that humans may have sometimes served as actual victims (p. 238). (The anthropomorphic head pictured on the cover of the book is a clay specimen used by Nambudiri Brahmins of Kerala in their modern performances of Vedic ritual, where no victims of any kind are immolated.) At least in a symbolic sense, however, Collins agrees with Heesterman that the head beneath the altar "attests to the violent relations that lie hidden beneath the surface of the bloodless . . . classical ritual" (p. 198). The bottom line, for Collins and Heesterman alike, is that the displacement of conflict from Vedic sacrifice creates a void in which a wide range of meanings—language, myth, philosophy, and theology—may arise.

While situating his project as a study of myth and ritual in India over a thousand-year period from 500 B.C.E. to 500 C.E., Collins offers the caveat that his "primary mode of analysis will be textual, not historical" (p. 3). Indeed, the book's stance throughout is pointedly *a*historical: like Girard and Heesterman, Collins makes an argument predicated on a loosely defined "prehistory," whose legacy reverberates in the historical cultures that follow. And while his reading strategy may be textual in that it takes the Vedas and the Sanskrit epics as the main frame of reference, its primary concern is not to systematically analyze the stratified testimony of these texts, nor to philologically engage text and language. Instead, Collins' approach is thematic and comparative: for instance, he invokes the work of medievalist Henry Charles Lea to frame the dynamics of rivalry in Vedic ritual (p. 96), Jacques Derrida on Greek ritual to decode the Brāhmaṇa story of Cyavana (p. 223), the "speculative realism" of philosopher Quentin Meillassoux to analyze the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā doctrines of Jaiminī (p. 231), postcolonial theory on climate change to talk about Karṇa's role in the *Mahābhārata* (p. 243), and so on. While sometimes disorienting, this approach makes for a fascinating read.

The Head beneath the Altar concludes with a short chapter ("Yajñānta: The End of Sacrifice") that aims to elaborate on the differences between Girard's critique of sacrifice and those Collins has assembled from Hindu mythology. Here, Collins acknowledges that his culminating ambition in interpreting Hindu critiques of sacrifice from the perspective of mimetic theory is to "articulate an ethical position" (p. 241) that will minimize the scapegoating, rivalry, and violence of mimesis in human culture. To this end, he returns to the epic hero Karṇa—who, he argues, transcends the mimetic structures of violence and sacrifice in the *Mahābhārata* war—to highlight his potential as a model for "universal singularity" (p. 241) in the modern context of global environmental catastrophe. In this way, a book that began as an analysis of how the old world has shaped religion concludes as an idealistic pitch for how religion might shape the new world. On the final pages Collins makes the case for locating "the end of sacrifice" in Hindu traditions of sacrifice, and more precisely in the Vedas as deployed by Girard in his *Sacrifice* lectures: because Vedic thinkers discerned the violence inherent in sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇas, they were able to transcend "archaic religion" (p. 243) and produce the philosophical innovations of the *Upaniṣad*s. In the context of Indology, this assessment neglects recent work by Signe Cohen, Brian Black, and Patrick Olivelle, among others, which interrogates the conventional wisdom that the Upaniṣads represent a monumental turning point in Indian cultural history; more broadly, however, the conclusion leaves the impression that, avowed differences aside, Collins' work cannot escape its Girardian inspiration. In true mimetic fashion, one might say, Collins has fashioned a reading of Hindu myth to rival Girard's reading of Western myth.

The Head Beneath the Altar contains several tables, endnotes, a bibliography, and an index.

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A Less Traveled Path: Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra Chapter 2, Critically Edited with a Study on Its Structure and Significance for the Development of Buddhist Meditation. 2 vols. By Daniel M. Stuart. Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region, vols. 18/1+2. Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House; Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2015. Pp. xiv + 642; 377. €98.

Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra is a Buddhist *sūtra*, probably completed by the beginning of the fifth century C.E, centered around a description of meditation practice. It consists of seven chapters. Chapter

1 is an explanation of karma, good and bad, and its results. Chapter 2 is an analysis of the human realm in samsara and a description of spiritual progress through ten stages (*bhūmi*s, not the same as the ten *bhūmi*s of *Daśabhūmikasūtra*). This chapter also contains an unusual version of the *pratītyasamutpāda* formula in which the relationship between feelings (*vedanā*) and craving (*tṛṣṇā*) is reversed. Stuart argues that this reversal has something to do with the meditative experience of monks. Chapters 3–6 are accounts of the realms of hell-beings, hungry ghosts (*preta*s), and gods, along with descriptions of the morally significant actions (karma) that lead to rebirth in each realm. Chapter 7 describes a meditation on the body. In the first six chapters, discourses on karma, cosmology, and mental functions are presented as the contents of a monk's meditation.

Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra is very long, 417 pages in the Taishō edition of the Chinese translation (*Zhengfa nianchu jing* 正法念處經, T721). In addition, the *sūtra* has been translated into Tibetan (*Phags-pa dam-pa'i chos dran-pa nye-bar gzhag-pa*), and from Tibetan into Mongolian. A Japanese translation of the Chinese version was published in 1932 in the *Kokuyaku issaikyō* 国訳一切経 series (Kyōshū-bu 経集部 11).

Aside from Lin Li-Kouang's pioneering *L'aide-mémoire de la vraie loi* (1949), which includes an analysis of the first six chapters but no translation, the *sūtra* has until now been largely ignored in the West. In Japan, Mizuno Kōgen published a substantial article in 1964, and since then a few more articles in Japanese have appeared. A Sanskrit manuscript of the first six chapters, kept in Norbulingka in Lhasa, has recently become available, and now there is more interest. According to Stuart, Vesna Wallace is preparing a Sanskrit edition of the first chapter, and Mitsuyo Demoto, of the third, while I am planning to edit and translate the Tibetan translation of the seventh chapter. In addition, several scholars, including Stuart, Demoto, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, and Costantino Moretti, have recently written articles concerning the *sūtra.*

A Less Traveled Path focuses on the second chapter of the *sūtra*, to which Stuart gives the title, "The Core Meditation Practice and the Human Realm." The chapter describes in rich detail the mental actions of a yoga practitioner (*yogācāra*). The meditating monk analyzes the physical and mental components of human existence, as well as the functioning of karma. In the course of his practice, he loses his attachment to samsara and achieves equanimity. He proceeds through ten stages, culminating in his attainment of *dhyāna.* The chapter is noteworthy for its similes. One striking example is the comparison of the mind to a painter: like a painter making a painting, mental actions create a person's world. Another unusual feature is the account of deities who praise the meditator to deities of the next higher realm.

The two volumes of Stuart's book include an introduction, a very long analysis of the text entitled "Meditation and Textual Practice in the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*," a critical edition of the Sanskrit text face-to-face with a heavily annotated English translation, a diplomatic edition of the Sanskrit manuscript, a critical edition of the Tibetan translation, and the Chinese text.

Stuart's contribution to the field of Buddhist Studies is impressive, especially for such a young scholar. He demonstrates mastery of Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese, as well as familiarity with an extensive array of primary and secondary sources. His edition, translation, and analysis all show that he has put a great deal of thought into his work, and he has very much advanced the study of *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*, which is indeed a rich and fascinating text.

The introduction includes a brief review of scholarship on Indian Buddhist meditation in which Stuart describes the importance, as well as the shortcomings, of the works of prominent scholars, going back as far as T. W. Rhys Davids. Stuart argues that recently scholars, including Gregory Schopen and Eli Franco, have been undervaluing meditation as a central feature of Buddhism. Stuart promises to avoid what he considers to be Franco's overemphasis on doctrine or philosophy and to take a broader approach in his own study of *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*.

In his analysis Stuart makes a number of assertions about the text. In the section entitled "Tacit Mahāyāna Soteriology in the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*," Stuart argues that the *sūtra* reflects Mahāyāna attitudes on three points: first, the *yogācāra* knows things that, outside of Mahāyāna, only the Buddha should know; second, it allows that the practitioner can become a full-fledged buddha; third, nirvana is postponed. Stuart concludes that the essence of all Mahāyāna traditions is the bodhisattva ideal and that the *sūtra*, without using the term "bodhisattva," advocates a version of a bodhisattva path. In the final section of his analysis, "The *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* as Commentary: The

Yogācāra Imaginaire," Stuart points to passages that illustrate what he considers to be a "mentalist project." He argues that developments in the *sūtra* "explain certain aspects of the development of the influential Yogācāra-vijñānavāda school of Buddhism."

Editing this text was clearly difficult. The Sanskrit is extant in a single, very imperfect manuscript, and the Chinese and Tibetan translations do not always correspond to the Sanskrit or to each other. Frequent emendation was required, and Stuart generally uses the Chinese and Tibetan skillfully in making corrections. In most cases, the notes provide all the information necessary to evaluate the emendation.

The appendices in volume 2 provide much valuable material. The diplomatic transcription allows the reader to picture the manuscript in its unedited state, with the original punctuation and irregular spellings, and with all the lacunae. This is particularly useful in the case of *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*, which requires extensive emendation. The transcription would have been even more useful if Stuart had included section references to the Sanskrit critical edition and English translation. Without them, and without a digital text, it is very difficult to navigate from the edition/translation to the transcription.

The critical edition of the Tibetan translation, on the other hand, is conveniently divided into the same sections as the Sanskrit edition and English translation. It is the result of a painstaking collation of nine witnesses, including the Basgo, Hemis, and Gondhla manuscripts, which have recently become available and have so far been collated only for a handful of texts. Unfortunately, Stuart has not provided a substantial introduction to the Tibetan edition. He assumes that the reader knows which of the witnesses belong to which of the two main transmission lines, Tshal pa and Them spangs ma. Although most of the affiliations can be found easily in previous studies, in the case of the Narthang Kanjur, some texts of which belong on the Tshal pa side and others on the Them spangs ma, only the editor knows for sure, and he has the responsibility to inform us about this. While Stuart's decision not to try to establish a stemma is understandable, he could have at least made some general comments about his witnesses and specific comments on more of his editorial choices. These would add to our overall knowledge of the Kanjur and would help future editors, especially of other chapters of *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra.*

The Chinese text is also divided into the same sections as the Sanskrit edition and the translation. As Stuart explains, it is basically a re-punctuated transcription of the Taishō edition complete with the Taishō variant readings, which he occasionally accepts. It is useful to have the Chinese text in the volume, but he should also have included page, column, and line numbers at regular intervals so that the reader could easily find the corresponding place in the SAT or CBETA databases.

Stuart has tackled a very difficult text, and his work is admirable. However, it has some shortcomings, not of scholarly competence but of style and judgment. First of all, Stuart is extremely wordy and is prone to writing long sentences full of vague words and abstractions. For example, "engagement," "engaged," or "engaging" can be found very often in Stuart's book, as many as five times on a single page. Some other words and phrases that appear with excessive frequency include: "textual community," "project," "program," "framework," and "trajectory." Besides occurring too often, these phrases are vague or abstract. In addition, a handful of words are misused. One example is the word "underwrites," which Stuart uses to mean variously "underlies," "is the basis for," or "emphasizes."

The renderings of several Sanskrit words are also questionable. One example is *rūpa.* When *rūpa* refers to the object of vision, Stuart translates it as "visible form," which is perfectly standard. However, in contexts where *rūpa* is normally translated as "matter," he prefers "materiality." Examples include "the sphere of subtle materiality" (*rūpadhātu*); "unmanifest materiality" (*avijñaptirūpa*); "the materiality of denizens of hell, animals, and hungry ghosts" (*nārakeyatiryakpretarūpa*). But *rūpa* is not an abstract word in Sanskrit: it is not the state of being composed of matter or form. It *is* matter or form.

In his introduction and analysis, Stuart repeatedly stresses the uniqueness of *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*. The *sūtra* is certainly unusual but perhaps not as revolutionary as Stuart claims. His observations regarding the *sūtra*'s unusual meditation system, its seemingly Mahāyāna attitudes, and its presaging of Yogācāra/Vijñānavāda are interesting and defensible. However, as Buddhist scholars have long noted, there are "Mahāyāna" elements in many non-Mahāyāna texts, and from its beginnings Buddhism has had a strongly "mentalist" tendency. Stuart is aware of this; nevertheless, he overstates his case, inviting skepticism on the part of his readers.

Stuart does not claim that the *sūtra* contains technical terms, for example, *ālayavijñāna*, *bīja*, and *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, associated with the fully developed Yogācāra/Vijñānavāda school. He also rightly

notes that "the foundations for an idealistic philosophical turn are, in fact, well established within the earliest textual traditions of canonical Buddhism." Nonetheless, he concludes that "the meditative experiences of the *Saddhsu* [=*Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*] *yogācāra*-s, coupled with certain doctrinal notions about the relationship between mind-consciousness and sense experience, laid the foundations for frameworks of thought that border on idealism." His argument is not totally unreasonable, but, in my opinion, he exaggerates the connection with Vijñānavāda.

From the start Stuart implies that *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* is a very important text. He states that "it is outside of the scholastic mainstream but perhaps as influential as the early materials preserved in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra.*" Referring to quotations in *Sūtrasamuccaya*, *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, and *Dharmasamuccaya*, Stuart says that the *sūtra* became well known in India. However, the handful of quotations in *Sūtrasamuccaya* and *Śikṣāsamuccaya* are simply accounts of the realms of hell-beings and *preta*s, while *Dharmasamuccaya* is just a collection of verses from *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*. In none of these texts is there any philosophical discussion of the *sūtra*, and there seems to be no reference to it in Indian Buddhist commentatorial literature. At least in India, no later text has noted the philosophical novelties identified by Stuart, such as an implicit promotion of a bodhisattva path and a tendency toward Vijñānavāda. It is cited fairly often by Chinese and Japanese Buddhist authors, but their interest seems primarily to have been in hells and hungry ghosts.

Putting these criticisms aside, I want to emphasize the value of Stuart's work. He approaches with utmost seriousness the formidable tasks of editing, translating, and commenting upon an unusual and difficult text. His book is a reliable basis for further work on *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* and a provocative contribution to the literature on meditation. Daniel Stuart is a very talented scholar, and his book is a major accomplishment in the field of Buddhist Studies.

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The Babylonian Theodicy. By Takayoshi Oshima. State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts, vol. 9. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2013. Pp. lxiii + 63. $39 (paper). [Distributed by Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Ind.]

Takayoshi Oshima, of the Friedrich-Schiller University in Jena, has given the field a valuable book that not only meets its goals as a learning tool for students of Akkadian, but will also stimulate discussion in a classroom setting.

The present volume may be seen as only one piece of Oshima's research program related to Mesopotamian wisdom texts. In the volume under review, Oshima alludes to his *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers:* Ludlul Bel Nemeqi *and the* Babylonian Theodicy (ORA 14; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), in which he has now published new materials and re-collations. A comparison with W. G. Lambert's *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* shows that more than half a dozen new fragments are included. In short, the new material offers significant gains in the text of strophes XIX and XXI, as well as smaller advances elsewhere, e.g., strophes I and V. Oshima's edition covers (fully or partially) 272 of the composition's original 297 lines. Since a more thorough discussion of the new tablets appears in the monograph, this review will focus largely on the textbook and its introductory materials.

The SAACT series will be familiar to Assyriologists. It is rooted in the idea of giving students just moving beyond an introductory grammar some simplified resources as they gain the skills to transition to less-well-curated texts. In the case of the present volume, that means that the inventory of signs is limited to the 189 that are actually used in the text. It also includes a seven-page glossary of Akkadian terms that appear, as well as brief lists of the few logograms and proper names.

The cuneiform text itself, which covers just over six pages, is presented with an effort to represent the condition of the broken tablets, in which shaded areas indicate the lost sections. The cuneiform is represented in a standardized font, with hollow wedge heads representing signs that are restored rather than represented on an extant copy. The effect of the whole is utilitarian; although a hand-copy would certainly be more attractive, beginning readers of cuneiform may be grateful not to have to struggle