



Asian Medicine Newsletter

No. 13 DECEMBER 1989

Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud EHESS, 54 bd Raspail, 75006 Paris, France

International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine

**Francis
Zimmermann**
to be the next
President of IASTAM

**Carol
Laderman**
Secretary-General

**Kenneth
Zysk**
Treasurer

A ballot to all dues-paying members of IASTAM was mailed in July, and the results of the election were announced on October 4.

Professor Paul U. Unschuld, President of IASTAM, will officially turn over his office to the newly elected President, Francis Zimmermann, on January 7 in Bombay.

Carol Laderman has been elected Secretary-General, and the other officers, running unopposed, include Kenneth G. Zysk as Treasurer, and three Vice-Presidents,

Professor Ma Kanwen (Beijing),
Hakim Mohammed Said (Islamabad),
Professor K. N. Udupa (Varanasi).

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IMPORTANT BOOKS REVIEWED

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THE ASIAN MEDICINE NEWSLETTER is published twice a year to be circulated free of charge to the paid members of IASTAM. It carries book reviews, research notes, news of people and of recent or forthcoming events. It will be continued in its present format, as complementary to the announced Journal of Asian Medicine.

BOMBAY 1990

THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TRADITIONAL ASIAN MEDICINE

4th to 7th January 1990

Hotel Oberoi Towers, Bombay, India

The THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TRADITIONAL ASIAN MEDICINE, sponsored by IASTAM and organized by the Indian Chapter of IASTAM, co-sponsored by The World Health Organization, Bombay University, Gujarat Ayurved University and Banaras Hindu University, promises to be an exceptional event. Hundreds of scholars, coming from more than twenty-five countries, have registered. A bird's-eye view of the various scientific sessions will be found below, in page 3.

Dr C.O. Akerele of WHO, Geneva, will address the meeting. A plenary session will take place the 2nd day, during which Professor Yamada Keiji of the Research Institute for Humanistic Studies of Kyoto University in Japan, and Professor G. Jan Meulenbeld, retired Professor of Indology of the University of Groningen, The Netherlands, will be awarded the A.L. Basham Medal, established in honor of the great Indologist and founder of IASTAM; the recipients will present lectures. A Presidential Address will be delivered by Professor Paul U. Unschuld on the 3rd evening. The installation of the new officers of IASTAM will conclude the meetings on the 4th day.

see more on ICTAM III in page 3

editorial continuity

In composing each and every issue of the newsletter, we are trying to establish, through the process of reviews, a scientific domain of our own, a new focus of research, shaped and marked out by the most significant publications. All topical questions touched in previous issues will be addressed again. For example, we noted in the previous issue that the new themes of Emotion and Affect are being incorporated into medical anthropology, and a paper by M.J. Fischer (IASTAM Newsl. 12, p. 7) brought to

FEMININITY femininity

Lila Abu-Lughod
*Veiled Sentiments, Honor and Poetry
in a Bedouin Society*,
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986
ISBN 0-520-05483-0 Cloth/0-520-06327-9 Paperback

Margaret Trawick
Notes on Love in a Tamil Family,
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990
ISBN 0-520-06636-7 Cloth \$40 296 pp.

Margaret Trawick Egnor, "Internal iconicity in Paraiyar 'crying songs'," in Stuart Blackburn & A.K. Ramanujan eds. *Another Harmony*, New Essays on the Folklore of India, Berkeley: U. of California Pr., pp. 294-344; Margaret Trawick, "Spirits and voices in Tamil songs," *American Ethnologist*, 15 (1988), pp. 193-215

Charlotte Furth
"Blood, body and gender. Medical images of the female condition in China 1600-1850," *Chinese Science*, An informal and irregular journal dedicated to the study of traditional and modern Chinese science, technology and medicine, Edited and published by Nathan Sivin [1 Smith Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA 19104-6310, USA], Volume 7, December 1986, pp. 43-66;
Charlotte Furth, "Concepts of pregnancy, childbirth, and infancy in Ch'ing Dynasty China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, no. 1, February 1987, pp. 7-35

Charlotte Furth is writing a book about medicine and gender in Ming (1368-1644) and Ch'ing (1644-1911) China. The two papers here under review explore the "medicalization" of feminine realities in the medical texts of the time (influenced by Neo-Confucianism), that is, the medical symbolization of female blood, female pollution beliefs, and the mother's sins of lust and anger. This ideological process of rationalization in the name of medicine "replaced images of negative female power with those of positive female dependency," and justified male paternalism ("Concepts of pregnancy," p. 30). Medical history is nicely blended with women's studies, and we are taking the opportunity to open a new rubric in IASTAM Newsletter! Furth has studied a very large spectrum of indigenous texts. Among the more formal ones, she works, for example, on the *I tsung chin chien* "Golden Mirror of Medicine" (1742), but she shows that "in Chinese medicine, the distinction between a popular and a specialist work, is not in fact great" (p. 10). Her paper on "Blood" will be of special interest to anthropologists studying fluids, humors, and the body image; it has long translations from the classics on blood and women's sickness.

Margaret Trawick and Lila Abu-Lughod are studying the very same basic tenets of femininity in traditional ideology: passion and anger, sexuality, lust, vulnerability, and emotion, but in an ethnographic context, that is, in a context of performance (songs and oral poetry), where these ideas are not, or not yet, medicalized. They both belong to a new brand of anthropologists who do not write monographs any more, but narratives and personal accounts of a very rare and delicate encounter. Their own femininity, and the literary quality of their writings, help them to set up a new style, a new standard, and a new paradigm. They went inside, and they studied the inner world at large. Think, in particular, of the linguistic skills and years of practice required from an American to catch, translate and convey to us the hundred nuances of irony, love and sorrow in Tamil. Margaret Trawick's book will be reviewed in one of our next issues; but we wanted to announce it, and compare Trawick's work to Abu-Lughod's. In Tamilnad (South India), women agricultural laborers belonging to untouchable castes sing many songs giving voice to their complex feelings concerning the nature of human relations. Let me give you the flavor of Trawick's evocation ("Spirits and voices," p. 196): "The Paraiyar laborers' songs of themselves, like my dreams of my days with them, were brimming with vegetative imagery: they called themselves egg-plants, lentils, onions, grains, flowers on the vine. They blossomed, they fruited, they ripened, they were plucked and eaten, they were dried in the sun, they were left for seed. In their songs, they did not own the earth around them, they were that earth. The Paraiyar laborers were people of the open and unfinished body. . . ."

Bedouins who live in the Western Desert of Egypt, more precisely Bedouin women and young men, also sing many songs, to express personal feelings that violate their moral code. These *ghinnāwa-s*, or "little songs," are "lyric poems, like Japanese haiku in form but more like the American blues in content and emotional tone" (p. 27). They have provided Lila Abu-Lughod with the *thématique*, the set of themes, of her person-centered ethnographic account. We do not pretend here to review this book in all its richness; we must select one or two themes that are more relevant to the perspectives of this Newsletter, that is, from the standpoint of an anthropology of illness and healing.

Through the analysis of oral poetry, Lila Abu-Lughod has reached an original concept of illness: "illness, in folk psychology a consequence of any negative emotions" (p. 202). However, the presence of fear at the core of all diseases is somewhat blurred, when the anthropologist, falling victim of her academic training, superimposes on it a grid
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editorial

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our attention Lila Abu-Lughod's Veiled Sentiments. To enhance the informative value and suggestive power of our comments, we are now reviewing this book in conjunction with consonant essays that deal with different cultures. This method of combined reviews on a given common theme - here, Femininity - aims to emphasize the comparative aspects of Asian medicine. Margaret Trawick's papers and forthcoming book on Love in a Tamil Family of South India complement Lila Abu-Lughod's essay on Bedouin women of Egypt. Both anthropologists elaborate the cultural poetics of emotion, while Charlotte Furth's papers on the female condition in Chinese history is enriching our knowledge of the traditional body image. I would like to suggest that a plus is gained through this comparison. Although they have come from such distant places as Egypt, India and China, Lila Abu-Lughod, Margaret Trawick and Charlotte Furth are addressing the same issues. They have a lot to say to each other, and it is the goal of IASTAM Newsletter to further this encounter.

crossing boundaries

We confess taking a malicious pleasure in crossing boundaries between cultures and specialized domains. Although our logotype juxtaposes Sanskrit, Chinese, and Arabic characters (symbolizing the three classical traditions of Asia), Asian medicine to us is not the mere juxtaposition of various areas, languages and disciplines. Our method is to systematically crisscross all perspectives, so that news and reviews may interest all readers, beyond the restricted circle of classical philologists. Versatility is the richness of IASTAM. The uniqueness of IASTAM resides in the exceptionally wide range of cultures and disciplines represented in its membership, a whole world of medical studies and practices, from the Arabic and Persian in the west to the Korean and Japanese in the far east, from textual studies to popular beliefs, from ecology and ethnobiology to philosophy and ethics, and from the ancient sciences of long life to contemporary health care systems. Our scope also extends beyond the boundaries of academic scholarship, since we should not underestimate the geopolitical and economic impact of Asian medicine on today's international relations and public health policies. This is enough to justify our efforts to establish Asian medicine as a new focus of attention.

Francis Zimmermann



International Association for the
Study of Traditional Asian Medicine

FRANCIS ZIMMERMANN, the new President of IASTAM, is a Directeur de recherche (tenured research professor) at the French National Centre for Scientific Research [CNRS] in Paris. Office address: Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en

Sciences Sociales, 54 Boulevard Raspail, 75006 Paris, France. Trained in anthropology, Sanskrit and philosophy of science, he is a recipient of the Wellcome Medal for Research in Anthropology as Applied to Medical Problems, awarded to him by the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1986. His publications include: The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats, An Ecological Theme in Hindu Medicine, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987; and Le Discours des Remèdes au Pays des Epices [Remedies and Medical Discourse in the Land of Spices], Paris, Payot Publ., 1989, English version forthcoming from the University of California Press. The latter book is an anthropological account of the Astavaidya tradition of Ayurvedic medicine in Kerala (South India).

CAROL LADERMAN, the new Secretary-General, is a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Fordham University, Bronx, New York 10458, USA. She was a recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 1987. Her publications include: Wives and Midwives, Children and Nutrition in Rural Malaysia, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983, now available in paperback; several papers on Humoralism (see IASTAM Newsl. 11, p. 9); and a new book on Malay shamanism, forthcoming from Berkeley (University of California Press).

KENNETH G. ZYSK, the new Treasurer, teaches at Eastern Michigan University, Department of History and Philosophy, Ypsilanti, MI 48197, USA. He was a Founder of IASTAM with his teacher A.L. Basham in Canberra in 1979 (see the moving obituary he published in IASTAM Newsl. 8, pp. 3-4). His publications include: Religious Healing in the Veda, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1985 (see IASTAM Newsl. 9, pp. 4 & 6); Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India, Medicine in the Buddhist Monastery, Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1990.

Bombay 1990

FORTHCOMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

a review of the most significant scientific contributions to our Congress, the THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TRADITIONAL ASIAN MEDICINE (4th to 7th January 1990, Bombay)

The announced panels or symposia (with their organizer's name) include: Indian and Chinese medical history (Paul Unschuld), Islamic medicine in Asia (Anne Sweetser), Chinese healing traditions (Thomas Ots), Religion and curing (Cromwell Crawford), Ritual therapies in the Himalayas (Gregory Maskarinec), Cultural beliefs and mental health (Mitchell Weiss), Guru and psychotherapist (Jacques Vigne), The performance of healing (Carol Laderman, Marina Roseman), Martial arts and medicine

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François Jullien on China

François JULLIEN

Procès ou Création.

*Une introduction à la pensée
des lettrés chinois,*

[Process or Creation. An Introduction
to the Modes of Thought of Chinese Scholars]

Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989

ISBN 2-02-010253-6 320 pp. FF 170

This essay is based on a close reading and interpretation of the works of Wang Fuzhi or Wang Chuanshan (1619-1692), a Chinese scholar in the line of Neo-Confucianism, whose writings represent the ultimate exemplification of Chinese thought before it comes into contact with Western thought. This essay itself is a scholarly piece of work, although it is meant not for the exclusive use of the "specialist," but for a large audience of well-read people. Appended to the book are three "Repères" [i.e., coordinates], a nice French word to designate the critical apparatus: biographies of Chinese scholars mentioned in the text, a highly specialized bibliography (including Chinese, Japanese, and English studies on Wang Fuzhi [English authors say Wang Fu-chih]), and a listing of all Chinese phrases cited or glossed in the essay, that are reproduced both in transliteration and in Chinese characters. This book is anything but dull or pedestrian. Although it is written in a very polished and elegant style, it might be difficult to read for a foreigner, and one might question François Jullien's predilection for fashionable metaphors. For example, he borrows from Gilles Deleuze and the Parisian idiom the word pli (fold, pleat) to designate the specific modes of thought, the unconscious framing of thought in a given culture. Chinese scholars have accustomed to think of action in terms of "process," whereas Western philosophers have accustomed to conceive of it in terms of "creation." François Jullien points to the concepts of process, pervasion, correlation, etc., as revealing a specific habitude of Chinese thought, un pli particulier, a particular structure inscribed in the culture text like a pleat inscribed in a fabric, or else, like a fold inscribed in the bedrock of Chinese thought. This is the kind of metaphors of which the main purpose is to mark out the author for recognition on the Parisian intellectual scene. A non-initiate might pause also, when faced with phrases like: "esquisser une problématique à dimension inter-culturelle - par effet de différence" (p. 11). In clear, Jullien's objective is "to outline the problematics of cross-cultural comparison by bringing out contrasts." Contrasts like Process vs. Creation are deliberately exaggerated in order to reveal the tenets of Chinese thought, more exactly, its specific habitudes.

Jullien's point of departure (see his book, p. 42

and 84) is to be found in the reading of Jacques Gernet, *Chine et Christianisme: Action et Réaction*, Paris: Gallimard, 1982 (An English translation is available in print). The idea of Creation, which appeared as an unquestionable evidence to the Jesuit missionaries who had turned up at Peking in the eighteenth century, collided with a totally different idea, the idea of Process which itself appeared as an unquestioned evidence to Chinese scholars. Therefore, there could not be any encounter nor debate between China and Christianity, but only defence reaction and rejection. "Incompatibility was rooted in the very structure of the modes of thought," Jullien says, since there are various, incompatible modes of rationality, and philosophy, as a specifically Western tradition, recognizes only one of them: "Or la philosophie ne dialogue toujours qu'à l'intérieur d'une même rationalité. Il est légitime qu'elle passe alors la main à l'anthropologie." Philosophy is ethnocentric, Western philosophers enter into dialogues within only one and the same mode of rationality. Therefore, their handing over the problematics of rationality to anthropologists is right in order (Jullien, p. 84).

One of the most innovative aspects of Jullien's book is the wealth of references to Western classical philosophers: Leibniz (pp. 17, 91, 156, 275, 285), Kant (136, 285), Hegel (231, 271), etc.; and closer to traditional thought, Plato's *Timaeus* (83, 179), the Stoics (150, 219-230), Thomas Aquinas (89, 167). However, it does not strike a fair balance between the Chinese side of the comparison, focusing on the intricacies of Wang Fuzhi's thought, and the Western side, where it remains at the surface of things. Kant's famous exclamation, for example, which is quoted out of context (in p. 136): "The starry sky above me, and the moral principle in me," might weaken Jullien's argument in the mind of some readers. This is the kind of formulas that are committed to memory by freshmen in the French colleges. The same is true with the Stoic motto quoted in p. 221: one should live "in conformity with nature." The German "sky" and the Greek "nature" are highly elaborate conceptions; allusions to these conceptions through a limited stock of text-book quotations are likely to remain unconvincing. Nevertheless, Jullien's book is a challenge and a breakthrough in the field of comparative philosophy. One should appreciate the finely-worded and insightful approach to Chinese concepts like that of *li*, reason, inherent logic, a principle of coherence inherent in reality (pp. 127, 148, 165, etc.). "Chinese thought is to be not 'explained' but 'elucidated'. According to the traditional etymology (which is questioned today, but still of symbolic value), the Chinese word we render as 'reason' (the *li*) originally denoted the art of 'carving from jade' (Demiéville said 'the working out of uncut jade by taking advantage of its structural veins'). Let us patiently

follow these veins, through ramifications and cleavages, down to the deepest luminosity of the seam" (p. 23).

Jullien shows (p. 180) that conceptualization in Chinese is obtained through correlations, through the double play on opposition and association of two terms in a binomial, like Tian-dao, "the Sky (tian) and the Path (dao)," or Shen-hua, "the Spirit dimension (shen) and the Concrete transformation (hua)." This "principle of conceptualization through correlation" (p. 181) is applied in the semantical and syntactical parallelisms of Chinese poetry and of special types of prose based on binomials, similes and symmetries. A concept is a node in a network of intersecting polarities. "Even the notion of 'Sky' [tian], a term unique par excellence and the keystone of Chinese scholarly thought, cannot stand as a concept by itself alone; it hardly is a concept, it is rather an indefinite virtuality of meaning. . . and it actually becomes an operating concept only when apposed to one of its correlates. For example: 'Sky' correlated with. . . 'Path' (dao) to mean the steady cycle of the seasons and the endless engendering of existent beings, 'Sky' correlated with 'Inherent order' (li) to mean the principle of coherence in things and their intrinsic nature, 'Sky' correlated with 'Breath' (material energy, qi [ch'i]) to mean the atmospheric sky, the material reality of the world in its non-concrete early stage of latency and emptiness, etc." (p. 179).

Of special interest to the readers of IASTAM Newsletter will be the definition and glosses of qi as "elementary breaths" (in pp. 141, 150), "material energy" (pp. 146, 148, 151, 168 [c'], 178-9, 223, 260, etc.), and Jullien's reflections (pp. 150-1) on the difficulty of conveying to the Western reader the internal play on the correlative meanings of qi in Chinese: "Everything is 'matter' (as 'material energy', qi), even the Spirit dimension (shen), which nevertheless is its counterpart and may categorically be its opposite (qi and shen then forming a pair). . . A semantic effect can be created within the notion of qi," which integrates spirit into matter. Also important to us will be the recurring theme of a complementarity between landscape and emotion, in the Chinese scholar's view of his lived world. Chapter One is rightfully entitled The Saliency of Nature (L'Evidence de la Nature), and the first words of this chapter are telling: "In the beginning was alternation: inhaling and exhaling, day and night, the heat of summer and the cold of winter . . ." (p. 27). Jullien opens his book with a philosophical analysis of the cycle of the seasons, and he closes it (pp. 246-9) on an analysis of the symbiosis of landscape and emotion in Chinese poetry, a symbiosis being a process, an encounter, a "mutual incitation" between interiority and exteriority, that is, an opposite to the Western concept of poetry as creation. According to Wang Fuzhi, there is an essential correspondence between the stream of consciousness and the evolution of nature, which can be conceptualized in

the form of a binomial, Jing-qing, "Landscape" (jing [ch'ing] and "Emotion" (qing [ching])). The landscape is brought to life by the poet's emotion, and the poet can experience and apprehend the most subtle feelings of consciousness only through the "mood" of an evoked landscape. Wang Fuzhi derides the poor school-teacher who conscientiously explains a regular Chinese poem in dividing the distich on landscape from the distich on emotion (p. 247). Actually, "Landscape and emotion are not originally separable, and the emphasis on the one or the other of these two poles merely depends on the orientation of our attention" (Wang Fuzhi, Remarks on Poetry, quoted in p. 248).

François Jullien gives us in this excellent book a rich, brilliant and provocative introduction to the comparative epistemology of Chinese modes of thought.

Extrême Orient Extrême Occident

Extrême-Orient / Extrême-Occident, Cahiers de
Recherches Comparatives,

a Journal in French on Chinese modes of thought, 11 issues published since 1982. Available with: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, Université de Paris VIII, 2 rue de la Liberté, 93526 Saint-Denis Cedex 02, France. The latest issues are:

No. 10 (1988), "Effets d'ordre dans la civilisation chinoise, Rangements à l'oeuvre, classifications implicites" [Style effects in Chinese traditional classifications, Arrangements used in the classic sciences, and implicit grids]; contributions by Francesca Bray and Georges Métaillé on ethnobotany and the classic texts on botany, by Catherine Jami and Karine Chemla on the divisions of the Chinese mathematical field and classifications in Chinese mathematical texts, by Michel Cartier on social divisions, by François Martin on tones and prosody, by Viviane Alleton on the phrasing of quantities in Chinese. 122 pp. FF 60.00

No. 11 (1989), "Parallélisme et appariement des choses" [Parallelism and the correlation, or pairing, of things]; contributions by Léon Vandermerch on Divination as the origin of the Chinese tradition of literary parallelism, by Anne Cheng on Yin and Yang, and the cosmological origins of parallelism, by Karine Chemla on Chinese mathematical texts from the standpoint of parallelism, by François Martin and François Jullien on various Chinese scholarly theories of literary parallelism.

134 pp. FF 60.00

François Jullien is the founder and chief-editor of this Journal, which provides readers of Jullien's book with a wealth of confirmations and developments on Chinese modes of thought by some of the very best French sinologists.

Harvey Alper

Harvey P. ALPER, Editor
Understanding Mantras,
Albany: State University of New York Press,
1989 530pp. \$59.50 (bound) Paperback
also available

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This book is much more than a monograph on a specialized topic; actually, it strikes at the heart of Hindu culture. What is at stake is the religious authority and magical efficacy of Speech. Philologists and sanskritists will discover in these 530 dense pages an incredible wealth of erudite materials, and much more than mere erudition. Not only is this book a reference book covering nearly all sectors of Indian philosophy, but the conceptual grid is so finely worked that it offers a perfect and comprehensive initiation to Indian thought. It was edited carefully, in an elegant format. It is a pity that Professor Harvey P. Alper (1945-1987), who died suddenly in April 1987 after completing the editorial work, could not be still with us to see this excellent volume in print.

Of immeasurable worth is the "Working bibliography," contributed by Harvey Alper. Synthetic

and critical notices covering more than 1600 items bring to the student's attention the classics in the field as well as out-of-the-way publications. The grid consists of the following subdivisions, which are listed here in full to testify to the thematic richness of the whole volume.

The Vedic world: the worldview and practice of the Veda (the understanding of speech and speaking in the Veda; poems and poetic inspiration; the social and ritual context of Vedic mantrasāstra); Vedic texts (Ṛgveda; Sāmaveda; other Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas); mantras in the Brahmanic tradition (commentaries on the Veda; the Sūtra literature; mantras in daily life; mantras and renunciation; the 'act of truth'; the survival of exemplary mantras in the Hindu period).

Post-Vedic traditions other than Tantra: reading, writing, and speaking in traditional India; religious traditions (Hinduism; the significance of names; Hindu theism and the great Saṃpradāyas); the philosophical and scientific traditions (Vyākaraṇa and philosophy of language; Pūrvamīmāṃsā; other philosophical traditions; Āyurveda and other traditions of Indian science).

Tantra: ideology of tantra (deities; 'śākta' and 'śāktic'; Tantra and Advaita); the social and ritual context of mantrasāstra (the spatial setting of mantras; the 'magical' context; the Guru as Master of mantravidyā; mantra as enigma); Tantric texts dealing with mantra (Āgamas; classical Tantras; manuals); mantrasāstra and sādhanā (initiation and other preparatory rites; mantra and meditation); the world of sound (Vāc and her permutations; the Tantric 'alphabet'; bījas and other exemplary mantras).

The diffusion of mantras: Indo-European background; non-Hindu and quasi-Hindu mantric traditions within India (the use of mantras among 'tribal groups'; among Muslims, Sikhs, Jains; in Indian Buddhism); mantras beyond India; mantras in neo-Hinduism.

A review of recent publications on Hindu mantras appeared in the previous issue of IASTAM Newsletter, No. 12, pp. 11-12: interested readers should refer to it. The collection of essays edited by Alper is to be compared with the one in French edited by André Padoux (Mantras et Diagrammes Rituels dans l'Hindouisme, Paris: Ed. du CNRS, 1989) and the exhaustive essay by Arion Roşu, "Mantra et yantra dans la médecine et l'alchimie indiennes," in Journal Asiatique, 274 (1986), pp. 203-268.

Mantras (Sanskrit, "instruments of thought") are short formulae, or even mere monosyllabic invocations (like "oṃ"), used in rituals along with other spiritual tools like diagrams or yantras ("instruments of restraint") to achieve some goal. Says Alper: "As a tool of human intentionality, mantras are protean. They are used in an astonishing variety of contexts, for a plethora of purposes, with a multitude of informing emotions. . . The [Hindu] tradition. . .