

Jeannine Bischoff, Petra Maurer, and Charles Ramble (eds.), *On a Day of a Month of the Fire Bird Year. Festschrift for Peter Schwieger on the occasion of his 65th birthday*, Lumbini (Lumbini International Research Institute), 2020. xviii + 1015 pp. ISBN: 978-9937-0-6110-0.

Per Kværne
(University of Oslo)

Including an Introduction by Jeannine Bischoff, this volume has 49 contributions, in their range and diversity reflecting the breadth of Schwieger's own research interests. They also reflect what one of the contributors to the volume refers to as his "widely regarded personal qualities", and it is therefore not surprising that – although consisting of more than one thousand pages, in itself an impressive achievement on the part of the editors and the publishers – the *Festschrift* could have, as Bischoff points out, easily been expanded if the submission deadline had been extended.

It is impossible for a reviewer of a book of such proportions and dealing with a wide range of topics to do justice, or even to simply mention, every single contribution. A brief mention of the major categories to which the majority of the articles can be assigned, and a necessarily somewhat arbitrary mention of a few of the contributions, is all that can be achieved.

As Schwieger himself is primarily a historian, it is perhaps not inappropriate to draw particular attention to a few of the contributions that fall into the category of "history".

Alex McKay (30), "The beginnings of colonial rule in Sikkim: according to the Council minute books", relates to the history of British colonial influence in the Himalayas, in this case, Sikkim. Based *inter alia* on unpublished documents, it explores how, having deposed the native ruler of Sikkim in 1888-1889, the British authorities strove to achieve political control by renovating the taxation system and introducing modern infrastructure through a consultative Council. The limited success of this policy up to the retirement of the first British Political Officer in Sikkim in 1918 is described with the close attention to detail and primary sources characteristic of McKay.

"Explaining the Dalai Lama to the Tibetans: Basil Gould's report on the enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama" by Ulrike Roesler (35), explores the British involvement with the Tibetan government in Lhasa from a double perspective: not only that of the British, but also that of the Tibetans. Her article presents a report published in Delhi in 1948 by Basil Gould (1897-1972), who represented the British Raj at the enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1940. The report was

translated into Tibetan by the Sikkimese Rāṇi Chos-nyid rDo-rje (1897-1994) in Kalimpong, and subsequently printed in Lhasa with the approval of the Tibetan government. The Tibetan version is generally faithful to the English original, but some of Gould's comments, which would make no sense to a Tibetan reader, as well as certain sensitive political issues, such as the possible return of the Ninth Panchen Lama to Tibet, were omitted. The Tibetan translation was used by the British Mission in Lhasa as a gift to Tibetan officials and friends at the eve of the demise of an independent Tibetan state.

To the theme of "colonial rule" could perhaps be added an article by *John Bray* and the late *Tsering D. Gonkatsang (04)*, "Two Ladakhi accounts of the enthronement of Maharaja Pratap Singh of Jammu & Kashmir in 1886", since Jammu and Kashmir had been incorporated into the orbit of British India after 1857. There are two vivid Ladakhi accounts of the event, and, as the authors point out, they "represent what amounts to a new genre of Ladakhi historical writing". One of these accounts was published by A.H. Francke in 1926, while the other found its way into the British Library and has hitherto remained unpublished. The article presents an analysis of the two texts in their historical context; British perspectives on the enthronement; a discussion of the text published by Francke; and finally, a translation and text edition of the British Library manuscript.

A carefully documented article by *Syrhoi Sou (42)*, "Srong btsan sgam po. Historische Figur vs. Darstellung in tibetischen Schulbuchtexten", compares the divergent ways in which the historical narrative of the first Tibetan Emperor, Srong-btsan sgam-po (7th century C.E.), is presented in modern Tibetan-language schoolbooks in Tibet itself and in the Tibetan diaspora. Briefly stated, Marxist-Leninist ideology, introduced in the early 1950's, has remained the exclusive norm in China and Tibet, whereas in the diaspora, historical writing, inspired by Buddhism since the 11th century and regarding the early kings as divine emanations, remains normative. Thus, the Chinese textbooks do not mention the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet during the reign of Srong-btsan sgam-po, highlighting instead the missionary, self-sacrificing role of his spouse, the Chinese princess Wencheng, in spending her life among the less civilized Tibetans to promote "friendly relations" between the two nations and the consequent advantages that accrued to the Tibetans – points which are entirely absent from the textbooks published in the Tibetan exile, where the Tibetan Emperor is revered as a divine emanation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. While this overall picture is not surprising, the article is, to the best of my knowledge, the only research-based attempt to deal with this – or similar – highly sensitive topics as reflected in Tibetan schoolbooks in a comparative perspective.

Alice Travers (43), "Changing emblems of social domination: a brief note on Tibetan aristocratic crests in the first half of the 20th century", is an inquiry into the crested stationary that ten Tibetan aristocratic families started to use during the first half of the 20th century, a topic about which very little has been known. According to Travers, the crests are "a magnificent example of cultural hybridity", combining Western and Tibetan symbolic elements, conforming, however, more or less closely to the Western heraldry in overall structure. They can be understood as "examples of the creativity displayed by the aristocracy in its strategies to maintain its social domination in Tibet during the first half of the 20th century. One such strategy was the appropriation of particular aspects of western modernity".

Turning to Buddhist studies, which are well represented in the volume, a few might be mentioned as rather random examples among many excellent contributions.

With regard to study of ritual, Cathy Cantwell (6), "Engaging the senses in the Tibetan tantric "Major Practice Session" (*sgrub chen*)", explores a communal ritual in which the lay participants are offered the possibility of developing the pure vision of the world as an enlightened "maṇḍala" through engaging receptively – but without the requirement of meditation and long periods of spiritual discipline – with the full range of their senses in the ritual performance of the principal lama and his assistants. As Cantwell points out, this religious practice, viewed as a strategy to widen access to a religious doctrine, raises interesting questions concerning the relationship between lay people and ritual experts.

As for the Bön religion, Kalsang Norbu Gurung (16), "A restricted Bon ritual and its Buddhist lineages", deals with a ritual, the *byad 'grol*, "liberation from a curse". The article focuses "on one particular *byad 'grol* text entitled *Chang khros ma'i man ngag*, "An instruction for cleansing with beer"". After presenting a translation of this short text, and comparing it with three other versions, the author discusses how this ritual was performed by a several Buddhist masters, foremost the Fifth Dalai Lama, providing a fascinating example of how the conflict between Bön and Buddhism was sometimes of little relevance in the context of religious practice.

Two articles deal with yoga in Tibet. Petra Maurer (29), "How to strengthen the scholar's back? Reflections on *rgyab*, *back* and related terms", starts with a useful survey of modern yoga in the West, particularly in Germany, followed by a survey of "Tibetan yoga", and, finally, a discussion of the Tibetan term *rgyab*, "back". A study of *yantra yoga* is contributed by Saadet Arslan (3), "Yantra Yoga – 'Phrul 'khor movements beyond deity and mandala". In the early sources within the "Great Perfection" (*rdzogs chen*) tradition studied by

Arslan, '*phrul 'khor* has the specific meaning of "body movement", and as such is still practised.

Monastic history is of course an important field in Buddhist studies, and one to which Schwiieger himself has made important contributions. *Franz-Karl Ehrhard* (13), "Historiographical notes on the Zhal snga bka' brgyud pa", is a study of an important source for "assessing the monastic institutions of the Gelugpa school in the various regions of Tibet". Bearing the short title *dGa' ldan chos 'byung*, it was written c. 1625 by dKar-nag Lo-tsā-ba. Ehrhard presents a translation of the section of this text that deals with the western regions of East Tibet, supplemented by notes by another Gelugpa scholar, Phan-bde chos-rje Sākya lHa-dbang, whose work was composed in 1640. Ehrhard shows how dKar-nag Lo-tsā-ba's text was an important source for the *Baiḍūrya ser po* of sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, written in 1692, as well as later authors.

Nor are textual studies neglected. An important contribution to the history of transmission of the vast compilation of text known as the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (*Collection of Ancient Tantras*) is contributed by *Orna Almogi* (02), "Spiritual masters and master copies on the move: on a recently discovered manuscript edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* from East Tibet and its origin". Almogi presents information on a 33-volume set of the collection that has recently surfaced in East Tibet, and discusses the history of its compilation. She then inserts this set into a succinct and clarifying survey of six groups of *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collections, providing a highly useful tool for further research.

Further textual studies are, among others, *Michela Clemente* (07), "Appearances can be deceptive: the case of Ngmpp At 61/21"; *Lewis Doney* (12), "A note on the canonical attribution of treasure texts: Ratna gling pa and the *Zangs gling ma*"; *Karl-Heinz Everding* (15), "Sangs rgyas gling pa's apokryphe Biographie des U-rgyan padma 'byung gnas"; and *Matthew T. Kapstein* (23), "The *Jātakamālā* of Āryasūra with the supplement of the third Rgyal dbang karma pa rang byung rdo rje".

Tibetan society and cultural institutions are currently receiving considerable attention by scholars, and are well represented in the present volume, for example by *Thierry Dodin* (11), "Rope sliding and pole swirling in Lhasa: some remarks on the acrobatic performances of the traditional Gyalpo Losar"; *Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy* (21), "A lasting legacy for Tibetan performing arts today: on the monks of Rme ru and Kun bde gling performing drama in Lhasa in the first half of the 20th century"; and *Berthe Jansen* (22), "Law and order during the Lhasa great prayer festival".

Going back to the 15th century, *Jörg Heimbels* (18), "In need of donations: a letter written by Go rams pa to encourage the collecting of offerings in Eastern Tibet", presents a critical edition and translation of a letter issued by Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge (1429-1489), an abbot of Ngor Monastery, to a group of monks he sent to Eastern Tibet to collect offerings. This is a valuable contribution to the (still) little-studied topic of the details of the economic life of monasteries in pre-modern Tibet.

A number of other contributions also deal with aspects of Tibetan society, for example *Fernanda Pirie* (32), "The making of Tibetan law: the *Khrims gnyis lta ba'i me long*", a legal treatise from the latter part of the 14th century, and *Charles Ramble* (34), "Longing for retirement: the testament of Chos mdzad nyi shar, the last Ya ngal", which deals, among other things, with the issue of inheritance in late 19th-century Mustang (Nepal).

Finally, two contributions dealing with Buddhism in Mongolia should be mentioned: *Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz* (25), "Negotiating the Buddhist future: Rdo rje shugs ldan in Mongolia", and *Veronika Veit* (44), "Shamanism and Buddhism in Mongolia: religious and historical aspects from an historian's point of view". The former paper outlines the history of the deity rDo-rje Shugs-ldan in the Mongolian regions and then explores the practice of its cult in today's Mongolia, paying "particular attention to the conflicting constructions of a Mongolian Buddhist identity" in which the cult of this deity plays a potentially ambiguous role; the latter is a useful survey of the two religious forces that have been at play in setting the course of Mongolian history.

Even this cursory presentation, necessarily omitting many studies that would merit individual presentation, will, it is hoped, be sufficient to make it evident that this volume has something of interest to almost anyone engaged in Tibetan studies, illustrating the vibrant state of Tibetan studies today, to which Peter Schwieger himself has so significantly contributed.

