

ISSN 0041-977X

Volume 63

Part 1

2000



*Bulletin of the  
School of  
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Studies*

*University of London*

*Published by  
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## Abstracts

### Aśoka and the Buddhist *Samgha*: a study of Aśoka's Schism Edict and Minor Rock Edict I

HERMAN TIEKEN

Therevāda sources attribute an important role in the growth and development of Buddhism to Aśoka. In order to clarify the details of Aśoka's role the two contemporary inscriptional sources mentioned in the title are subjected to closer scrutiny; both inscriptions refer to contacts maintained by the emperor with the Buddhist *samghas*, either personally or through his officials. Part of the article is devoted to attempts to solve a number of problems in the texts of the two inscriptions. This involves, apart from purely textual matters, a comparison of the Buddhist *uposatha* ceremony with its secular counterpart, an examination of the relationship between the two parts of the Schism Edict and a new interpretation of the meaning of the '256 nights' mentioned in the Minor Rock Edict. From these discussions alone a fairly accurate picture emerges of the nature of Aśoka's interference in the affairs of the Buddhist *samghas*.

### The Queen of the Habasha in Ethiopian history, tradition and chronology

KNUD TAGE ANDERSEN

In this article I argue that the tenth-century Queen of Abyssinia, Gudit, was not a rebellious pagan vassal who conquered the Abyssinian throne, destroyed Aksum, the capital, persecuted priests and ruined churches as some scholars suggest. Neither was she, as Ethiopian tradition has it, a poor but beautiful prostitute in Aksum, who slept with a priest and was exiled for having tempted him, married a Syrian Jew and became a Jewess herself, burned Aksum, destroyed churches and persecuted the priests and the people. Rather, she was a legitimate member of the Christian Ethiopian royal family who captured the throne in a succession struggle, restored peace and order, ruled the country with authority for 40 years and founded a new, strong Christian dynasty which was to last for about 300 years. The negative view of the queen was only the result of a later aversion to accepting the idea of a woman on the Ethiopian throne.

### Lurching towards ergativity: expressions of agency in the Niya Documents

STEPHANIE W. JAMISON

This paper examines certain special features of the system of split ergativity in the Prakrit of the Niya Documents, especially the expression of agency in the preterite. Because most linguistic work on the Documents was carried out before the current interest in ergativity arose, their relevance to the study of the development of ergativity in Middle Indo Aryan has not previously been recognized. As in most MIA languages, the Niya preterite stems from the old past passive participle of Old Indic. The agent of transitive preterites can be expressed either by the old instrumental case or by the absolutive case, a merger of old nominative and accusative. Though Burrow considered this phenomenon a result of 'confusion' of the two cases, this paper argues that the core function of these instrumental agents is to disambiguate the agent from the object in sentences containing two human arguments.

### The *Womē-no* poem of *Harima Fudoki* and residual orality in ancient Japan

EDWINA PALMER

Residual orality in ancient Japan is explored here through the little-known *Womē-no* poem in *Harima Fudoki*, recorded c. A.D. 714. Through it, we examine the use of punning, and thereby recognize three main points hitherto unnoticed. The first is that the *kō/otsu* distinctions of Old Japanese were largely ignored for the purpose of punning. Secondly, punning could involve mental substitution of a synonym to evoke the relevant

thought association. Thirdly, we discover that puns could hang on chiasmic reversal. It is argued that all three of these devices are features of residual orality in ancient Japan, and it is demonstrated that they could be used in combination to convey to the audience an extremely cryptic or esoteric message. In short, this paper not only provides a deeper analysis of the *Womē-no* poem than ever before, but produces new and original evidence about residual orality in ancient Japan.

The *Kitāb al-Taswī'a* or *Book of Reprobation* by Jonah ibn Janāḥ. A revision of J. and H. Derenbourg's edition

MARÍA A. GALLEGO

In this article I study several linguistic aspects of the *Kitāb al-taswī'a* or *Book of Reprobation*, a Judaeo-Arabic grammatical treatise written in the eleventh century by the Andalusian grammarian Jonah ibn Janāḥ. I start by analysing the various misinterpretations of the title that have been made, partly due to the erroneous reading on the part of the Derenbourgs in their 1880 edition and translation of the *Kitāb al-taswī'a*. I then compare the two complete available manuscripts of this work and give a list of linguistic features not reflected in the Derenbourgs' edition, but that can be included among the typical traits of Medieval or Classical Judaeo-Arabic.

Proto-Afro-Asiatic origin of 'gum'?

GÁBOR TAKÁCS

In this paper I attempt to show that Egyptian qmj.t 'gum' (the ultimate source of our common European word for 'gum') comes from the Proto-Afro-Asiatic lexical heritage. Since the supposed West Chadic cognate of this Egyptian word seems at the moment rather isolated, I try to demonstrate the regularity of the consonant correspondences in question adducing several relevant examples from the etymological material.