there are only rare mentions of lamas. Since these mentions are always negative, the author suggests that the shamans were somehow linked in the past to the practitioners of the Bon religion which was in violent conflict with invading Buddhism. While this is certainly an interesting line of inquiry, it is worth investigating the possibility that the implicit hostility may be derived from an association with the ethos of the Kalyala dynasty of Jumla, which carved out a strongly Hindu Kingdom in the ruins of the Buddhist Malla Empire.

The tradition presented here is also strongly reminiscent of what J. Hitchcock called Dhaulagiri shamanism, that is practised by the Northern Magar as well as by the Blacksmiths who live with them. Not only do the similar narrative motifs of the songs make this obvious but also the two ceremonies that frame the life of a shaman, his initiation and his funerals, that are described in the sixth chapter. These provide a mine of information of great comparative value.

This book is the fruit of an experience of which any reader will acknowledge the authenticity, and it has already been greatly appreciated, not least by the nation which hosted the research: the author was recently awarded the Birendra Academy Decoration, a distinction that until now has been extended to Toni Hagen and the late Christoph von Führer-Haimendorf.


Review by Ann Hecht

In recent years there has been a proliferation of books on textiles, especially on India and the far east, and the subjects have become familiar with a surfeit of pictures but not necessarily scholarly texts to accompany them.

It is all the more exciting therefore to find this excellent book on the textiles of Bhutan, a less well known country, written by four experts. The book was published to coincide with a special exhibition 'From the Land of the Thunder Dragon' based on the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum, augmented with further examples from public and private collections. The text is written and edited by Diana K. Myers and Susan S. Bean with contributions from Michael Aris and Françoise Pommaire. As one would expect from such a scholarly volume there are notes, a glossary, a catalogue of the exhibition objects, references, and a detailed index.

It is only in roundabout ways that Bhutan textiles have come into museum collections. The first such were acquired by museums in Britain, brought back by British diplomats, the only western power at the time to have relations with Bhutan. Jane A. Phillips, a patron of the Peabody Essex Museum, was captivated by the exquisite and intricate patterns of the Bhutanese costumes in a collection of textiles from Kathmandu brought into the museum by a dealer in the early 1980s. From that first sighting she began to build the collection on which this catalogue is based.

Textiles in Bhutan are integrated into all aspects of life. They represent prestige, wealth, and forms of payment, in addition to their use in Buddhist ritual. Items of clothing and gifts of cloth mark important social occasions, both small and large, private and
diplo. No transaction is complete without the accompanying gift of textiles carefully chosen to accord with the standing of the recipient.

Three areas of Bhutan (following north-south corridors) have distinctive weaving traditions, eastern, north central, and central Bhutan. Eastern Bhutan is renowned for plainweave fabrics, supplementary-weft-patterned fabrics, and supplementary-warp-patterned fabrics such as the popular aikapur made in the northern region of eastern Bhutan. It was also a centre for dyeing, especially the warm eastern valleys which were noted for lac production and the production of indigo from a local broadleaved shrub Strobilanthes flaccidifolius. Nowadays, synthetic dyes are much in use, though not exclusively; sometimes the natural ingredients include a measure of powdered dye in the bath or, stranger still, yarns dyed with chemicals are later dipped into a natural dye bath!

North central Bhutan, in the Lhuntsi district, was the home of the traditional woman's tunic (no longer worn), woven with distinctive techniques of supplementary-weft-patterning, on a warp-faced cotton ground, in wild silk, wool, and bast fibres. This tunic style, the patterning of which is perhaps the most intriguing of all to be found in Bhutan, was later abandoned for the new style of wrapped dress (kira) worn now throughout the country by royal command.

The predominant fibre in use in central Bhutan is wool, woven on the horizontal frame loom introduced from Tibet. It is used for blankets and rain coats in the heavier weights, or sold by the yard in the lighter weights for making up into women's dresses and men's robes.

The weaving of western Bhutan does not compare with the sophisticated practices elsewhere, but Thimphu, the capital and the seat of the royal family, has seen many weavers move west following their employers in government service. The Queen of Bhutan takes a personal interest in promoting the traditions of weaving and the Kaling National Handloom Development Project in Thimphu is one of several royal government initiatives to stimulate weaving.