aspects of this complex relationship, Nicola Di Cosmo (University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand) has managed to present numerous new views and interpretations. The author is focusing on the early, formative period of the Nomadic-Chinese relationship, in the period from the first millennium B.C. to the first century B.C., when the pattern of mutual relations had been established. As correctly stated by the author at the very beginning, these relations have often been viewed and evaluated from the Chinese Sinocentric and quite simplistic perspective subordinated to the history of China, which is to a large extent due to the fact that the researcher is confronted on one hand with abundant Chinese sources and only a limited number of documents which mirror the “barbarian” understanding of their relations with China (p. 5) on the other. Nicola Di Cosmo is using both the textual evidence (and while reading and interpreting Chinese sources, which are quite well-known and accessible to scholars, he is able to present new interpretations of particular issues) and archaeological evidence as excavations continuously produce new data. He makes use of a large number of primary and secondary sources in various languages (Chinese, Russian, English – see the extensive Select Bibliography, pp. 335–359) he is acquainted with, but draws his own conclusions, which are often not in accord with the traditional and often repeated picture. His analysis of the Nomadic-Chinese relations in the early period is both focused on the role the experience with the northern “barbarians” had had for the formation of China and at the process of state formation among the pastoral nomads on the steppes with regards to their contacts with China. His aim is to provide the reader with different possibilities of interpretation (p. 4) and thus approaches the topic from various angles.

The monograph is divided into four parts, each approaching in two chapters the central topic from a different perspective in a chronological order. The first part (pp. 13–90) deals with the rise of pastoral nomadism on Eurasian steppes during the first millennium B. C. Nicola Di Cosmo uses archaeological evidence to show the process of emergence of cultures that developed bronze metallurgy, handicraft technologies and intro-

duced horseback riding to the steppes. The author discusses the material, economical and social preconditions which led to the rise of pastoral nomadism. Then he focuses on the area north of China (the so-called Northern Zone; that is, today's Manchuria, Mongolia and Xinjiang) and using archaeological data, discusses the rise of nomads. According to his periodization this process had evolved in three phases during the Western and Eastern Zhou Dynasty (between the 9th and the 3rd cent. B.C.). This area is in the focus of the author's interest as it had direct contacts with the nucleus of the Chinese polity. The second part (pp. 93-158) makes primary use of the Chinese written sources and the author describes the perception of the northern non-Chinese people during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty as reflected by these sources. He argues against the simplistic dichotomy between agriculturalists and nomads, or the civilized Chinese and the uncultured "barbarians" (with good reasons N. Di Cosmo points out that in Chinese there is not a general term for the non-Chinese neighbours and the indiscriminative use of the term "barbarian" obscures the various roles these ethnic groups – the Man, Yi, Rong and Di of Chinese sources – had played in the Chinese imagination and foreign policy; p. 95, note 7) divided by a sharply demarcated boundary. He draws a distinction between the assimilated Man and Yi, and the non-assimilated Rong and Di. He proves that actually the Rong and Di cannot be considered as typical nomads (for the most parts they were farmers and shepherds) and only after their incorporation into China the Chinese states were confronted with typical pastoral nomads (the Hu) who had represented a different type of challenge. The author shows that these ethnic groups inhabiting the Northern Zone had played an important role as allies and resources in the struggle among the Zhou states. Later he analyses the pattern of relations between China and Inner Asia which had emerged during this period, namely trade and tribute, and the wall building, which according to the author was the result of an expansionist strategy of Chinese northern states (p. 143, 149 – he uses evidence from Chinese sources), and was not – as traditionally interpreted – a defensive measure against the frequent intrusions of nomadic armies.

The central topic of the third part (pp. 161-252) are the relations between the Xiongnu and China from the 3rd to the 1st cent. B.C. This period represents the first encounter between the Chinese empire (after 221 B.C.) and a highly centralized – however, following the Inner Asian model of centralization – nomadic empire. N. Di Cosmo first analyses the rise and political unification of the Xiongnu and their relations with the Qin Dynasty and the early Han Dynasty which resulted in a creation of a new world order in East Asia which was dominated by the Han Chinese Empire and the Xiongnu empire which represented two great powers of equal status with other states and communities subordinated either to China or to Xiongnu. However, this changed with military expansion of the emperor Han Wudi in the Western Regions toward the end of the 2nd cent. B.C. This change of policy was to a certain degree the result of the realization that the appeasement *heqin* strategy did not work and could not guarantee an enduring peace. Nicola Di Cosmo's examination of this policy brings into our consideration the different nature of the authority of the Chinese emperor and the Xiongnu *shanyu* which are closely connected with treaty violations (pp. 218-224). The final, fourth, part (pp. 255-311) follows the impact of the contact with the Xiongnu on Chinese scholarship, namely historiography as represented by Sima Qian's *magnum opus*. Starting with the *Shi ji* the non-Chinese inhabiting the north became an object of historical and ethnographic inquiry of Chinese scholars and the detailed description (based on personal acquaintance, oral accounts and written documents) of the Xiongnu in the chapter 110 forms a model for later descriptions of non-Chinese in Standard histories (however the

author draws a distinction between the sympathetic and tolerant account of Sima Qian, and the much more critical and derogatory description of the Xiongnu by Ban Gu in the *Han shu*, pp. 270-271). Sima Qian made Inner Asia a part of the history of China and it became a part of the all-inclusive vision of the universe.

At one point (p. 271) the author describes Sima Qian as a “barbarophile”. According to my opinion, the author of the monograph under review can be regarded – in the positive sense – as a modern “barbarophile”: Nicola Di Cosmo has successfully managed to re-evaluate the Nomadic-Chinese relations in the early period and has rehabilitated the role of Inner Asian nomads in Chinese history. His monograph has raised some important questions which will hopefully be answered sooner or later either by him or other scholars. His publication represents a formidable piece of scholarship and he has indeed succeeded “to establish a basis for the study of the early relations between China and Inner Asia” (p. 313). Anybody dealing with the various aspects – economic, political, military, institutional, social, religious, etc. – of the complex and manifold relationship between the Northerners and Chinese in the course of the history is well advised to consult the publication under review.

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MUSASHI TACHIKAWA, SHRIKANT BAHULKAR, MADHAVI KOLHATKAR: *Indian Fire Ritual*. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited 2001. 212 pp.

There are many detailed descriptions of vedic rituals, especially in younger Vedic texts, namely in Sutras. Although these texts introduce precise rules regarding the performance of rituals and the role of priests, altars, fire places, utensils, etc. the procedure of rituals has undergone various modifications in later times due to various conditions, whether geographical, social, or economic. This was one of reasons why the authors of the publication under review decided to record as carefully as possible an actual performance of a chosen ritual in contemporary India and do it not just by word but also through the use of photographs. Especially the photographs should serve another aim of the authors, that of enabling people living outside India, who cannot personally follow relevant rituals, to have a more concrete notion about individual aspects of a ritual. An expectation of the authors that their work will contribute to a comparative study of the *homa* rituals in Asian religion is equally important.

The authors have chosen one of the most basic sacrifice, Pavitreṣṭi, as an object of their examination, analysis and description. The sacrifice has been performed by a team of priests invited for this purpose from Nasik. The priests performed the ritual in July 1979 in Vaidika Saṁśodhana Maṇḍaḷa in Poona, India. They followed the manual Pavitreṣṭiprayoga. The English translation of the text of the manual is given in Appendix I (pp. 175 – 189) and its Sanskrit text in the Roman script in Appendix II (pp. 190 – 201).

The work is divided into five parts: the Introduction and Parts I – IV. In the Introduction (pp. 1 – 22), the authors briefly explain the structure of Pavitreṣṭi and the role of the fire ceremony, as well as the division of sacrifices. Then attention is paid to the duties of priests in the Śrauta ritual and to a role of the priests and the sacrificer in Darśpūrṇamāsa sacrifices.

A detailed overview of the structure and procedure of the analysed ritual follows. The procedure is divided into three blocks: 1. Preliminary rites, 2. Main rites, 3. Con-