

## FRENCH CONTRIBUTIONS TO HIMALAYAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES

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The excellence and versatility of French scholarship in the fields of Himalayan and Tibetan studies are well-known. However, as the publications of French scholars normally appear in French, most Tibetan, Indian, and Nepalese scholars do not have direct access to the work of their French colleagues. The two volumes reviewed below are, therefore, not likely to be well-known in India and Nepal. All titles of articles are accordingly given in English translation in the following review.

Alexander W. Macdonald (ed.), *L'Ethnographie*, vol. 83. Special volume: "Rituels himalayens", Paris (Société d'ethnographie de Paris) 1986. Pp. 328.

The journal *L'Ethnographie* has devoted a special volume to "Himalayan rituals", reflecting not only the diversity of "Himalayan" studies in France in the 1980's, but also the renewed emphasis placed by anthropologists as well as historians of religion on ritual as a crucially important theme of study in order to understand the foundations of any social entity, whether local community or regional civilization. Not only have studies of ritual in the Himalayan area (understood in the broadest geographical sense so as to include the trans-Himalayan Tibetan plateau as well) been scarce, but, as the editor points out in his introduction to the volume, "Few comparative analyses of ritual have been attempted. Each specialist has a tendency to shut himself up in his own fields: Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan continue to be studied separately" (p. 5). The present volume attempts to remedy this, not by proposing far-flung comparative vistas (which would be premature), but by juxtaposing 11 substantial articles having ritual in one form or another as their common theme. Unfortunately, there are no contributions dealing with Bhutan; here a vast and

complex field awaits study (or, at any rate, publication). Three articles (Allen, Locke, Ramble) are in English.

The contributions to this volume can, in a very rough and ready way, be divided into three groups: those dealing with Tibet; Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples ("tribes") of the Himalayas, subject to Tibetan cultural and religious influence; peoples not subject to Tibetan influence.

A very limited number of anthropologists have been able to do field-work in Tibet itself in recent years, but only after the present volume was edited. The Tibetological contributions to this volume are therefore either philological, i.e. based on textual studies, or anthropological, but based on field-work outside Tibet itself.

There are two contributions based on textual material: Katia Buffetrille, "Un rituel de mariage tibétain" ("A Tibetan marriage ritual"), and Samten G. Karmay, "L'âme et la turquoise: un rituel tibétain" ("The soul and the turquoise: a Tibetan ritual"). The former contains the text and translation of a text detailing the rituals to be performed by the lama at the moment when the bride arrives in front of the door of the house of her future husband. It was composed by Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas (1813-1899) on the occasion of the marriage of the prince of Derge in 1870. As Kong-sprul was one of the founders of the eclectic (*ris-med*) movement in eastern Tibet, it is not surprising that the text is characterized by the inclusion of both Bonpo and Buddhist elements. The same text had already been translated by D. Schuh, "die Darlegungen des tibetischen Enzyklopädisten Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas über osttibetische Hochzeitsbräuche", in R. Kaschewsky (ed.), *Serta Tibeto-Mongolica*, Wiesbaden 1973, pp. 295-349. This was only brought to the author's notice after she had finished her own translation (showing, incidentally, the problems occasionally posed by linguistic barriers in Europe also), but differences in translation are commented on in the notes.

Karmay's article deals with the concept of *bla*, "soul", on the basis of beliefs attested from the period of the royal dynasty as well as in later texts (Padma gling-pa 1450-1521, and a Bonpo text from 1852). The concept of "soul" – which of course runs counter to orthodox Buddhist doctrine – is a fundamental one in Tibetan "popular" religion, and Karmay convincingly shows that rituals of "calling" or "ransoming" the soul (believed to have temporarily left the body, thus exposing the latter to illness and misfortune) are not of Indian origin, but perpetuate very ancient indigenous Tibetan beliefs.

Ladakh is still largely a land of Tibetan culture. Pascale Dollfus, "Lo-Gsar, le Nouvel An populaire au Ladakh" ("Lo-Gsar, the people's New Year in Ladakh"), provides a detailed, day-by-day description of the so-called *so-nam lo-gsar*, "agricultural New Year",

which is celebrated two months before the official New Year, not only in Ladakh, but also in certain communities in Nepal (Dolpo, Langtang, and Yolmo), in Sikkim, and in Tibet. Dollfus, who has done extensive field-work in Ladakh, especially points out the co-existence of Buddhist and non-Buddhist elements in the Ladakhi rituals, thus joining, thematically, the focus of the articles by Buffetrille and Karmay.

The contribution of Charles Ramble (in English) likewise employs anthropological method and perspective, but attention is now shifted to a population of Tibetan culture in Nepal, the villages of the Baragaon region of the Upper Kali Gandaki: "The Muktinath Yartung: A Tibetan harvest festival in its social and historical context". The Yartung (*dbyar-ston*) festival is one of three annual seasonal festivals in the area, and as such related to the "agricultural New Year" of Ladakh. It takes place in the seventh agrarian month, corresponding to September. Ramble not only gives a description of the festival, but shows that it discloses an obsolete social order. The festival is described with special emphasis on tracing the course of events from the point of view of one of three principal communities involved, the Bonpo village of Lubra. (An interesting point for further investigation and reflection is the apparently double significance of the term *bon-po* in this area, i.e. both as a follower of the Bon religion in general, and as a specific religious specialist, p. 240). Although there is no enmity between Bonpos and Buddhists in the Baragaon area today, this may not always have been so, as a closer scrutiny of the Muktinath Yartung festival reveals.

Four articles deal with ethnic groups in Nepal speaking Tibeto-Burman languages and subject in varying degrees to cultural influences from the Tibetan (and largely Buddhist) world to the north and the Indian (and Hindu) world to the south (the latter augmented by political domination by the Nepali-Hindu government in Kathmandu). As N.J. Allen points out in "Thulung Weddings: the Hinduization of a ritual cycle in East Nepal" (in English), one must be wary of simplifications: "the Hindu-tribal dichotomy provides a model that is exceedingly crude" (p. 33), among other reasons because "it risks attributing to the Thulung a changelessness which... is certainly unreal". Further, "it risks attributing to Hinduism a homogeneity that is if possible even more unreal". The goal should be to "look for an underlying unity and homogeneity in Himalayan society" (p. 16), for "... eventually the social history of the various peoples of Nepal will need to be studied as a unitary field" (p. 33). Allen seeks to reconstruct the traditional style of wedding among the Thulung, based on the accounts of informants as well as comparative linguistic data; he sees it "as the result of Hindu influence operating on a culture that was once essentially tribal" (p. 15).

Philippe Sagant, "La cure du chamane et l'interprétation des laïcs" ("The shaman's cure and the laymen's interpretation"), deals with shamanism among another people of East Nepal, the Limbu. As indicated by the title, his chief concern is to study the position of the

shaman in a particular community, and the understanding among his patients and clients of the cures he is believed to effect. Numerous aspects of the role of the shaman are examined within the framework of the Limbu world-view; no comparative thrusts are attempted, but the article will certainly be a fundamental one for a comparative study of Himalayan shamanism in the future.

The Magar of the village of Sānkh at first sight seem to present an extreme case of acculturation to Indo-Nepalese culture. Among other things, they have forgotten their Tibeto-Burmese language and only speak Nepali. Nevertheless, they are proud of their Magar identity (defined as caste identity), and in her contribution to this volume, "Papini biha; le mariage de la mauvaise fille: Essai d'identification d'une fête magar" "Papini biha: the marriage of the bad girl: An attempt to identify a magar Festival"), Anne de Sales analyses a ritual which is unique to this village and which expresses the Magar identity of its inhabitants. Although it reflects influences not only from the dominant Indo-Nepalese culture but also from Tibet, it is essentially the result of an active, creative process of "bricolage" in which the Magar have made use of whatever "symbolic objects" could serve their purpose.

Brigitte Steinmann deals with an aspect of the ritual life of the Tamang: "Le culte des dieux du clan chez les Tamang: la terre, le livre et la lignée" ("The cult of the clan-gods among the Tamang: the land, the book and the lineage"). Steinmann has discussed Tamang rituals in several recent articles as well as in a monograph, *Les Tamang du Népal*, Paris 1987. In the present article she deals with the cult of the clan deities of the Tamang of Eastern Nepal. The Tamang are not strongly influenced by Hinduism; on the contrary, they are in a certain sense Tibetan Buddhists, and have married lamas belonging to the Nyingmapa order. However, they have put Tibetan Buddhism to their own use within the general framework of their own, complex religious institutions. This leads to the typical duality of Tamang religion, in which the archaic indigenous beliefs and institutions coexist with - or, as the case may be, are opposed to - the lamaist interpretation of those beliefs. The cult of clan deities is no exception to this pattern. Thus the lamas officiate at the cult of the deities of Tibetan origin associated with certain clans, and the non-Buddhist priests, the *labon*, venerate the ancestors of the lineages (p. 304).

The remaining three articles deal with very different communities. None of them, however, are influenced by Tibetan culture. These articles are mentioned briefly here, not because they are of less interest or significance than the others, but because the present reviewer is less qualified to discuss them. "Naissance d'un village tharu: à propos de rites de claustration villageoises" ("The birth of a Tharu village") by Gisèle Krauskopff "provides an analysis of Tharu representations of village territory and of its boundaries through two rituals: the first being the village-shrine foundation and the second one a village cloistering

ritual" (p. 131). Such rituals were regularly performed in earlier times when there was less pressure of forest and empty land, allowing a village to move to a new site; however, the great influx on hill people and subsequent increased ecological degradation of the Terai has rendered these rituals practically obsolete. The author describes a ritual of demarcation, performed in 1983, twelve years after disastrous floods forced an entire village to buy land from a neighbouring village in order to move to a new site on higher ground.

John K. Locke, S.J., deals with a Buddhist Tantric ritual performed by the Newars, "The Uposadha Vrata of Amoghapāśa Lokeśvara in Nepal" (in English). He traces the history and development of the ritual and provides a detailed description of the ritual as performed to-day, in a specific form recorded at one of the twelve place of pilgrimage (Guyeśvarī) associated with this deity in the Kathmandu Valley. He also summarizes the legends connected with each of the twelve pilgrimage places.

The last article to be noted deals with the Kalash of Hindu Kush; Jean-Yves Loude and Viviane Lièvre, "Fêtes d'été chez les Kalash du Nord-Pakistan" ("Summer festivals among the Kalash of North Pakistan"). The Kalash are the only remaining non-Muslim people in Pakistan, and although their freedom of religion is protected by the authorities, motorable roads have opened their hitherto inaccessible valleys in the Hindu Kush to modernization. It is therefore of great importance to record their rituals while there yet is time.

Fernand Meyer (ed.), *Tibet. Civilisation et société*, Paris (Editions de la Fondation Singer-Polignac/Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme) 1990. P. 204 + 53 plates.

This volume contains paper delivered at the seminar organized in April 1987 by the Fondation Singer-Polignac in Paris. With the exception of three very short papers contributed by scholars from the Chinese People's Republic, the papers are all substantial and original contributions to Tibetan studies, including studies of related populations in Nepal. All the papers are in French.

Several may be grouped under the heading of art, architecture and iconography. The first is that of Gilles Béguin, "Remarques concernant les influences néwars dans la peinture tibétaine à l'époque des Phag-mo-gru-pa" ("Remarks concerning Newar influences on Tibetan painting during the Phag-mo-gru-pa period"). Béguin deals in turn with mural painting and with thankas. The former is studied principally on the basis of the early fifteenth century Gyantse *sku-'bum* (stūpa), and while pointing out the conspicuous presence of Newar influence, Béguin stresses that the murals also show a considerable degree of originality. As for the thankas, Newar influence is traced from the fifteenth to the early

seventeenth century, and a preliminary fourfold stylistic classification (depending on the degree of Newar influence) is attempted.

The extremely complex historical evolution of the iconography of two protective deities is studied by Amy Heller in "remarques préliminaires sur les divinités protectrices Srung-ma dmar-nag du Potala" ("Preliminary remarks on the protective deities Srung-ma dmar-nag of the Potala"). The paper does not offer any final identification of the 'red and Black Protective Deities' who, since the Third Dalai Lama, have been the protectors of the Dalai Lama, but explores the fluctuating and complex relationship between them and other deities, principally Beg-tse.

Anne Chayet writes on the architectural history of bSam-yas, the first monastery to be founded, in the eight century A.D., in Tibet: "Contribution aux recherches sur les états successifs du monastère de bSam-yas" ("Contribution to research into the successive phases of the monastery of bSam-yas"). Having to some extent escaped the destruction wrought by the Chinese on religious edifices in Tibet, bSam-yas still presents a group of edifices which can provide the historian of architecture with much invaluable information. The author concludes (p. 114) that several sources of inspiration may have influenced the lay-out and shape of bSam-yas: the Indian monastery of Ontapuri (or perhaps Nalanda) as well as, on a deeper level, Mount Meru and, corresponding to it, the mandala; non-Buddhist models such as the royal encampment of the Tibetan kings, the ritual edifice of the *mdos*, and even the *mingtang*-palace of ancient. The study of the origins of bSam-yas thus opens perspectives pointing back to a very early period in Tibetan history.

A fundamental study of Tibetan medical paintings is presented by Fernand Meyer: "Introduction à l'étude d'une série de peintures médicales créée à Lhasa au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle" ("Introduction to the study of a series of medical paintings created in Lhasa in the 17th century"). Starting with a L.A. Waddell, Western scholars published a number of Tibetan anatomical paintings which remained unconnected until the existence of a set of 17 paintings, preserved in the Ethnographic Museum of Ulan Ude, was made known in 1979. The following year a similar set was reported from the Institute of Medicine and Astrology in Lhasa (sMan-rtsis-khang). The latter set was published in Lhasa in 1986. In this very substantial article, Meyer studies the impressive set of no less than 79 medical and anatomical paintings prepared by order of the regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho (1653-1705) in order to illustrate the medical text *Vaidurya sngon-po* of which he was the author.

This vast series of paintings, completed, at the latest, by 1703 (p. 33), reflects the great interest of the regent for the science of medicine. The set preserved in the sMan-rtsis-khang, which contains several thankas that may belong to the original set dating from the late 17th century, was restored and completed by the famous medical scholar mKhyen-rab-

nor-bu (1883-19962) on the order of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. A second set, still preserved in Lhasa, was likewise assembled by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and is said to have been previously kept in the Norbulinka. The Ula Ude set was copied in Lhasa for the Buryat monk Dorjev (1849-1938). Meyer's Conclusion (p. 48) is worth quoting in full:

"The series of medical paintings created in Lhasa between 1687 and 1703 under the auspices of the regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, constitutes, with regard to its amplitude and originality of conception, an extraordinary iconographical whole, not only for Tibet, but in the general history of medicine. It is both the result of various earlier traditions and the expression of the genius of a man who, continuing the work of the Fifth Dalai Lama, strove to construct the vast institutional and cultural system which was to unify Tibet under the authority of the *dge-lugs-pa* school. In addition to its technical purpose, this iconography was also conceived of as a prestigious aesthetic work and a political act".

Another field within Tibetan studies which is indisputably dominated by French scholars, is that of Tibetan music, especially liturgic music. To an already impressive series of musicological articles, published in various journals, Mireille Helffer now adds "Recherches récentes concernant l'emploi des notations musicales dans la tradition tibétaine" ("Recent research concerning the use of musical notation in the Tibetan tradition"). In this extremely important article, the various systems of notation are first of all classified according to instrument: human voice, drums and cymbals, and wind instruments. Within each class, the traditions of each major school of Tibetan Buddhism are discussed, in some cases taking different monastic traditions within a single school into account. For reasons which are not mentioned, systems of notation used by adherents of the Bon religion are not dealt with, but Helffer has studied Bon traditions extensively in other articles.

Pre-Buddhist and popular religious traditions is a field of study completely dominated by French Tibetologists: one need only invoke names such as Lalou, Stein, Macdonald, Spanien, Karmay, and Blondeau. In the present volume a new and fascinating contribution to the study of symbolism and ritual is the article by Anne-Marie Blondeau, "Questions préliminaires sur les rituels *mdos*" ("Preliminary questions regarding the rituals of the *mdos*"). Blondeau does away once and for all with the widespread misunderstanding in Western Tibetological literature, that *mdos* signifies the same as the *nam-mkha'*, the "thread-crosses" used in various rituals. Blondeau traces this misunderstanding to the dictionaries of Jäschke (1881) and Das (1902), the latter inspired by G. Sandberg (*Handbook of Colloquial Tibetan*, 1894). In fact, the term *mdos* has a much wider implication, being the "totality of ritual constructions and ritual objects and materials which are assembled including, as the case may be, *nam-mkha'*" (p. 95). Blondeau stresses that the question of the nature, function (in relation to the *glud*, "ransom"), and origin (Buddhist or non-Buddhist) of the *mdos* can only be decided by having recourse to relevant Tibetan texts. In

fact, the Tibetan ritual literature dealing with *mdos* is extremely abundant, and Blondeau concludes that the *mdos* rituals are performed with a great variety of purposes, and have, in a general way, the function of removing spiritual as well as material obstacles. Finally, two rituals involving *mdos* are analysed, one of which is integrated into a Buddhist framework, while the other is practically free of Buddhist associations. Blondeau takes care to avoid hasty conclusions, but accepts a non-Buddhist origin for the *mdos* rituals as probable, and, citing a large number of parallel traits, suggests a link with the ancient funerary rites.

Two historical studies are included in this volume: a short note by Samten G. Karmay, "A propos d'un sceau en or offert par l'empereur shunzi" ("Regarding a golden seal given by Emperor Shunzi"), and Patrick Mansier, "La guerre du Jinchuan (rGyal-rong): son contexte politico-religieux" ("The Jinchuan War: its politico-religious context"). Gyarong is a region in which Tibetan culture predominates (the Gyarong people are not, however, Tibetan, as the author rightly points out), and which is still extremely little studied. Mansier's article is of considerable scope and interest, as it gives a broad overview of the political and religious situation in the Gyarong region in the 18th century. The enforcing of direct imperial rule, which only succeeded after overcoming fierce resistance, had aspects which foreshadowed the occupation of Tibet itself two centuries later, including the manipulation of religious rivalries between Gelugpa, Karmapa, and Bonpo factions.

Two articles concerned with literature and linguistics round off the collection of articles directly concerned with Tibet: Alexander W. Macdonald, "Cendrillon au Tibet" ("Cinderella in Tibet") which discusses a Tibetan version of the Cinderella story (the text was published by Macdonald already in 1967), NSD and Nicolas Tournadre, "Présentation de la grammaire traditionnelle et des cas du tibétain. Approche classique et analyse moderne" ("Presentation of the traditional grammar and the cases of Tibetan. Classical approach and modern analysis"). The latter constitutes a welcome clarification of the nature of the Tibetan "case" system.

Finally, two substantial articles deal with populations in Nepal. The contribution by Philippe Sagant, "Les tambours de Nyi-shang (Népal). Rituel et centralisation politique" ("The drums of Nyi-shang (Nepal). Ritual and political centralization") demonstrates the importance of the small Tibetan communities of northern Nepal for a proper understanding of Tibetan civilization. On the basis of an analysis of a communal ritual in the Nyi-shang area, Sagant discloses two mutually opposed ideologies; an archaic, decentralised political system where personal prowess of those "elected" by the local mountain deity constitutes the basis of power, and a centralised system, based on the primacy of age, heredity, and clan privilege. The latter system was adopted by the Yar-lung dynasty of the ancient Tibetan kings and later sanctioned by Buddhism. In the case of the ritual in question, one can observe the shift of emphasis from the first to the second.



Finally, Brigitte Steinmann, the foremost French expert on Tamang culture and religion, has contributed to this volume as well as to the first volume presented in this review: "Interprétation de concepts tibétains par des lamas tamang rnying-ma-pa du Népal, dans le rituel funéraire" ("Interpretation of Tibetan concepts by Tamang rNying-ma-pa lamas of Nepal, in the funerary ritual"). The article discusses the extraordinary complexity of Tamang religion, in which various elements - Buddhism, local shamanism, the cult of clan deities - have retained their distinctive profiles. This is strikingly brought out by the fact that each strand in Tamang religion has its own class of priests: the *lhabon* are in charge of the cult of the clan deities; the *tamba* recites cosmogonic myths; the *bombo* are the shamans; and the *lamas* represent a non-monastic, Tibetan Buddhist tradition of the rNying-ma-pa order. Steinmann does not undertake a chronological analysis of these various elements of Tamang religion, but instead raises the question as to which elements of Tibetan Buddhism correspond to indigenous (and already heterogeneous) Tamang beliefs, and thus have been appropriated by the Tamang. This is a perspective in which she analyses the Tamang funerary ritual, leading to the conclusion that it may be more fruitful to regard Tibetan texts such as the Bardo Thödol ("The book of Liberation from the Intermediate State through Hearing") as learned elaborations of existing popular ritual (corresponding to the basic structure of the Tamang ritual) rather than to seek an explanation of Tamang ritual in the Tibetan texts which are actually recited.

In this review, only two publications in the form of collections of articles have been presented. Other collections could be mentioned; a large number of monographs on topics as far apart as social and religious organisations of Ladakhi communities and the architecture of the temples of Chengde north of Beijing; several exhibition catalogues; and, not least, a steady flow of articles in various journals throughout the 1980's. At the end of this survey one can only conclude that with regard to Tibetan and Himalayas studies, the French academic milieu is unique in its scope, diversity, and quality.

Peter Schwieger, *Tibetisches Erzählgut aus Brag-g. yab. Texte mit Übersetzungen, grammatischen Abriss und Glossar*, Beiträge zur tibetischen Erzählforschung Band 10, Bonn (VGH Wissenschaftsverlag) 1989. 175 pp.

Under the energetic editorship of Prof. Dieter Schuh, new titles in the series Beiträge zur tibetischen Erzählforschung continue to appear regularly. The present volume, prepared with care and competence by Peter Schwieger, contains a collection of eight folk tales from the district of Brag-g.yab in eastern Tibet. The urgency of collecting authentic folk tales and accurately noting the dialects in question is clearly brought out in Schwieger's introduction. His material was collected in India and Nepal in the years 1979 to 1981, and none of his informants could speak an unadulterated Brag-g.yab dialect. Today the situation would, in this respect, be even less encouraging. Nevertheless, his informants had preserved

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enough of their native dialect to enable Schwieger to give a very useful outline of its phonetic, morphological, and syntactic characteristics. As is usual in the series, the texts are published in phonematic transcription and in translation, conveniently printed on facing pages. Finally, a vocabulary lists all words found in the texts, the written (literary) form being added where possible.

The translation (but not the text) of the eight tales published here has been published earlier by Schwieger in vol. 4 of the series (*Erzählgut aus A-mdo und Brag-g. yab*, Sankt Augustin 1982) in a form which is easy to read and accessible for a larger public. The concordance is as follows: text no. 1 = 1982 no. 47; 2 = 55; 3 = 69; 4 = 71; 5 = 48; 6 = 59; 7 = 45; 8 = 51.