Louis Renou

Pāli Tipitakam Concordance, Being a Concordance in Pāli to the Baskets of Buddhist Scriptures, Parts 1–5

(London: Luzac, 1952.) Pp. 314.

The present work is the beginning of a vast chronicle (these five parts contain scarcely a tenth of the total) which aims to list under representative word-heading, alphabetically arranged, all the *formulas* constituting the substance of the *pāli* Canon, that is, of the sacred Scriptures of southern Buddhism. It is well known that among the various languages in which these Scriptures (sayings attributed to Buddha, rules of the primitive community, reflections on the "Law") were recorded, the pāli occupies a special place: it is, if not the only language used, the only one in which a complete Canon has come down to us. Despite research of the past fifty years directed more and more toward northern Buddhism, it is probable that, as was long believed, the pāli version remains most faithful to the original teachings.

The *formulas* composing this extensive literary ensemble appear in various texts and reappear from paragraph to paragraph in the same text with a frequency which fully justifies the elaboration of a *concordance*.

The great basic texts of all religions are more or less repetitious. The Bible is no exception. While in profane works repetition is either avoided as an index of monotony or sought after (under particular conditions such as phonic assonances, etc.) for reasons of expressiveness, it is a fundamental element of religious texts. Péguy understood this, exploiting the almost piercing effects of repetition in his hieratic poetry. This is the emphatic form of repetition, con-

sisting of similar or slightly varied *attacks*, the procedure which passed on into the classic ode. But alongside this emphatic repetition is a humbler type, formed of clichés, identifying epithets, and stock phrases; it is the procedure found in the epic (originally a partially religious *genre*), in Homer, for example, as in the great epic poems of India.

The Buddhist canon includes both types of repetition. We find whole sections, notably in the sermons, reproduced in one text after another in identical terms, as parallel developments echoing each other. We also find formulas of varying length which form the unvarying ground of a description. Above this monotonous base the slightest variation or singularity in a dialogue immediately stands out. There was doubtless the intention of creating an atmosphere, a décor; it also provided mnemonic exercise. This training which in our civilizations, where memory plays such a small role, is performed by directing attention to the new, the diverse, is acquired in the Orient by means of mechanical repetition: one sees it in present-day India in recitations of the Veda, which are given out of order, backwards, etc.

The quasi-magical element in repetition, finally, satisfies a basic exigency of the sacred. The very intensity sought by profane art in the discontinuous, the surprise, the march toward a climax, is obtained in religious art by the incessant repeat, the particular resonance of the same motifs; thus it is related to the melodic lines which music retained much longer and more faithfully than did literary art.

If the present work is finished within a reasonable length of time, it will form a precious complement to the much too abridged *Dictionary* of the Pāli Text Society; it will furnish a sort of substitute, lacking the critical part, for Trencker's dictionary, which may well never be finished. In Indian philology where good research tools are too often lacking, this work will take its place beside the celebrated *Vedic Concordance* of M. Bloomfield.