

Thundering Falcon. An Inquiry into the History and Cult of Khra-'brug, Tibet's First Buddhist Temple by Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod. In collaboration with Tsering Gyalbo. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2005. (Öst. Ak. d. Wiss., Philos.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften, 333. Band). vii, 422 pp., ca. 220 ill. (fig., maps, drawings, diagrams), 1 DVD. ISBN 3-7001-3495-9.

Reviewed by Rudolf Kaschewsky, Bonn.

The history of Tibet, at least as regards the fundamental period of the early kings, is intrinsically connected with the region of the Yarlung area (situated some 80 km southeast of Lhasa), which was, as the authors rightly state, "the area where the cradle of the Tibetan civilisation stood" (p. 1). One of the most important buildings of this area is the Khra-'brug monastery. This is why its history is inseparably connected with the first (historical) king, Srong-btsan sgam-po (7th century A.D.). The book under review presents detailed studies on the historical, literary, legendary and architectural importance of that first monastery, of the whole region, and of the early history of Tibet in general.

It is a well-known fact that in Tibetan traditional geography "this Country of Snow had the form resembling a supine *srin mo*-demoness" (p. 48)¹ and that there had to be constructed temples "for the suppression of the major and minor bodily limbs" (p. 49) of the demoness. Generally there are three groups, each of them comprising four temples "suppressing" one of the demoness's shoulders, hips, elbows, knees, palms and foot-soles, being arranged under three headings, viz. "Ru-bzhi, mTha-'dul, Yang-'dul". The book presents a detailed and lucid schedule of the twelve temples according to the relevant sources (chronicles, etc.) (pp. 184-199) and a carefully reproduced "body-map" showing the actual site of the temples on the body of the demoness (fig. 94-98). This "map" and its explanation are extremely helpful for understanding the connection between the rather abstract idea of "limb suppressing" edifices on the one hand and the concrete geographical situation on the other.

The temple suppressing the left shoulder of the *srin mo* bears the name *Khra-'brug*, generally translated as "thundering falcon", whereas in

¹ page-numbers without further indication refer, in the present review, to the pages of the book reviewed.

Mongolian texts *khra* is understood as "coloured" and the name of the temple is rendered as *eriyen luu* (Kaschewsky, 1971, p. 178). Rightly the authors emphasize that *Khra-'brug* can be identified "as Tibet's oldest recorded temple", according to "sources that date from the early post-dynastic time" (p. 5), whereas "the beginning of the monastic tradition" is associated with the founding of *bSam-yas* (pp. 21, 22).

The book starts with an introduction (36 pages), which includes iconographic blockprints of deities, diagrams, maps, and photos (among them historical photos made by H. Richardson and G. Tucci). After a general survey on "the position and classification of *Khra-'brug* in the Tibetan tradition" and on the literary sources (the translation of which is given as Part II) the authors discuss in detail the "historico-geographical delimitations" of the temple and the surrounding area and the "political and religious developments" in the area concerned. (As for the birth-date of king *Srong-btsan sgam-po* ["born 605?" (p. 5)], this seems to be quite plausible, though the year 617 [e. g. *Shakabpa* 1967: 25] fits better with the date of ascent to the throne at the age of 13 which is generally assumed to have taken place in 641.) In connection with the administrative location of *Khra-'brug* (p. 11), the authors do not mention the (old and modern) Chinese name of the temple, viz. *Ch'ang-chu-sze* or *Changzhusi* (昌珠寺, in older maps 常嘉寺), which would have been helpful to anyone who is consulting Chinese sources and/or is simply trying to locate the temple; cf., e.g., *Zhongguo shaoshu minzu* 1998: 84. (Incidentally, the bulky book does not contain a single Chinese character!) There are very accurate satellite maps of the *Yar-lung* and *'Phyong-po* area (e.g., on p. 12) with inserted place names.

Regarding the "dark period" of Tibetan history after the death of King *Glang-dar-ma* the authors mention "indications, that at the close of the 9th century monk communities still existed intact in the vicinity of *Khra-'brug*" (p. 23), whereas the "cultic and religious re-occupation of the temple" did not start before the end of the 11th century (p. 27), and about the historical role of *Khra-'brug* in the later centuries "we possess no precise information" (p. 29).

One section of the introduction deals with the "building history" of *Khra-'brug* (pp. 15-21), mentioning the work of "craftsmen from Nepal" and *Khotan* (p. 17).

The main body of the book is constituted by the literary "sources for the history of *Khra-'brug*", six texts, which are described in Part II of the introduction and translated and annotated at length, though not completely, but the "relevant passages" only, from p. 41 onwards.

Text A (pp. 6-8, pp. 41-113) is a pilgrimage guidebook (*gnas bshad*) which "arguably was compiled in around the year 1920" (p. 7) and has

miniature drawings of e.g. Atiśa, Śākyamuni, Padmasambhava, bTsong-kha-pa and the 13th Dalai Lama; among the deities illustrated here, figures also the "speaking Tārā" (*sgrol ma gsung byon ma*) (p. 6) – a striking resemblance of the *Bolne Tārā* of Nepal (often mentioned in pilgrim's guides, e.g.), Bodh Gaya and South India.

It is very helpful for the reader that the authors have divided the guidebook under ten headings (some of which are further subdivided in subsections): Introductory Preamble, King Srong-btsan sgam-po, The Ra-sa 'Phrul-snang Temple and the Temples for Taming the Body and Limbs of the *srin mo*-Demoness [being an unnecessary reduplication as *srin mo* itself means "demoness"], The Main Temple and its Principal Sacred Objects, The Temples Outside sGo-drug Khra-'brug, The mChod-rten dBu-lnga, The Circumambulation, The 18 Holy Sanctuaries of the Yar-[k]lung Area, and Concluding Verses.

The (hitherto unpublished) Tibetan text is given in facsimile on pp. 337-353. In the English presentation of the text, it is not clearly perceptible which "relevant passages" have been translated and which non-relevant passages have been omitted; besides, the beginnings of some folios have inadvertently not been indicated – so fol. "4a" should be inserted on page 45, line 2; fol. "17a" on page 73, last line of (the main body of) the page; fol. "18a" on page 75, line 14.

On fol. 3a "the three *chol kha*-s" (regions, districts) of Tibet are mentioned, and as the Mongolian equivalent *ölge* is given for Tib. *chol-kha* (p. 43); however, usually *chol kha* is, in Mongolian, rendered by *egür* (Sumatiratna 1959: 661, cf. Lessing 1961: 301b). And as the authors use no Chinese characters one wonders which *lu* ist meant as equivalent for tib. *chol kha* (ibid.) which usually is rendered in Chinese by *qu* (alias *ch'ü*, 區).

Tib. *a mṛ de va* (fol. 4a) most probably is not "Amideva" (p. 46), but Amṛtadeva which is rather synonymous with *Amitāyus*; *lha ldan* (fol. 4b) should be rendered by *devavat* instead of *devavān* (p. 46), and *mi'i lha* by *mānavadeva* instead of *mavadeva* (ibid.). Fol. 25b *gtsug tor 'khor los bsgyur ba* is rendered as "Ulagriva-" (p. 90) instead of the usual "Uṣṇīṣa-" (cf. Lokesh Chandra 1976: 1895a). Further: *Ākarmati* (p. 66) for *Ākaramati*, *Āryapalo* (p. 76, Index p. 423a and p. 158 *Ārya Palo*) for *Āryabala*; *Krakuccanda* (p. 74, fol. 17a – not fol. 6b as stated in the Index p. 423a) for *Krakucchanda*.

After the translation of the text itself there follow a satellite map of "Lower Yar-lung" and more than 80 photos of the landscape, the buildings and inner cells, altars and iconographic details (pp. 114-142).

Text B (p. 9, pp. 143-148) is an excerpt of the famous chronicle *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* of dPa'-bo gTsug-lag phreng-ba from the Beijing edition of 1986. Here *gtsang khang* should not be rendered by *gaṇḍakutī* (p. 144) but by *gandhakuṭī* (Edgerton, 1953, p. 209b).

Text C (p. 9, pp. 149-154) is taken from the *rGyal po bka' thang* (*bKa' thang sde lnga*) from the Beijing edition of 1986, presenting detailed descriptions of several chambers of the temples, especially of the *gNod-sbyin-khang*, "not mentioned in the other texts" (p. 152). A diagram (p. 154) is showing precisely the position of the different sections of the "Nāga Treasury" of that *gNod-sbyin-khang*.

Text D (p. 9, pp. 155-158) "is derived from the 16th chapter of the *bKa' chems Ka khol ma*" from the Lanzhou edition of 1989. In note 6 (p. 157) mention is made of "the confession text Bodhi[sattva]pattideśanā"; correctly, this should be *-āpatti-* 'sin' (Edgerton 1953: 97b) – or *-pratideśanā* 'confession' (*op. cit.*, 363a); and *ciṅtāmaṇi-* should be *cintāmaṇi-*.

"Text E is the famous inscription of the Khra-'brug temple bell" (p. 9, pp. 159-161), "evidently to be dated (...) ca. 804 A.D. or later" (note 5). That inscription had been reproduced or mentioned in several earlier publications, but partly confounded with the bell of the *bSam-yas* monastery; the authors have, meritoriously, cleared up the matter (p. 159, note 1). As king Khri lDe-srong-btsan (*Sad-na-legs*) is mentioned in the text, the authors discuss his and his predecessors' dates, presenting (with sound arguments) a chronology which differs from the usually found dates: hence, Khri-srong lde-btsan's death in 802, Mu-ne btsan-po reigned 802-803/04, Khri lDe-srong-btsan (*Sad-na-legs*) reigned 804-815/17 (p. 160, note 3).

"Text F is a 84-folio-long *bskang gso* text from the 18th century dedicated to the protector gods of the temple" (p. 9, pp. 162-168) and is centred on *Tshangs-pa dkar-po*, the god, who "assumes the key position" on occasion of "the fifth-month festival *Me-tog mchod-pa*" – described on pp. 289-296, and vividly illustrated by impressive photos of the years 1998 and 2001 and particularly on the accompanying DVD video attached to the book. The text, also included in the attached DVD, was "completed 1763". It should be added that *Tshangs-pa dkar-po* is also one of the 30 tutelary deities "of the world" (cf. Kaschewsky/Tsering 1998: Nr. 27) bearing the epithet "Lord of life" (*srog gi bdag po*). In note 12 the assumed Sanskrit form of the goddess *Nyi-ma gzhon-nu* should read *-kumārf* instead of the masculine *-kumāra*.

One finds quite a number of inaccurately transliterated Sanskrit terms and names which cannot all be listed here; see, for instance, *Guhyasamāja* for *Guhyasamāja* (p. 146), *Dipaṃkāra* (p. 73) and *Dipamkara* (p. 423) for *Dīpaṃkara*, *Māmākī* (p. 424) for *Māmakī*, *caturaśeti* (p. 423) for *caturaśīti*, *samadhi* (p. 425) for *samādhi* etc.

There are four appendices: Under the heading "The Tradition Concerning Tibet's First Royal Temples" the authors mention the (also ideological) tentative attempts of the Tibetans to reconstruct the "important period considered the golden heyday of Tibet" (p. 171) and

present tables listing the temples (which were to "suppress" the demoness) according to the various chronicles, etc. This is followed by a very impressive description of the "Supine Demoness Painting and its Religious Sites" which provides a lucid help for understanding the tables.

App. II (authored by Guntram Hazod alone) deals with the "beginnings" of the glorious period of Tibetan history in the Yar-lung area, starting with an attempt to reconstruct the pre-Buddhist tradition (pp. 249, 259), thus throwing light on the rule of "pre-imperial" Yar-lung, e.g., king lHa Tho tho-ri (often considered a merely "mythological" figure), and on the shifting of the rulers from Yar-lung and the "Establishment of Royal Residences in the Central sKyid-chu Region". The author is also dealing with "the foundation legend" (pp. 249f.) which gave the Khra-'brug temple its name and which is even today recounted by the locals: "a great bird which in the form of a falcon (*khra*) and accompanied by thundering ('brug)", helped the king to dry out the sea when its water had dangerously risen.

App. III consists of a chronological table of immense interest, presenting the authors' findings on the early history of Tibet, from lHa Tho-tho-ri (5th century) to the year 2002; these six pages (pp. 308-313) can be regarded as the most recent and most reliable overview of Tibet's history! In addition, there is a genealogical table "of the Yar-lung Jo-bo-s (11-14th cent.)" (pp. 314-322).

The wealth of mythological, historical, philological, and geographic information is completed by App. IV "Architectural Documentation" with detailed plans and illustrations.

The bibliography contains, inter alia, 14 pages of Tibetan text titles, alphabetically arranged according to (short) title – which at times is not easily to be recognized, thus the Vth Dalai Lama's famous *Gang ga'i chu rgyan* being listed under the heading "Thob yig". In all cases where editions from China / Tibet and also facsimiles from India / Nepal are available, preference has been given to the China / Tibet editions. As "secondary sources" the authors list modern books written by Tibetans; one wonders why here (p. 373) Ye-shes 'byung-gnas is listed between "Dung-dkar" and "Nam-mkha'i nor-bu". Besides, there are seven "Chinese sources", 14 pages listing "European-Languages Sources" and two "Websites". In the "Tibetan Index", personal names ("human and non-human"), place-names, and a very limited list of "Texts" are to be found. It is not quite clear why from the vast amount of Tibetan texts mentioned in the bibliography only about 20 have been included in the Index. (The place names beginning with sG- [p. 408b] should have been inserted on p. 409a [after *rGyas sman*].) There is no Chinese index; however, two Chinese names (Guan Di and Guan Yu) have crept into the Index of Tibetan personal names (p. 394).

Thundering Falcon is, in all its aspects, an extraordinary book of highest scientific value. It is and will remain a landmark of Tibetology the importance of which hardly can be overestimated.

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