

In conclusion, Muldoon-Hules's work is deserving of high praise for its careful intertextual engagements of a broad array of classical Indic texts, the focus it brings to one fascinating but understudied text, and its wonderful unpacking of the theme of marriage in Buddhist narratives about women. Muldoon-Hules is a scholar's scholar, and, while her book doesn't ask or answer every relevant question, *Brides of the Buddha* provides an admirably solid basis for future ongoing explorations of female religious agency and history in South Asia.

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*Contribution to the History of the Wheeled Vehicle in India.* By JEAN DELOCHE. Collection Indologie, vol. 126. Pondicherry: INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE PONDICHÉRY and ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT, 2014. Pp. xiii + 145; 31 figures; 36 plates.

French Indologist Jean Deloche has earned much respect for his important contributions to lesser explored aspects of Indian civilization and history, especially in their technological manifestations. His pathbreaking studies on India's roads, bridges, transportation systems, fortifications, water management systems, ports, boats, and ships are notable for their masses of data accumulated over decades of fieldwork combined with painstaking archival research and an unrivalled analytical care for detail in preference to theorizing. He has also contributed to new editions of accounts by French travellers to India, such as Anquetil-Duperron, Chevalier, and Modave.

Deloche's contribution to the study of wheeled transport in India began in 1980 with a two-volume *La circulation en Inde avant la révolution des transports* (École Française d'Extrême-Orient; English tr., *Transport and Communications in India Prior to Steam Locomotion*, vol. I: *Land Transport*; vol. II: *Water Transport* [Oxford Univ. Press, 1993]). In the preface, he acknowledged his motivation: "During the course of several years we journeyed, walking or by bullock cart, throughout this immense country, covering thousands of kilometres: during the torrid heat of summer, wending along the paths of the Himalaya, during the cool season, following the trails of Rajasthan or treading the paths shaded by coconut palms in Kerala; coming here to a halt at a shelter for pilgrims, there, at the ruins of a Mughal palace serving now as a stable for buffaloes. We ardently loved the Indian roads, and fondly preserve descriptions of these in small exercise books." This "ardent love" led in 1983 to a *Contribution à l'histoire de la voiture en Inde* (École Française d'Extrême-Orient), now translated into English in the work under review, which is, however, more than a translation, since the author took this opportunity to revise and substantially enlarge his original work.

Attempting a comprehensive classification of India's traditional wheeled vehicles is Deloche's first concern; his method is empirical, focusing mostly on typology and functionality rather than on the particular draft animal, the goods transported, or the region of the subcontinent, although the last will remain prominent at every point of his discussion. This approach seems appropriate, considering the wide diversity of dimensions and designs involved. Deloche starts with the carriage's wheels (solid or not, spoked or not), their size (with a region-wise discussion, since the smallest are found in arid regions of the subcontinent's northwest while the highest tend to be in the south), crossbars (if any), and felloes (and their thickness). He proceeds with the axle or axles, since in some types of carriages (mostly in north India) each wheel has its own axle, while in others a pair of wheels has a common axle. Every type of carriage, wheel, and body is illustrated by a wealth of line-drawings drawn from many publications.

The second chapter is titled "Carriages in Indian iconography," although it gathers evidence not just from art depictions but also from archaeology and literature. Deloche begins with the Indus civilization and its numerous toy-cart models of ox-drawn wheeled vehicles of diverse but still poorly understood designs: it is not always clear, for instance, whether "the wheels rotated on a fixed axle or were fixed to an axle that revolved with them." Deloche rightly points to the surprising continuity in the width of

the axle, which was measured from rut marks at Mohenjo-daro and in Gujarat and found to be nearly the same as that of contemporary carts in those regions. The design of the solid Harappan wheels is another point of continuity, although it would have been interesting to have a fair discussion of recent claims by seasoned archaeologists such as B. B. Lal and L. S. Rao on the existence of Harappan spoked wheels too, based on radial designs found on many terracotta models; the counterargument has been that these are not models of actual wheels but of spindle whorls, although some of them clearly sport a projecting hub and, in some cases, a groove for a lynchpin. Until more evidence surfaces (and more detailed publications), the question must remain in suspension. Deloche's mention of the remarkable Daimabad copper chariot could have been more extensive, since this early second-millennium BCE artifact represents a major stylistic departure from the Harappan models.

A brief discussion of vehicles depicted in rock art follows, necessarily limited in view of a preference for stylization over realism and the notorious difficulty in dating the paintings. Deloche acknowledges the "difficult problem" posed by such depictions, since "most of the miniature wheeled carts of the chalcolithic age are shown with solid wheels, while most of the carriages represented in rock paintings of the same period are depicted with spoked wheels . . . The chronological position of the early Indian art is therefore puzzling." Missing in his list are paintings from many rock shelters in the Narmada Valley (such as Bhimbetka and Morhana Pahar) and further south on the Deccan plateau, which include spoked-wheel chariots, some drawn by oxen but most by two, four, or more horses; they have been well documented by the rock art specialist Erwin Neumayer, among others.

We are of course on surer ground in the historical period, when designs diversify enormously and every part of the carriage becomes a work of art, as evidenced by stone carvings at Taxila, Bharhut, Sanchi, Besnagar, Amaravati, and other locations (with again a wealth of drawings and pictures). The appearance of the war and processional chariots closely matches their mention in technical texts such as *Arthaśāstra*; farm carts, too, show innovations, such as covered wheels or traction harnesses attached to the draught-pole. Deloche notes important variations: "Buddhist monuments" do not depict solid wheels; their slender spokes numbered as many as twenty-four, "more than those of the modern bullock carts." Solid wheels, on the other hand, are frequent in narrative scenes of peninsular India (e.g., at Pattadakal, Halebidu, etc.).

At this point, Deloche takes care to separate regions and periods in his meticulous descriptions of the many styles and techniques for attaching wheels to a shaft and the shaft to the carriage's body. He notes, for instance, how wheel suspension seems to appear in the sixteenth century in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and the Gangetic plain, and briefly discusses the important case of vehicles for heavy loads, such as Firuz Shah's ten-wheeled carriage designed to transport a fifty-ton Aśokan pillar to Delhi, or the Moghuls' transportation of stone pillars and cannons.

Armed with a mass of data accumulated in just about fifty pages plus three annexures detailing cross-bars, country carts from Bihar, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu, litters, and palanquins, Deloche's conclusions are well informed though often tentative. He asks why the four-wheeled vehicle should have been, across the subcontinent, so underused in comparison with the two-wheeled one, and suggests that the "natural" condition of Indian roads is likely to be the chief answer. This road condition was by and large better in the north than in the Deccan, as "at least since Aśoka, the sovereigns of the Gangetic Plain were interested in the question of roads, and particularly in the good condition of the Grand Trunk Road and the axes leading to the Gulf of Cambay." On the whole, therefore, the construction of carts showed "much greater ingenuity [in north India] than [in] the Deccan."

Returning to the question of the size of wheels, Deloche finds that their distribution as depicted in carved stone panels "roughly tallies that of the present time. Thus, the medium-size carts depicted at Sanchi and Bharhut are not different from the bullock carts of Central India, whereas the carts with high wheels found at Goli and Amaravati evoke the vehicles seen in the coastal area of Andhra Pradesh." Despite a number of technical innovations over the centuries, "certain types of vehicles devised during ancient periods were so efficient as a means of transport that they did not undergo any fundamental changes and have indeed survived to the present day." Indeed, Deloche lists a few recent attempts at "improving" the traditional designs and the reasons for their impracticability. "If the traditional bullock cart is still used in most parts of India, it is probably because the farmers, through trial and error over the ages, had already determined the best conditions."

Plates of over eighty black-and-white photographs from every region add much value to the book, which closes with a fairly exhaustive bibliography and a very useful index-glossary. It is likely to remain an unrivaled reference in the history of wheeled transport in the subcontinent for some time and adds an important chapter to the history of Indian technologies.

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*Demoting Vishnu: Ritual, Politics, and the Unraveling of Nepal's Hindu Monarchy.* By ANNE T. MOCKO. New York: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016. Pp. ix + 246.

When in June 2001 almost the complete royal Nepalese family was wiped out in a shooting spree, or when in 2005 the last Shah king assumed direct rule that triggered the People's Movement of 2006, it was apparent that these events would shake the foundations of Nepal's political system. It is one thing to realize that history was being made, but another to pin down the key changes, as Anne T. Mocko has done in her PhD thesis and the present monograph based on it.

Starting from the observation that in June 2008 King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah quietly abdicated and turned into a normal citizen, she sets out to trace the unmaking of this last Nepalese king in the preceding interim period (2006–2008). She asks how the monarchy could have ended so abruptly but still largely peacefully, and how and why elites who up till then found “it more convenient to rule *through* a Shah king than replace him” (p. 29) suddenly turned against it. Rather than through a conventional political analysis, these questions are answered from the perspective of ritual studies.

In her introduction (ch. 1) the author argues, building on pertinent theories about kingship and ritual practice, that a cornerstone in constructing the social office “king of Nepal” and its attendant ideologies was the performance of exclusive roles in rituals. In her investigation of how the monarch was dismantled by “systematically acting against the office of kingship, rather than the person of the king”—by blocking his access to “objects, locations, events, duties, privileges, and relationships through which the monarchy had been constructed and supported” (p. 2)—two sets of rituals are focused on. Initially, the “succession rituals” that transferred the office to its last holder in 2001 are dealt with, contending that these failed in many respects and “left Gyanendra's kingship incompletely established” (p. 61). In the calendric “reinforcement rituals,” which reconfirmed the king's royal identity on a regular basis, roles previously reserved for the king were shifted to the head of the democratic state from 2007 on. Construing Nepalese royal ritual as elitist practice, “performed not for ‘the people’ but for the king” (p. 11), the author limits herself to asking how ritual performance is productive of political ideologies, leaving the question of their reception aside. She follows the main actors involved in recasting the rituals. On the basis of personal interviews, observations, and journalistic and academic source material, she delivers an “ethnography of event” (p. 24) that takes a detailed look at “institutionally invested political elites carrying out a revolutionary project” (p. 11). Given this research framework and the volume's approach to tracing ritual dynamics in the making, the book offers invaluable testimony regarding how Nepalese kingship ended but was survived by its rituals.

Chapter 2 contains a sketch of the Shah dynasty's rule (1768–2008)—a commendable introduction to that period of Nepalese history. It tackles the “institutional endurance” (p. 27) of Shah kingship despite mostly weak monarchs and continual power struggles. From the beginnings under the charismatic king of Gorkha, Prithvi Narayan Shah (1722–1775), whose conquests laid the foundations of what is now Nepal, it moves on to the “Period of Puppet Kings and their Puppet Masters (1777–1950),” during which the actual kings were largely excluded from exercising political power and confined to ceremonial rule. By not adopting the conventional break between the early Shah (1768–1846) and Rana (1846–1951) periods, this periodization is refreshing and corresponds to the book's focus on royal powers. For the phases that witnessed the restoration of full kingship (1951–1990) and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy (after 1990) the double rhetoric of presenting the monarch as the