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An Early Tibetan Gesar *bsang* Text

This article introduces and presents an annotated English translation of what appears to be an early, and perhaps our earliest, Tibetan Gesar *bsang* (purifying smoke offering) ritual text. The translation is preceded by a discussion of the association between Gesar as a “worldly deity,” and the autochthonous Tibetan rite of smoke purification, and a tentative suggestion concerning Gesar’s role in the “Buddhification” of the *bsang* rite in Eastern Tibetan popular ritual culture. The article then gives a brief exposition of the layers discernible in the text’s presentation of Gesar: as the hero of a predominantly secular-orientated chivalric-shamanic folkloric tradition, and his apotheosis as a Buddha. The article then explores the difficulties in dating and attributing the text. The attribution to Karma Pakshi is ultimately rejected, in favour of a tentative attribution to the mid-late 17th century (and to Yongs-dge mi-’gyur rdo-je in particular) which would make sense in light of what can be discerned about the evolution of the Buddhist cult of Gesar in eastern Tibet around that time.

KEYWORDS

The Epic of King Gesar | Tibetan rituals

Daniel Berounský 527–559

Bird Offerings in the Old Tibetan Myths of the Nyen Collection (*Gnyan ’bum*)

The article introduces a corpus of Tibetan texts containing apparently old Tibetan myths on the Nyen (*gnyan*); beings representing the natural environment. The myths mostly narrate their conflicts with the original people, which are eventually resolved by ritual means. These texts are known as the *Nyen Collections* (*Gnyan ’bum*). Three examples of them are currently known and references from the Tibetan chronicles of the Bon religion speak about the rediscovery of some of its versions in western Tibet prior to 1017. The content, nevertheless, points to eastern Tibet as the place of origin of the core items of

these texts. These texts represent a certain mythopoetic lore stemming from oral tradition, which might well be related to the traditions of the Naxi people in the Sichuan province of the PRC, as well as to some surviving traditions in eastern Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, as recently described. Extracts from the myths dealing with birds are presented in translation and paraphrase. These myths use their own specific poetic register and manifest an extraordinary veneration of birds. The other aspect of this veneration is the evident tradition of offering birds up to the Nyen. This is in sharp contrast with the orthodox Indo-Buddhist world-view, which does not ascribe any specific value to the animal realm.

KEYWORDS

Tibetan myths | Bon religion | non-Buddhist traditions of Tibet

Ngondzin Ngawang Gyatso

561–575

The Lhadag Leu (*lha bdag le'u*), Ritual Specialists of the Black Water Bon of the Phenomenal World in Southern Amdo: A Brief Introduction

The paper translated from original Tibetan by Charles Ramble briefly examines the origin of the term *leu* (*le'u*), the various types of *leu*, their functions, and the features of the *leu* texts. This term designates both ritual specialists and rituals which have been performed in some areas of Amdo until recently. *Leu* is referred to in a number of Tibetan texts. This proves a long history of this tradition, which has been left unnoticed by the western scholarship so far.

KEYWORDS

Bon | Tibetan rituals | *leu* | Amdo

Lobsang Yongdan

577–593

The Introduction of Edward Jenner's Smallpox Vaccination to Tibet in the Early 19th Century

Before its eradication in 1979, smallpox was considered to be the greatest killer in the world. Therefore, over time, people developed a variety of methods of prevention and treatment for smallpox. The study of smallpox is a well-established field and many scholars have written on the subject; however, as far as I am aware there is almost no scholarship regarding smallpox in Tibet. Thus, it is widely believed that Tibetans knew very little about smallpox and that the Jennerian vaccination technique was not introduced in Tibet until as late as 1944. This, however, is not the case: during the course of Tibetan history, Tibetans not only knew about smallpox but also developed various methods of prevention and treatment for the disease. As a literary society, Tibetans also produced a vast quantity of medical works, as well as historical and biographical accounts in relation to smallpox; in Tibet, as elsewhere, medical knowledge was constantly evolving. This

article sets out to show how a Tibetan physician named Tsenpo Nomon Han (1789–1839) introduced Edward Jenner's vaccination technique to Tibet in the early 19th century.

KEYWORDS

Smallpox in Tibet | inoculation | vaccination | Qing official Lamas | Amdo | Tsenpo Nomon Han | Beijing in the 19th century

Stevan Harrell, Yang Qingxia, Sara Jo Vivaldo, R. Keala Hagmann, Thomas Hinckley, and Amanda H. Schmidt

595–623

Forest is Forest and Meadows are Meadows: Cultural Landscapes and Bureaucratic Landscapes in Jiuzhaigou County, Sichuan

Present-day landscapes are shaped by historical forces that combine natural change (generated by climate, geological processes etc.) with anthropogenic change (locally generated in interaction with larger political and economic forces). In the Jiuzhaigou region of Northern Sichuan, humans have shaped landscapes to their needs for at least 3,500 years. In recent centuries, landscape change has probably accelerated, particularly in response to changes in the political economy of the region since the late 19th century. At present, Amdo and Baima Tibetan communities in the region are faced with generally similar but locally differing political and economic pressures, including economic development, tourism, and policies of conservation and reforestation. The communities have reacted to these pressures in diverse ways that produce different landscape outcomes, demonstrating that neither local cultural landscape ideals alone nor policy prescriptions alone can explain current landscape configurations or predict the precise future impact of policies. However, constraints imposed by bureaucratic planning may lead to landscapes with diminished biodiversity and reduced adaptive capacity.

KEYWORDS

Landscapes | Tibet | Jiuzhaigou | bureaucracy | landscape plasticity

Gerald Kozicz

625–644

Stupas, Lhathos, Tsatsakhangs: A Preliminary Report on the Cultural Topography of Hunder

The Nubra Valley is one of the ancient corridors used by traders, armies and pilgrims that connected Northeast India, Central Asia and the Western Himalayas. The fortified settlement of Hunder was probably the most important regional checkpoint along this line from the very early times of human occupation. Placed on a ridge above a gorge and protected by a perfect topographic setting, Hunder could hold its position for centuries. And like a cultural barrier riff, all the cultural currents left their marks all over the topographic relief in the form of the various types of material culture and religious architecture such

as tombs, stupas, lhathos and burial shrines. The following article attempts to provide an overview of all the various relics in order to provide some insight into the chronology of the cultural history of this place which served as an outpost for western Tibetan culture for so long.

KEYWORDS

Nubra Valley | Hunder | lhatho | stupa | Trans-Himalayan routes

Book Reviews and Notes

Knut A. Jacobsen (Editor-in-Chief), Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, Vasudha Narayanan (Associate Editors). Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism. Volume IV: Historical Perspectives, Poets, Teachers, and Saints, Relation to other Religions and Traditions, Hinduism and Contemporary Issues.

(Jan Filipický)

645–647

Peter Schwieger. The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China. A Political History of the Tibetan Institution of Reincarnation.

(Jarmila Ptáčková)

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Our Contributors

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