

instance, that the professional “neutrality” of the researcher is ultimately a neutralisation by others of the harmful effects of her voluntary non-engagement (p. 289). Her dedication to the task of learning serially from the mutually competitive claimants to authentic knowledge (Tamba, lama and shaman), and her honesty in portraying the relational contexts, furtive cigarettes and culinary endurances entailed in the whole process deserve strong congratulations. If the strengths of the book are in its ethnographic locatedness, a weakness is the lack of an explicit discussion of alternative approaches. Steinmann says the danger of naming demons is to bring them alive. In terms of demonstrating the value of her contribution in relation to other scholarship, this could have been a risk worth taking as important debates remain implicit.

As a pair these publications raise the quality of ethnographic knowledge of the Tamang to a new plateau. They are works that deserve repeat visiting, as they contain innumerable levels of relevance and insight commensurate with the complexity of the lives they describe. As a fictive younger brother of these scholarly sisters I pay respect. *Nanama ta shyu laji, ale tse.*

Das Königreich Mang yul Gung thang, Königtum und Herrschaftsgewalt im Tibet des 13.- 17. Jahrhunderts [The kingdom of Mang yul Gung thang, kingship and political power in 13th to 17th century Tibet], vols. 1 and 2, by Karl-Heinz Everding. Bonn: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag 2000. Series Monumenta Tibetica Historica, Abteilung I, Band 6 (1,2). ISBN 3-88280-062-3, diagrams, sketch-maps, facsimile of Tibetan texts (8 pages), pp. 748.

Reviewed by Hildegard Diemberger, Cambridge

Karl-Heinz Everding has presented us with an impressive study of the kingdom of Mang yul Gung thang. This important and still little-explored polity between Central and Western Tibet shaped the history of the Himalayan regions from the 13th to the 17th century. Located at the gateway between Tibet and Nepal, this kingdom, founded by the descendants of the

Tibetan royal house, became part of a system of shifting alliances and political competition involving the kingdoms of Western Tibet, the Sa skya polity and the rulers of southern and northern La stod.

Even from a quick glance it is clear that this work is not only a comprehensive study of the local history and of the monarchs and their rule, but is also a far-reaching compendium that provides precious information much beyond the immediate scope of the title.

The study is organised in two volumes: “The *Gung thang rgyal rabs* chronicle - edition and translation,” and “Studies on the history of the kingdom”. Volume I is devoted to the study of an important historical text, the *Gung thang rgyal rabs* by Kaḥ thog Rig ‘dzin Tshe dbang nor bu. It is subdivided into three parts: The *Gung thang rgyal rabs*: value and significance - Transliterated text and annotated translation - Facsimile edition. Volume 2 is devoted to the study of the history of the kingdom of Mang yul Gung thang, from the earliest historical evidences about the area as part of Zhang zhung conquered by Srong btsan sgam po around 643-44 AD, to the demise of the Gungthang kingdom following its conquest by gTsang pa sde srid in 1620. The volume is subdivided into four parts - Sources - Geography and history of Western Tibet: an overview - The kingdom of Mang yul Gung thang - Appendices.

Everding’s work is a philological *tour de force* that sets out from the translation and discussion of the *Gung thang rgyal rabs* and touches on a number of important research themes and discussions. The sheer size and richness of the work makes it impossible to present its contents systematically within the space of a book review. I shall rather outline some key points and highlight a few aspects that may be particularly useful for scholars who do not usually work within the framework of historical and philological studies and who may fail to give to this work the attention it deserves.

The great significance of the *Gung thang rgyal rabs* had already been noticed some time ago by a number of historians such as Ariane Macdonald/Spainien who drew upon it in her discussion of the *sku bla* and the ancient territorial cults, and David Jackson who discussed it in the framework of his work on Mustang. The importance of the fact that this text is now available in full translation in a western language, enriched by numerous notes that set it in relation to other historical sources and to current Tibetological research, cannot be overestimated.

The full title of the text is “How the genealogy of the God-kings of mNga’ ris smad Mang yul Gung thang originated, the book ‘magic mirror of crystal’”. It was composed in 1749 by Kaḥ thog Rig ‘dzin Tshe dbang nor bu while he was residing in the royal palace of Mustang. The text was compiled on the basis of pre-existing genealogical documents and should be seen as a sequel to Rig ‘dzin Tshe dbang nor bu’s work on the history of the Tibetan

kingdom *Lha btsad po'i gdung rabs*. The *Gung thang rgyal rabs* is the only chronicle that links up the local ruling house with the ancient kings of Tibet. Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu's undertaking seems to reflect the contrast between ancient political greatness, seen as a source of inspiration, and more recent internal and external strife in Tibet. Everding acutely observes that it was conceived in order to provide orientation for government practice according to the Dharma, and aimed at the religious and political leadership of his time. In his words (which I translate from the German) this work was a "literary production aiming at the creation of culturally shaped historical images rather than at a factual and critical account of the history of the kingdom" and had to be seen first of all in the context of its compilation. In order to do so he provides the reader with an exhaustive account of the author's life.

Everding devotes a particularly valuable chapter to Kaḥ thog Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755). This rNying ma pa master, mentioned by Hugh Richardson as an 18th century "antiquarian" (Richardson 1998: 379-382), is a sort of celebrity among scholars working in very different fields of Tibetan history and culture. This is due both to the multifarious character of his achievements and to the wide range of his travels: he was born in Eastern Tibet; took an interest in Tibet's ancient history and reproduced early inscriptions in Lhasa and in Kongpo (Uebach 1985); took part in the scriptural revival and reproduction of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (Cantwell 2002: 360); was involved in the spread of the doctrine in the Himalayan areas and in the so-called "hidden valleys"; was sent to Nepal to take care of the restoration of the stupas of Bodhnath and Swayambhunath in Kathmandu (Ehrhard 1989: 1-9); was closely connected to Pho lha nas and the Seventh Dalai Lama; and was active as a political mediator in Ladakh (Schwieger 1995: 219-230), just to name a few of his "deeds". Despite his importance, knowledge about Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu has so far been somewhat fragmentary as he has been discussed mainly in the framework of his specific activities. The present comprehensive outline of his life history, year by year, along with a discussion of his biographies and autobiographies is therefore important and useful pieces of work in their own right, beyond the fact that it provides an illuminating introduction to the *Gung thang rgyal rabs*.

With the study of the history of the Kingdom of Gung thang, Everding provides us with a detailed, chronologically oriented account of the history of this area which in many ways seems to have belonged to both Central and Western Tibet. He sees the question of the geographic ascription of Mang yul Gung thang as an underlying theme that pervades his whole study. Without diminishing the importance of borders and geographic classification, I sometimes wondered whether this question could be answered in a context in which we observe multiple affiliations shifting over time, in which we have to infer a lot from scanty evidence and in which we

probably have to question the very notions of territory and boundary. Having said all this, I nevertheless found it extremely useful that the author looked carefully at the political alignments of this kingdom, which oscillated between Western and Central Tibet.

In providing the historical account of the kingdom in vol. 2, Everding weaves together biographies and chronicles so as to create a fascinating narrative that follows individual histories of political and religious personalities, their religious deeds, marriage alliances, and disputes. On the “stage” of local history we see, appearing together with the rulers of Gung thang, outstanding religious figures like Mar lung pa, Rig ‘dzin rGod ldem, Bo dong Pan chen phyogs las rnam rgyal and the Sa skya representatives who played a particularly important part as protectors of Gung thang.

In the captivating historical account we find also a very subtle reconstruction of how narratives concerning the early Tibetan kings were re-enacted and manipulated to fit local contexts and political needs. A remarkable example is the discussion of a 13th century episode: the religious master Mar lung pa used a distorted representation of the 9th century history of Mu tig btsan po and the killing of Zhang dBu ring to find a “karmic” justification for the king of Ya rtse who had executed the local lord, bTsad chung Khab pa. In his argument Mar lung pa “recognised” his contemporaries as reincarnations of the previous historical figures and claimed karmic links between the two situations. Unfortunately Everding’s comment highlighting the efficacy of Mar lung pa’s strategy brings an unexpected dissonance in the account. I quote (translating from the German): “It is important to understand that such a simple way of thinking [*einfache Denkweise*] for the people of this cultural area [*dieses Kulturraumes*], for whom the law of *karma* was an all-life determining reality, was plausible and understandable and that such an interpretation of the events, since it corresponded to the mentality [*Mentalität*] of these people, could not fail to achieve its effect” (p. 380). I think I am not alone in having experienced people of rural Tibet showing a great sense of intrigue, ability to see through political manipulation, contrasting views of events, together with a general awareness of the law of *karma*. (And even more could be said about how people in the western world have been manipulated again and again with the most bizarre readings of history.) It seems that here the narrative was suddenly caught in a series of essentialist representations of Tibetan local “mentality” – an unreflected legacy of some “orientalising” tradition of Tibetan studies? This passage is, however, an isolated case, a simple lapse, but worth mentioning mainly because of the recurrence of the problem in the work of other authors (for a valuable critique by a Tibetan scholar, see Shakya 2002:39-60). Everding’s sophisticated analysis of the voices emerging from the different texts, however, shows a much more perceptive attitude throughout his work, which is always to the highest standards.

A particularly useful aspect of this Tibetological study is the fact that its author did not only rely on well-known historical texts, but also went to great lengths to highlight little-known sources about the area, many of which have appeared only recently thanks to research programmes such as the Nepal Research Centre and the publication of Tibetan texts in China, India and Nepal. An important part of volume 2 is devoted to the outline of rare sources, such as letters and documents from Gung thang, the biography of Chos legs and the biography of Mar lung pa, an extremely important source for the history of western Tibet, to name but a few. In addition, the appendices provide a useful additional collection of overviews and translations of important passages from *Chos legs rnam thar*, *Mar lung rnam thar*, Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu's *lHa btsad po'i gdung rabs*, *Ta dben rtogs brjod* and Padmasambhava's instructions to the kings of Gung thang contained in the prayer *bSam pa lhun grub ma*.

Everding's work of translation is extremely accurate and well-thought through. I may perhaps point out just one intriguing detail. Referring to the maternal ancestry of Bo dong Pan chen phyogs las rnam rgyal in an earlier publication of his, Everding equated his "nephew-line" (*dbon brgyud*) with matrilineal kinship (*matrilineare Verwandtschaft*). Indeed Phyogs las rnam rgyal's mother was the sister of Grags pa rgyal mtshan whose mother was the sister of Byang chub rtse mo, whose mother was the sister of sPang Blo gros brtan pa. However, the notion of *dbon brgyud* seems to highlight the male relatives in these kinship relations, rather than represent a female transmission line. This issue points to the interesting broader question of how we should render Tibetan systems of reckoning kinship in our own western languages and anthropological models.

Finally I wish to underline that this work is a precious basis for further interdisciplinary research and that many of the themes touched on by Everding point to promising avenues of investigation. For example, analysing local royalty and practices of governance; studying the architecture of the royal palace of Gung thang that seems to have been a template for other palaces in the region, like the royal palace of Mustang; mapping the pattern of kinship relations between Gung thang, La stod lho, La stod byang and Sa skya; exploring the political and religious role of the numerous prominent women who appear in the *Gung thang rgyal rabs* and related sources; or even examining the importance of local historical memory in the current revival of traditions are all likely to be very rewarding enterprises.

In short, we should be extremely grateful to Karl-Heinz Everding for having produced an excellent piece of historical and philological work that will prove very useful far beyond the circle of experts in Tibetan history. It is worth considering whether this work, or parts of it, could be translated into English so as to facilitate its access to an international readership and to Tibetan scholars in particular.

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***Sacred Landscapes of the Himalayas*, edited by Niels Gutschow, Axel Michaels, Charles Ramble and Ernst Steinkellner. Wien (Vienna): Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003. ISBN 3-7001-3109-7. Numerous colour & b/w plates, plans and drawings, pp. 212.**

Reviewed by Caroline Humphrey, Cambridge

This is a rather unusual book. It combines two characters that are usually kept separate in publishing: the proceedings of an academic conference, on the one hand, and the beautiful book of stunning colour photographs on the other. If one associates “proceedings” with the often slightly grim collections stuffed with the good and not-so-good papers of the meeting, this book avoids that fate, for the papers are well-chosen and all of them provide insights onto a common theme. As for the “beautiful book”, which is normally provided with patchy captions, inadequate references and/or