In 1971, when the noted Swiss Buddhologist Jacques May published “La philosophie bouddhique idéaliste” (Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques 25 [1971]: 265–323), he was able to attempt a thorough survey of the state of the field in fewer than sixty pages. In that broad overview, the Yogācārabhūmi (YBh), considered the source of the Vijñānavāda doctrine that was May’s major concern, was referred to but briefly. By contrast, the volume under review here—a volume that, in the editor’s extensive introduction (pp. 22–287) and the thirty-four essays that follow, both surveys the field and adds substantially to it—offers through its sheer girth a tangible demonstration of the remarkable expansion of research in this area during the four decades that followed May’s benchmark article. The Foundation for Yoga Practitioners may now be taken as the “go-to” source through which to explore the YBh and its legacy, particularly for those depending primarily on research in European languages (though East Asian scholarship is also very well represented in these pages). The work was first conceived as the proceedings of a 2008 conference on the YBh held at Geumgang University (South Korea) honoring Lambert Schmithausen, whose contributions, together with those of his many students and others he has influenced, have been rightly thought to have revolutionized the study of the YBh in both its philological-historical and philosophical-hermeneutical dimensions. Besides the fifteen scholars who participated on that occasion, an additional nineteen have contributed articles here.

The editor, Ulrich Timme Kragh, has endeavored to present the resulting collection as a work of far greater coherence than one expects to find in a volume of proceedings. To achieve this, he has adopted an ambitious, overall plan suggested by the architecture of the YBh and its complex Rezeptionsgeschichte, elucidating the former in considerable detail in the course of his introduction

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(“The Yogācārabhūmi and Its Adaptation: Introductory Essay with a Summary of the Basic Section”), which provides an original and highly useful summary of the contents of the entire YBh. This in itself represents a significant, new contribution to the field and, for anyone setting out to find just what the imposing text of the YBh actually covers, Kragh’s survey provides, for the first time in English, a precise and thorough orientation. In the course of this, moreover, he specifies, so far as is possible, the relations between the articles contained in the volume and the contents of the YBh itself, while also including capsule biographies of the contributing authors and brief surveys of their earlier scholarship on topics relating to the YBh. The introduction thus provides a valuable resource documenting much of the pertinent work in the Yogācāra field over the past several decades. Kragh has also sought to ensure that the work as a whole be as accessible as possible to researchers internationally by including, throughout the entire volume, English translations of each scholarly citation, whether from Chinese, French, German, Japanese or Korean sources, and translations of the titles of articles cited as well.

Following earlier work by Deleanu, Kragh (pp. 49–50) has taken the title of the YBh to refer to the foundations of yoga practice and not, as has often been the case in earlier scholarship, the steps or stages of the path, an interpretation that was no doubt influenced by the frequent use in Mahāyāna literature of the term bhūmi in regard to the levels of progress of the bodhisattva, a usage that is by no means foreign to the YBh itself. Although I am convinced that this shift of nuance in our understanding of the term in the title of the work is indeed warranted, I am less sanguine in respect to the YBh’s actual connections with spiritual practice, about which Kragh writes (p. 30): “When it came to present a foundational and systematic overview of Buddhist yoga practice … it was only natural that the composers and redactors of the text saw it as their task to explain the Mahāyāna practice of yoga within the larger frame of Mainstream Buddhist yoga doctrines, thereby resulting in a manual of almost epic proportions.” Try as I may, I find it difficult to regard the peculiar design of the YBh, more a sprawling encyclopedia than a manual, as something “natural.” And, as has been much argued in recent scholarship, the relations between Buddhist scholastic writings that deal theoretically or dogmatically with paths of practice and actual practices are not at all clear and evident.2 This, of course,

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