from being unintentional immigrants in the land of their birth. Trenka strongly criticizes Korean international adoption's commodification of children, which involved the falsification of some of their identities and family histories in the process. Through a series of flukes, she learns that her American adoptive parents were led to believe that Trenka's birth mother was unmarried and that she had abandoned her children soon after Trenka's birth. Trenka declares that the "true story" is that "I had a family, that my mother desperately wanted me and that she loved me. . . and that my father later regretted the violence that he brought upon his family, which ended in my adoption. . ." (p. 92). She argues that the falsification of adoptees' identities and histories was not personal, but rather methodical. Trenka documents how the collective loneliness experienced by returning Korean adoptees at times results in self-inflicted violence in the forms of self-mutilation and addictions to alcohol and sex.

The title *Fugitive Visions* has an important dual meaning. It refers to the returning Korean adoptee as a fugitive of destruction, failed marriages, racism, and the past (p. 9). But it also refers to Trenka's intense love for music, and specifically piano, that was marred by physical as well as psychological challenges. As an adult, Trenka studied Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives*, an exercise that she claims broke and then rebuilt her as a pianist (p. 20). Thus the reader is not left with conclusion that the returning Korean adoptee is solely a tragic figure. Despite the difficulty of living in Korea, Trenka concludes that there are many days when it is simply wonderful to spend another day there. She writes that "despite all these abandonments, all these tiny annihilations—I want to live" (p. 95).

Catherine Ceniza Choy
University of California-Berkeley
ceniza@berkeley.edu

SOUTH ASIA

Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism. By Johannes Bronkhorst. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011. viii, 293 pp. $169.00 (cloth).
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This book, written by one of today's most prolific scholars of classical India, is a follow-up on his recent book, *Greater Magadha: Studies in the Early Culture of India* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), in which he, among other things, laid out the bold thesis that the concepts of rebirth and karmic retribution had been developed in non-Brāhmaṇical circles in north-east India before they were

incorporated into Brāhmaṇical thinking. After summarizing this thesis in the introductory first chapter, the present book turns to later periods to "study some of the ways in which Brahmanism did influence Buddhism" (p. 25).

The second chapter, entitled "Brahmanism," analyzes the ways in which Brahmins increasingly regained a powerful status in society after the Maurya period. Instead of trying to revive Vedic society, this "new Brahmanism" sought patronage by offering a variety of (ritual) services to rulers, combined with a comprehensive vision of society that legitimated the rule of the latter. The chapter discusses various strategies in this endeavor. First, Johannes Bronkhorst convincingly shows that the spread of Sanskrit and the spread of Brahmins are inseparable and that respect for the status of Brahmins in society is not to be confused with conversion to Brahmanism as a religion. Rather, he describes the "new Brahmanism" as a socio-political ideology that is oriented towards rulers and that provides, at the same time, a special status for Brahmins. Brahmins "colonized the past" by creating, for example, a work of statecraft (the *Arthaś āstra*) claiming that it had been composed by the (Brahmin) minister of the first great emperor, Candragupta Maurya. This, Bronkhorst argues, is an obvious attempt to justify and illustrate the envisioned role of Brahmins as counselors to the king who know how to govern an empire. Third, as an example of a "Brahmanization of borrowed features" (p. 74), he suggests that hermitages (*āś ramas*) and land grants for Brahmins (*agrahāras*) were conflated, or at least closely linked, in Brāhmaṇical literature. This linkage created, in view of potential donors, an idealized vision of Brāhmaṇical settlements as places of religious effort and purity—modeled on Buddhist and Jain monasteries.

The third and longest chapter, "Buddhism Confronted with Brahmanism" discusses various effects that "new Brahmanism" had, in turn, on Buddhism. It argues that Buddhists ceded political counsel and ritual protection for kings to Brahmins, as well as the responsibility for providing a vision of society. One major reason for Buddhists to adopt Sanskrit was, according to Bronkhorst, the status it had gained as a court language; in order to defend their interests in legal and philosophical debates at court, Buddhists had to be able to converse in Sanskrit. (Why this conceivable necessity should have prompted some Buddhist traditions to write down their religious texts in Sanskrit, needs further discussion.) Bronkhorst shows that, by the middle of the first millennium, the "Brāhmaṇical order of society and its vision of political behavior—or at any rate a slightly watered-down version of these two—had become the norm" for Buddhists, too, illustrated by descriptions of the past in Buddhist narratives (p. 161). Whether this development was indeed closely related to the Buddhist adoption of Sanskrit remains debatable, as Bronkhorst's key witness, Aś vaghoṣa, had an apologetic agenda and wrote for a Brāhmaṇical audience (see pages xix-li in *Life of the Buddha by Aśvaghoṣa*, translated by Patrick Olivelle [New York: New York University Press, 2008]).

Another area discussed is relic worship. Bronkhorst argues that in areas of South Asia where Brahmins had a powerful presence, their concepts of purity made Buddhists "hide" or replace the "impure" relics—a thesis that will probably cause debate. The book ends with a discussion on how finally Buddhists too

developed a vision of political rule (with the concept of the king as *bodhisattva*) and ritual skills to protect the state (with Tantric practices), both of which, however, could not compete anymore with the established Brāhmaṇical tradition. A number of subchapters in the book had been (or will be) published elsewhere, and some of those interesting studies have rather loose connections to its main theme. The book provides numerous discussions of particular matters, and the enormous range of references – to both primary and secondary sources—makes it a treasure trove for future investigations. For the general theme, two factors seem to deserve some more attention: the diversity and tensions within Brahmanism (consider, e.g., Brāhmaṇical asceticism) and its historical developments (e.g., the process of "Hinduization"). The ways in which we classify "Brahmanism" at any point in history—as a religion, an ideology, a socio-political program, a philosophy, and so on—determine the respective relation to "Buddhism," whose tradition is equally complex. Aśvaghoṣa is a case in point. Was he a Buddhist? A Brahmin? Or perhaps both, somehow? The designations "Brāhmaṇical" and "Buddhist" were never static, and it is our task to sort out their multiple meanings and dimensions. This book provides rich food for thought for this enterprise.

Oliver Freiberger
The University of Texas at Austin
of@austin.utexas.edu

Indian Female Gurus in Contemporary Hinduism: A Study of Central Aspects and Expressions of Their Religious Leadership. By Marie-Thérèse Charpentier. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2010. 394 pp. €56,25.
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Marie-Thérèse Charpentier offers a detailed and intimate series of portraits of four female gurus (*gurvī*) living in contemporary India. She marries ethnography and gender studies with William E. Paden's comparative approach to the history of religions (*religionswissenschaft*) to generate what she calls a macroscopic understanding of the overlooked phenomenon or patterns of female guruhood in India today. She argues that female guruhood as well as female spiritual leadership stands in sharp contrast to the various stereotypes of female subordination that we often see in orthodox Hindu religion, particularly the textual tradition where women are typically expected to be "passive," "submissive," and "worship their husbands as Gods" (p. 14). Furthermore, she points out that as a category of human religiosity, female gurus have been typically neglected or treated asymmetrically *vis-à-vis* male gurus and draws on the recent work of Karen Pechilis, Lisa Hallstrom, Daniel Gold, Maya Warrier, Meena Khandelwal, and others to frame her discussion.