

incapace di cogliere la complessità di quegli universi islamici le cui caratteristiche sfuggono alle consuete categorie interpretative²².

Restando sulla complessità del fenomeno in esame, ma tornando al lavoro di Bono, un'attenzione a parte merita l'ultimo capitolo del volume, dal titolo eloquente "La parola e il silenzio degli storici" (pp. 213-231). La lezione e la sapienza storiografica del "professore" si fondono con l'intento dello "storico" di affrontare il problema, tanto stringente in questi tempi, dell'uso politico della storia, di ciò che viene detto, di ciò che viene taciuto e in che modo questo avvenga. Il capitolo si presenta come un'analisi del ruolo assunto, nella storiografia occidentale e non, dai corsari maghrebini e, in generale, dalla guerra corsara: se la storiografia europea ha cercato di assimilare la figura del corsaro all'alterità mediterranea, quella nord-africana ha allontanato da sé, come in una sorta di *damnatio memoriae*, un passato che reputava scomodo. Non a torto, vista la propaganda coloniale francese, il passato corsaro venne visto come la causa prima della sottomissione e della colonizzazione. Ancor più interessanti sono gli ultimi riferimenti che Bono pone a chiusura del suo volume: il paragone, poco coerente, tra migrazioni e assalti corsari, a ben vedere assai poco legittimo e giustificato, è uno di questi.

Un moto di interesse, quello per la guerra corsara, che ha molto infiammato la storiografia, statunitense e non, dopo l'11 settembre 2001: con il terreno ben preparato dall'infinitamente citata opera di Samuel Huntington²³, l'accostamento tra terrorismo islamico e pirateria barbaresca ha certamente contribuito a creare un'inestricabile connessione, che travalica i limiti storici, tra violenza, Maghreb islamico e islam, in tutta la sua disomogenea vastità di rappresentazioni. Non stupisce, quindi, lo sforzo compiuto dall'Autore e dalla storiografia tutta nel ribadire la complessità di un fenomeno davanti al quale tutti, nel Mediterraneo, risultavano essere al contempo prede e predatori. Una fluidità, quella mediterranea, più volte ripetuta e constatata (al limite forse di un certo feticismo "mediterraneista"²⁴), che si riflette sui modi di vivere e sulle attività degli individui; sulle loro fedeltà, sui loro interessi e sui loro modi d'intendere e professare una fede o una religione. Qualsiasi cosa, con questo termine, si voglia intendere.

Antonino Campagna (Sapienza Università di Roma)
antonino.campagna@uniroma1.it

Andrew Ollett, *Language of the Snakes: Prakrit, Sanskrit, and the Language Order of Premodern India*, University of California Press, Oakland 2017. ISBN: 9780520968813.

Language of the Snakes is Andrew Ollett's first book. It is based on his doctoral dissertation, which was granted the DK Award in 2018 by the committee of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies. It offers "a biography of the Prakrit language from the perspective of cultural history" (p. 22). Ollett's principle argument is that "Prakrit was invented" (p. 22). To many, this statement will be counterintuitive as it

²² S. Ahmed, *What is Islam. The Importance of Being Islamic*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2016.

²³ S.P. Huntington, *Lo scontro delle civiltà e il nuovo ordine mondiale. Il futuro geopolitico del pianeta*, Garzanti, Milano 2000.

²⁴ G. Fiume, *La controversa eredità di Braudel e le forzature dei Mediterranean Studies. Un falso bel tema*, in «L'indice dei libri del mese» 2 (2016), "Segnali".

goes against the commonly held assumption that Prakrit was the everyday language of everyday people in ancient India. Ollett claims, however, that Prakrit cannot be reduced to a language of everyday communication (p. 17). According to Ollett, Prakrit's status has been poorly understood partly because of the "particular classifications and historicizations of Prakrit" (p. 25). To understand what Prakrit was, Ollett writes, one has to look at "the things that people did with Prakrit, the *practices* that gave it its historical being" (p. 22). For more than fifteen hundred years, he writes, the practices of Prakrit were "*literary practices*" with literature in Prakrit being "written and studied by people of all religious persuasions throughout all of South Asia" (p. 17). Contrary to the view that sees Prakrit as "the language of the common people" (p. 85), Ollett argues that we only can start speaking of Prakrit "after a language called 'Prakrit' has been identified and at least minimally characterized" (p. 83, also p. 23). In other words, for Prakrit to be considered a language, Ollett argues that it needs to have a self-conscious linguistic identity (p. 23). For Prakrit this identity is literary and is characterized by a process Ollett calls "literarization." He defines literarization as "the double movement by which a language is employed for expressive purposes and becomes invested with a literary expressivity" (p. 83). Ollett's study of Prakrit is thus an examination of the language as a literary phenomenon. At the same time, it is, in Ollett's words, "an account of Prakrit's position within the language order of India" and "a critical reorganization of the way we think about Prakrit" (p. 25). If Prakrit had to be invented, as Ollett claims, then this begs the questions of when, where, by whom, and for which purposes? Ollett answers these questions over the course of seven chapters, examining a wide variety of primary sources: from royal inscriptions and poetry to grammars and literary-theoretical texts. The book concludes with three appendices: 'Time Line of the Sātavāhanas and Their Successors,' 'Sātavāhana Inscriptions,' and 'Fragments of Early Prakrit Grammars.'

Ollett starts with a discussion of the various ways Prakrit has been defined, structured, and classified in both premodern India and European scholarship in chapter 1. These classifications, he argues, are not simply organizing principles, but rather are part of the "historicizing regimes that predetermine for us what kind of thing language is and thus what kind of thing Prakrit must be" (p. 25). Discussing both the natural and cultural theories of language history (pp. 18-22), Ollett shows the importance of examining Prakrit from a cultural perspective since it, just like Sanskrit, has been "defined and deployed as cultural products all along" (p. 22).

In chapters 2 and 3, Ollett argues that Prakrit began in the Deccan around the first to second centuries CE in the Sātavāhana Empire (p. 82). "Before this," Ollett writes, "we can identify all manners of 'near-Prakrits' – plenty of Middle Indic dialects, and plenty of instances of the influence of Middle Indic speech on Sanskrit – but nothing that proclaims its linguistic identity as clearly and as consistently as the literature of the Sātavāhana period" (p. 23). To make this claim, Ollett investigates the inscriptions of the Sātavāhanas, their contemporaries, and successors (chapter 2) as well as the literary works of that time (chapter 3). Ollett shows that while the inscriptions indicate that the Sātavāhanas developed a "poetry of polity," this was still in a Middle Indic language (pp. 23, 44). The emergence of Prakrit literature (*pāuakavvaṃ*), on the other hand, is located in the cultural practices of the Sātavāhana court and in the writings of Jain monks (pp. 82-83). According to Ollett, the pioneering landmark of courtly literature is *Seven Centuries* (*Sattasaī*), a lyrical and eroticized anthology of single-verse poems (*muktaka*) traditionally ascribed to the legendary Sātavāhana king Hāla. Contrary to scholarly narratives that explain *Seven Centuries* in terms of "popular origins," Ollett defines the anthology as "courtly." This, he argues, is not merely because its

verses were composed at court but, more importantly, because their authors “discovered their collective consciousness in the experience of life at court” (pp. 58, 61). At the same time, Ollett writes, the anthology is courtly for its use of “clever speech” (*chekokti*), being a set of literary practices such as “saying one thing while intending to convey the opposite” (p. 62). With regards to the Jain writings, he considers Pālitta’s *Taraṅgavatī*, which survived only in later abridgements, to be the foundational text of Prakrit literature authored by a Jain monk (pp. 77-82). Ollett elects to read *Seven Centuries* and the *Taraṅgavatī* together as “works that represent and define ‘Prakrit’ in the singular” (p. 50). He shows how scholarly accounts of Prakrit literature have traditionally separated courtly literature and Jain narratives into two distinct histories. This division into “Jain” and “non-Jain” strands of Prakrit literature is, as Ollett shows, an “artefact of European scholarship” (p. 51). According to Ollett, while this division is perhaps valid in the study of the literary production of a later period, it obscures rather than illuminates our understanding of the emergence of Prakrit literature (p. 54).

Chapter 4, titled “The Forms of Prakrit Literature,” discusses Prakrit as an aesthetic object (p. 85). Ollett defines Prakrit by examining its “expressive resources” (p. 87). According to Ollett, to focus on the expressive resources of Prakrit is to help us better understand why authors chose to compose in Prakrit (pp. 86-87). Following the characterizations supplied by ancient readers, authors, and grammarians of Prakrit literature, Ollett discusses Prakrit’s expressive features on three levels: “Prakrit’s ‘sweet’ texture on the level of its phonetics [88-94], its ‘quavering’ rhythms on the level of its meter [94-102], and its ‘unbound’ character on the level of its poetic compositions [102-110]” (p. 87). He demonstrates how Prakrit’s phonetics make “the language smooth, open, and musical” (p. 109), and how “Prakrit is a literature of *gāthās*,” both in terms of its meter and the poetry composed in it (pp. 94, 102). This poetry consists of the single-verse poems collected in anthologies or “treasuries” (*kośa*), a significant genre in Prakrit (pp. 94, 102-103). In addition to giving an insightful explanation of Prakrit’s expressive features, chapter 4 critically reflects on what these features mean for Prakrit’s intertextuality (pp. 103-109), for Pollock’s characterization of “the sphere of literary culture” as excluding “the realm of the oral, specifically, the sung” (p. 94), and for the text-historical development of the Buddhist and Jain canons (pp. 97-100). Regarding the latter, Ollett argues that we understand the use of the *gāthā* in Buddhist and Jain texts as the result of “Prakritization,” which he defines as “the transformation of a textual tradition through the language, versification, and aesthetics of Prakrit literature” (p. 98).

In chapter 5, Ollett analyses the position of Prakrit within the language order of classical India. He delineates “language order” as referring “to the way that languages are ordered within a culture, to the recurrent patterns and schemas and tropes by which they are defined and represented, the names under which they are known, and the values with which they are associated” (p. 3). Central to Ollett’s analysis is Naoki Sakai’s concept of “schema” (p. 111). For Ollett, “schemas perform the work of figuration, classification, and categorization that enable us to think of languages as objects” (p. 112). He argues that “it is through the representational work of schemas that Prakrit became a language: an internally homogeneous and discrete object, differentiated from other such objects – and above all from Sanskrit – as a species of a genus” (p. 112). In concrete terms, this chapter surveys an impressive range of primary sources in search of the naming, representation, and classification practices of languages. Ollett shows how “the central dichotomy of Sanskrit and Prakrit, the asymmetrical relation between the two, and the peripheral position of Apabhramsha” determined the language order in classical India (p. 114). According to Ollett, while this schema could be elaborated

upon to include more languages (pp. 136-140), Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha were the only languages in which literature could be composed (p. 140).

Chapter 6 asks what it meant to know Prakrit in premodern India. Ollett offers “an archeology of Prakrit knowledge” by examining Prakrit grammars, “including fragments of the earliest grammars in Prakrit and Vararuci’s *Light on Prakrit*, as well as some early grammars of Kannada and Telegu” (pp. 24, 144). Ollett discerns various phases in the history of Prakrit knowledge and claims that “the concepts provided by Prakrit forms of knowledge, and the particular relationship to literary practice embodied in it, were some of the conceptual conditions for the emergence of vernacular literature in South Asia” (p. 161).

The reason why Prakrit became less used, known, and rare over the course of the second millennium is the topic of the final chapter, aptly called “Forgetting Prakrit.” By the end of the so-called “vernacular millennium,” Prakrit had moved from its courtly origins to “the subterranean world,” becoming “the language of the snakes,” an expression Ollett takes from Mīrzā Khān’s 1676 *Gift of India* (pp. 1, 185-188). Ollett argues that we understand the transformation of Prakrit as going hand in hand with the process of vernacularization, which started from the ninth century onward. According to Ollett, the literarization of regional languages effected a reconfiguration of the classical language order. From appearing in a schema of co-figuration with Sanskrit in classical India (pp. 136, 176), Prakrit was later displaced, edged out, or marginalized in the newly emerging language orders (p. 173). These, Ollett shows, were not organized around the Sanskrit/Prakrit dichotomy of classical India, but around a new dichotomy: Sanskrit/Vernacular (pp. 173, 181). The reconfiguration of Prakrit starts to be clearly visible, Ollett argues, around the twelfth and thirteenth century when the decreasing knowledge and status of Prakrit resulted in the transcreation of earlier Prakrit literary works into Sanskrit, Kannada, Telegu, and Braj Bhāṣā (pp. 25, 178-181). Even if some would later try to resuscitate interests in Prakrit (pp. 181-185), it would never return to its Sātavāhana glory days but instead become a largely forgotten language.

Language of the Snakes is a groundbreaking contribution. Ollett’s cultural history of Prakrit language successfully leads the reader through Prakrit’s significant, complex, and shifting position within the language order of India. His research effectively challenges “the historical priority of Sanskrit by considering alternative points of origin for the “poetry of polity” (*praśasti*) and high literature in general (*kāvya*)” (p. 113). Demonstrating how Prakrit is a literary language that was invented around the first and second centuries CE, Ollett’s account further clarifies the shortcomings of modern language theories that characterize literary languages as “modifications” of spoken languages. His monograph complements, nuances, and at times corrects Sheldon Pollock’s classic theory of the Sanskrit cosmopolis. For being such an important contribution to the field, it is regrettable that Ollett’s writing is dense and unnecessarily complex, potentially narrowing the wide readership his book deserves. While Ollett succeeds in revealing continuities, ruptures, and developments across the various literary traditions and languages of South Asia, his enumeration of original sources has a tendency to turn into a reader’s labyrinth. An appendix with a timeline and overview of the primary sources could have lightened the chapters significantly. To conclude, *Language of the Snakes* offers an important correction to the manner in which Prakrit has commonly been appreciated and conceptualized. For many, several years of Sanskrit study precedes the study of Prakrit. Consequently, Prakrit has rarely been enjoyed for its own aesthetic features and is often read in contrast with Sanskrit. As Ollett notes, this “can lead us into thinking about Prakrit in purely structural terms, as if it were constituted entirely by its differences from Sanskrit” (p. 85). When dis-

cussing Prakrit's cultural history, Ollett also inadvertently unpacks Prakrit's unique beauty. This book should be read by all scholars engaged in South Asian literary history and languages.

Claire Maes (*The University of Texas at Austin*)
 claire.maes@austin.utexas.edu

A Diogneto ("Nuovi Testi Patristici", 1), a cura di Fabio Ruggiero, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma 2020, pp. 178. ISBN: 978-88-311-2700-4.

Spetta a questa nuova edizione e traduzione dell'*A Diogneto* il compito di inaugurare presso la benemerita editrice Città Nuova la collana Nuovi Testi Patristici, diretta da Emanuela Prinzivalli ed Emanuele Castelli: essa intende idealmente ricollegarsi – anche nel colore arancione ripreso nella grafica di copertina – alla collana di Testi Patristici fondata nel 1976 da Antonio Quacquarelli e al tempo stesso rappresentarne un'evoluzione metodologica. A quest'ultima fatica di Fabio Ruggiero tocca quindi il compito di tracciare una linea programmatica per i titoli destinati a farvi seguito, secondo un ritmo editoriale che prevede due uscite l'anno. La scelta è chiaramente quella di una collana di pubblicazioni dal taglio scientifico, destinate a un pubblico colto e più ampiamente di appassionati alla materia, ma attenta al contempo a non affaticare e scoraggiare il lettore con quegli apparati troppo tecnici ed eruditi, irti di richiami alla letteratura critica precedente, che connotano per lo più tale genere di pubblicazioni. Un non facile equilibrio tra rigore e accessibilità.

La differenza più notevole rispetto alla collana fondata nel 1976 consiste nel trattarsi questa volta di un'edizione corredata da testo a fronte: nel caso dell'*A Diogneto* siamo dinanzi a un testo dell'opera stabilito criticamente a partire dal riesame dell'intera tradizione testuale, ovvero dalla riconsiderazione dei circa 500 passi che presentano qualche difficoltà e su cui la storia delle edizioni ha introdotto o proposto varianti, documentate nell'apparato in modo essenziale ma completo. Ai problemi testuali dell'*A Diogneto* Ruggiero si era già rivolto in alcuni contributi preparatori precedenti, avanzando proposte di intervento molto originali e ponderate²⁵, degne pertanto della più attenta considerazione da parte di ogni futuro editore e commentatore che vorrà tornare a confrontarsi con questa testimonianza così originale e densa di suggestione della prima antichità cristiana.

È dunque motivo di grande utilità per il lettore ritrovare ora le proposte critico-testuali di Fabio Ruggiero entro la trama complessiva dell'opera, così da illuminarne nel modo più completo la pertinenza e coerenza all'intero testo; come pure è assai istruttivo poter ripercorrere nella sezione "Osservazioni critiche" (pp. 63-87) non solo la storia dei testimoni e delle edizioni dell'*A Diogneto*, ma ciascuno degli emendamenti al suo testo proposti da Ruggiero, nuovamente argomentati e a tratti perfezio-

²⁵ F. Ruggiero, *Osservazioni sul testo del Πρὸς Διόγνητον*, in «Augustinianum» 2 (2018), pp. 361-284; cf. anche Id., *La Lettera a Diogneto oggi: il paradosso del cristiano*, in «Regno-Attualità» 4 (2018), pp. 113-123. Com'è noto, il testimone unico dell'*A Diogneto* è rappresentato dal codice denominato *Argentoratensis Graecus* 9 della biblioteca municipale di Strasburgo, che andò perduto nella guerra franco-prussiana del 1870; del suo contenuto fanno fede tre apografi indicati dalle sigle H S, rispettivamente delle Biblioteche universitarie di Tubinga e Leida (quest'ultima arricchita anche di varianti marginali), oltre ad una copia denominata B dagli due degli editori, che ne hanno conservato alcune varianti significative. Cf. la Nota al testo a p. 88.