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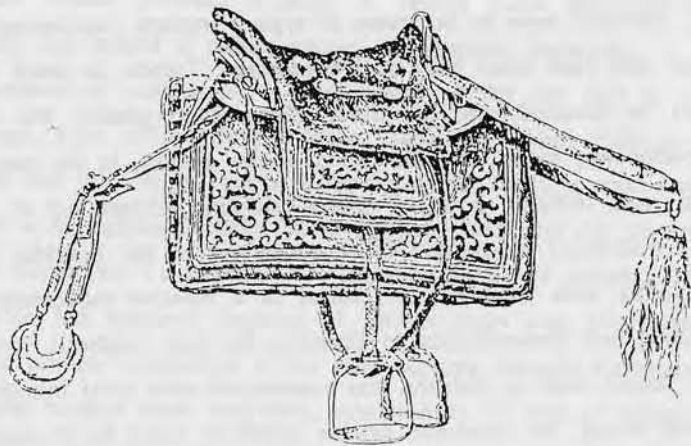
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András Höfer, *A Recitation of the Tamang Shaman in Nepal*, Bonn, VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1994, 379 p., bibl., index, ill.

Article review by Brigitte Steinmann.

A. Höfer gives us the second sorting tray of his shamanic recitals, recorded in the seventies, among the Tamang of Dhading district. This is an important and expensive volume of 379 pages, presented in three parts: the concepts, ritual techniques and language of the bompo; the text of the recitation; and the analysis of "symbol-construction". I shall deal here mainly with the second part of the book, i. e. the transcription and translation of the Tamang songs, although we shall see that all the book is concerned with this second part.¹

Last November, while I was walking in the (Eastern) hills of the Tamang Temal area with one of my Tamang companions, Thubten Gyalcen Lama, a Tamang rnying-ma-pa monk living in Sailung, Thubten aroused my curiosity while immersing himself, at each halting-place, in a number of photocopied pages of an English book. Glancing over his shoulder, I realised that he was patiently trying to read and to understand a chapter of the last book of A. Höfer, which was not yet available in the bookshops. I knew that Thubten had a vast international net of information about westerners deeds and words, and I proposed to help him as I could in this

¹ I keep A. Höfer's Pelliot transcription for the Tibetan terms quoted, and in my own notes I adopt the Wylie transcription. Nepali is transcribed according to Turner's Dictionary. TG refers to Thubten Gyalcen.

reading which soon became an exegesis of the translation of these western Tamang recitations, and an interesting debate with Thubten about the many different ways of transcribing the oral Tamang language into written Tibetan. We continued this work in Temal, in the company of Wangyal Lama (rnying-ma-pa), Bahadur Singh Tamba and Shyangdan and Maila bompos. I must add that all of them understand the western Tamang language; several Eastern Tamang people from Temal are married with western Tamang.

A. Höfer's method, since the publication of the first volume, *Tamang Ritual Texts*, has not changed. His translation still consists in the reconstruction of the meaning of unknown Tamang words by a philological derivation from supposed Tibetan roots or words found in the dictionaries. When the author does not understand a word or a verse, he proposes a Tibetan root, sometimes quite far from the pronunciation and the transcription of the corresponding Tamang word. Then he inserts commas and parentheses in the translated verse to express uncertainties, although he is able each time to propose a translation and a mythological explanation. We know that such recorded "texts" of oral languages are very difficult to understand and that the transcription itself is full of uncertainty. The lack of a recorded disk in the book does not allow the eventual Tamang speaker to check how the words have been heard by the ethnographer. Therefore, the reader must have confidence in the transcription. I am taking here firstly three examples, to illustrate how the same verse can be understood and translated in two completely different ways, both of them based on a Tibetan derivation. After, I shall give a (non-exhaustive) list of all that

appeared to me and to my informants as mistranslations and misunderstandings of the whole recital. Let us start with the first Tamang song: **"The state of affairs and the tasks ahead"**, 8-14, p.108, § 19, v. 172. In this part, says the author, it is question of incensing the ritual dagger, the porcupine quill and other shamanic ritual implements. A. Höfer translates thus :

sala syururu d̄j̄nba, ñ̄alna kuibam wágan nañri ñ̄alba,

"It soars {sic} scurrying on the earth, as to sleeping, it sleeps in a hole",

śala kuibam dónbo chyemboi kara śala kuiba,

"as to eating, it eats the syrup of the (flowers of the) great tree",
śyai ama(i) bişiri gyálboi syorai śyaldo saññi le !

"let us go and incense the bristliness of the wild animals(?) prickly king !

ò: nàm̄la phiriri d̄j̄nba, sala syururu d̄j̄nba,

"ò: it soars fluttering in the sky, soars scurrying on the earth",

śala kuibam pe:ma ġesere br̄bu śala kuiba,

"as to eating, it eats the fruit of the *pe:ma ġesere* tree",

m̄ap̄cyi amai m̄el̄oñ karboi syorai śyaldo saññi le Phamo !

Let us go and incense the bristliness of the white (bright ?) *m̄el̄oñ* (made of the feathers) of the mother peacock O Phamo !

One can translate instead :

"(The spirits) run on the earth, soaring "syururu", born from the womb, in the matrix,

"born from the earth, born from the virile semen ("the syrup of the great tree"),

“mother of the flesh, king of the noble (*shri*) semen, the colour of his (her) face has gone away !

“the gods fly in the sky, *phiriri*, the spirits run on the earth, *syururu*”,

“born from the earth, the fruit of the cotton tree,

“the bright mirror of the mother peacock, O Phamo, the colour of his (her) face has gone away”.

Notes :

The onomatopoeia “*syururu*” can be applied to any spirit coming, and there is no word here meaning “porcupine”. In the note, the author says that his informant simply told him that “*syururu*” could evoke the movement of the porcupine.

n̄alna kuibam , Tib. *mngal-nas skyes-bam*, “born from the womb” (and not “to sleep”, with *kuiba* as “an intensive form for *n̄alba*”, therefore, *kuiba* is not translated by Höfer).

wágañ n̄añri n̄alba , Tib. *'og-khang nang-ri mngal-ba*, “in the house of the matrix” (not “the porcupine sleeping in a hole”! According to note 26, p. 60, Macdonald would also have noticed this function of the porcupine ?)

s̄ala kuibam , Tib. *sa-las skyes-bam*, “born from the earth” (and not Tib. *za-ba*, “to eat”, like verse 109, p. 90, *s̄abai khari pho:ji wa:*, where “to eat” is justified. One would have here *s̄aba*, or at least a form different from *s̄ala*, above, meaning “from the earth”. The author solves the problem by transcribing *sala* and *s̄ala*).

dónbo chyemboi kara , Tib. *sdong-po chen-po'i ka-ra*, “born from the virile semen” {the syrup of the great tree is a metaphor: *kara*

means *sa-bon* or *khu-ba*}, *b̄isiri* means *shri* {*bij*} or the Nepali word for semen.

syai ama, “mother of the flesh”, can be understood literally. It is not necessary to find here a metaphor for “the game”. One does not understand exactly the adding of a mark of genitive to *ama* by the author.

syorai syaldo saññi le , Tib. *shor-ba'i zhal-mdog gsal-ni le*, “the colour of the face has gone away”, which means that someone died or is no more happy !

phiriri is always linked to the gods flying in the sky; *syururu* to the *bhut* running on the earth. The alternance with *phiriri* here makes clear the translation.

This is one example, among many, which shows the ambiguity of what A. Höfer calls “an interpretative study translation” (p. 49), of “an unusual, manneristic and sometimes even nonsensical” Tamang language (*ibid.*). The nonsense could well come from the ethnographer. Let us take an other example, in the same song, p. 91, v. 107 :

da:mo ñinda n̄awai bardo jyũba - salñi, chàwai bardo jyũba - salñi!

“The dear mistress is befallen by a state of illness (...) by a state of pain - let us go and heal (her)!

yara blõnbai khari pho:ji wa:, ma:ra blõnbai khari pho:ji wa: ?

“Has (she) been affected by something which arises above, has (she) been affected by something which arises below ?

tasya, wasya, laṅsya, ṅengi ru:ri pho:ji wa: ?,

“has (she) been affected by the impurity of the horse-meat, the pork, the ox-meat, (the impurity of) mating ?,

karda ru:ri pho:ji wa:, marda ru:ri pho:ji wa: ?,

“has (she) been affected by the *karda* -impurity ? “has (she) been affected by the *marda*-impurity ?,

sawai khari pho:ji wa:, ṅalwai khari pho:ji wa: ?,

“has (she) been affected while eating, has (she) been affected while sleeping ?,(...)

yara syelne jyūṅji wa: ?,

“has (she) been befallen by a “rinsing up” ?,

maṛa oine jyūṅji wa: ?,

“has (she) been befallen by a “flowing-down” ?,

da:mo ṅinda thōmdom-riri, riṅriṅ-phetphet jyūṅji wa: ?

“has (she) been befallen by *thomdom-riri*,

by (all sorts of) illnesses and ailments (?) ?

One can translate instead :

“Mistress (of the Earth), we have crossed the *baṛdo* of sickness, let us heal !

“Is the pain due to a hot sickness, is it due to a cold sickness ?

“Did (he or she) reincarnate in the clan of the horses, of the foxes, of the oxen,

“Did he reincarnate as one who wears a white weapon (a god) or a red weapon (a *btsan*) ?

“Did he reincarnate as one who eats (a man), as one in the Hell (Narak), (a demon) ? (...)

“Did he reincarnate up (as a god), or did he reincarnate down (like a man or an animal) ?

“Mistress, our consciousness has darkened, we have lost external perception”.

Notes :

Western Tamang write *ṅinda*, for *yinda* (Nep. *hāmilaī*); so, it is not “our mistress”, but “to us, mistress ! (Tib. *gnam-sa gnyis-kyi bdag-mo*), “we are sick”! Does it mean, in Höfer’s conception, that the bombo would address to “the master of the house” if it was a man who was cured ?

yara-blōṅba (like *nawa-chawa*) is the alternance between “a hot illness” (like bubbles rising up) and a cold illness (going down);

pho:ji , Tib. *pho-ba*, “to die, to transfer”;

ru:ri , Tib. *rus* (and not “ritual impurity”; why, in this case, do we have a locative ?); *ṅengi, nangi*, “inside”, (and not *gnyen*, “kinsmen” from which “mating”!)

karda, marda , Tib. *dkar-mda*’ , “weapon of the *lha* (white)”; *dmar-mda*’ , “weapon of the *btsan* (red)”;

khari , or *thog-la, nang-la*, “on, upon”, and not “while”;

ṅalwai , Tib. *dmyal-ba*, or “Narak”, “Hell”, and not “to sleep”.

yara syelne, Tib. *shel-nas* or *’od-nas ’khrung-pa* , “to be born from light (up);

maṛa oine , Tib. *’og nas* (Tib. *mi dud-’gro skyes-ba*), “to be born like men and animal;

thom-thom (*song-ba*), “having become darkened” (*nang dran-shes yal-*

nas); *rim-rim* (*song-ba*), “having lost external perception” (*phyi*

snang-ba nub-nas); in fact, it is Holmberg (see note 117) who is right by translating "fear and dark haze".

Höfer translates by "a little-known illness" and "all kind of ailments".

I take a third example of equivocal translations, verse 161, p. 106. A. Höfer explains us that "*chene*" would be "the metal vessel, the central piece of the altar" (from Tib. *mchod-gnas*, "the place of sacrifice"). But *chene* (also *chyene*, see A. H. p. 59), may be simply "You", "about you" in Tamang, or Tib. *khyed-ni*, or Nep. *timi ta*, the personal pronoun given here as an address:

A. H. : *Chene Nolgi Da:mo, Chene Sergi Da:mo,*

"O Chene Silver Mistress, Chene Golden Mistress"

One can understand : "O You, Nolgi Damo, O You, Sergi Damo"!

Everybody understood this last sense in Temal, which leaves the reader utterly perplexed about a good part of A. Höfer's theoretical interpretations about the *chene* as a "group of paraphernalia (p. 166)". In Tibetan, anyhow, *mchod-gnas* refers much more to the chaplain, a person, than to "the place of sacrifice".

I give hereafter a list of other examples of A. Höfer's Tamang transcription and translation and my critiques, with Tibetan etymologies when they are obvious.

"The state of affairs and the tasks ahead", 8-14, p. 88:

V. 94: A. H. : *syerap salyu, sorap baryu*, (from Tib. *ses-rab*, wisdom, and *sro-rab*, heat, ardour):

"make clear the alertness, make the voice of the bon expand"!

B.S.: *syerap* seems related here to *gçen-rabs*, "history of the origin of the *gçen*"; *sorap* is a contraction of Tib. *lha gsol (rabs)* : rituals of propitiation for the gods;

"make clear the origins of the *gçen*, let us accomplish the propitiation rituals for the gods"!

V. 95: A.H. : *yongi bamdi kalbi chyudañ baryu !*

"come down and make the sea-water (in the jug) put on (his) left shoulder expand !

B.S. : In this verse, *kalbi* is not translated; it could come from Tib. *bskal-pa'i chu-dang 'bar-gyu*, "the water expanding at the end of times".

V. 96: A. H. : *yongi (recte: kekki) bamdi kalbi meluñ baryu*, "...the flame put on (his) right shoulder expand"!

B.S. : *ibid.* "the fire expanding at the end of times".

By giving an "idiom", *phamo kalba*, and adding a free correction of *yongi* by *kekki*, A. Höfer reconstructs here a particularly obscure meaning (*melung* for "burning lamp" touching the body).

V. 97: A. H. : *bongi puñma gúlgul jedyu !*

"come down and make the bon's shoulders (?) quake"; *puñma* is given here as meaning "shoulder" (why two different words, *bamdi* and *puñma* ?)

B.S. : Tib. *dpung-dmag (gúlgul) byed-rgyu*,

"let us operate the army of the bompo".

V. 98: A. H. : *bongi geppu khyurna syembu cu:ji,*

“as the bon’s senior departed, another one has taken up (his work)”.

B.S. : *geppu* is not Tib. *rgad-po*, old man, but *rgyud pa*, “the master of the lineage”; *syembu* is not Tib. *gzan-pa*, but *sems (bu) pa*, “to think”, *tshugs-pa*, or *sems dga’ ba*, “to be cheerful”, and *khyurna* is ‘*khyug na*; then :

“the master of the bomo’s lineage came, the mind is in peace”.

V. 101: A.H. : *càwa bappai bonjye, kàwa bappai bonjye, ma.kuina kuibi bonjye, ma.cuna cu:bi bonjye,*

“of a bon who is descended from a *càwa*, of a bon who is descended from a *kàwa*, of a bon who could not help becoming a bon, of a bon who could not help performing (the rites)”.

B.S. : Tib. *rtsa -ba (lha) ‘bab, bka’ ba (lha) ‘bab,*

“of a bon in whom the gods come, of a bon to whom the gods talk”

(*bka’ bab* is synonym of *lung*, “instructions”, and *rtsa-ba*, “root, base”).

Tib. *ma mgu-(wa)*, “if there is no joyfulness” (“if the gods are not happy”)

Tib. *ma ‘gug-na*, “if there is no enduring” (“if the patient is not enduring”), *kuibi bonjye*, “then, what the bomo can do !” (Nep. *kohi pārne bomo* !). (Höfer’s note 101 is less than explicit).

V. 102. A.H. : *jiṇḍa ḍḍaṇ cu:na bonḍa gyábna kha taṅbai noccyen syoṅla,*

“when performing the ceremony (for) the client, the bon may be hurt at the back by an harmful agent which presents (its) mouth”.

B.S. : Tib. *sbyin-bdag mdos dang tshugs-na* (Nep. *prārambha*) *bon mda’ (bon zor) rgyab-na kha gdang- ba’i gnod-sbyin bshung-la* ,

“if the bomo makes a *mdos* for the client, he attacks the harmful agent opening his mouth, at the back”

A. H. : *nōṅna chi: taṅbai noccyen syoṅla, ..*“may be hurt at the front by a harmful agent which presents (its) backbone

B. S. : Tib. *sngon-na lce* (and not “*chigs*”) *gdang-pa’i gnod-sbyin bshung-la*, “he attacks the harmful agent pulling out his tongue, in front”,

A. H. : *gyábna taṅmen syoṅla, nōṅna júkmen yóṅla*, “may be hurt at the back by a defamation, may be hurt at the front by an accusation”,

B. S. : Tib. *rgyab-na bstang-smān (chu dug) “syoṅla”, sngon-na byug-smān (mc dug) “yóṅla”* (Nep. *halinu*), “at the back, he attacks (the harmful agent) with some poisoned water (from a *bumpa*), at the front, he pours out some poisoned fire”, (*syoṅla* and *yóṅla* are not synonyms),

In the next verse, A. H. translates *jo:ri nákpōi* by “ferocious enemy”, *kuldap, skul-ba* by “to exhort”, *ñendap, ñes-pa* by “wrong” + ‘*dcbs-pa*, “to hit”.

B.S. : There are three kinds of *zor*: *Jori Nakpo’i mnan thabs (bcos-thabs or bcos-pa)*, “to oppress the evilness”, *Jori Nakpo’i brngan-thabs (mchod-pa)*, “to spoil someone with gifts”, and *Jori Nakpo’i ngan-thabs (bskul-ba)*, “to urge someone to work”; so, there is no “magic arrow” or “harming charm” here; these are methods of subduing.

A. H. translates *saṅduṅ-praṅduṅ* by “a (non initiated) specialist”+ *praṅduṅ*, “an echo”!

B.S. : Tib. *zangs-gdung, sprangs-mdung* is not “a specialist” but “a magical spear made of red copper and white iron”.

V. 103. : A. H. : *de:wa maḥchyugo, damba maḥchyu:go thu: dāmbi Gúru Phamo,*

“Do not perturb the action (?), do not perturb the distinction (in the mind), O Guru Phamo with the distinctive mind,

B.S. : *de:wa*, Tib. *bde-ba'i lus*, “the human body” (and not “the action”); *damba*, or *dam-ngag* or Nep. *gyān* (and not ‘*dam-pa*, “to select”); *thu :*, *thugs-dam*, “vow, oath” (and not *thu: dāmbi phamo*, “an epithet”, see note 103) : “Do not perturb the body, do not perturb the knowledge, O Venerable Guru”.

V. 104. : A. H. : *baḥkap tiñle phamoi lāgañ pheñi, nañbai tiñle phamoi lāgañ pheñi !*

“Let us go and get at the *phamo*'s divine abode in the middle of the atmosphere”...

B.S. : According to T. G., *pheñi* means “to offer to the mouth” (and not ‘*phyed-ba*, “to discern”); *nañbai tiñle* would be Tib. *nam-mkha'i khyim*, “the heavenly mansion”: “let us offer (incense) to the *phamo*'s of the divine abode, of the heavenly mansion”.

V. 105. : A. H. : *saṅsam sañbai temrul pheñi, ñcensam ñcembai temrul pheñi !*

“If it is a good one, let us go and get at the good omen, if it is a bad one...”

B. S. : *saṅsam* has been confounded with Tib. *bzang-po*, “good”; according to T. G., we have instead : *sangs-sam sangs-pa'i* “if gods are happy or not, let us offer the incense” (? *temrul*)

§ 10, p. 93. : A. H. : *da:moda kha ñammu*, “the mistress's mouth”...

B. S. : the same mistranslation goes on, *da:moda* is a contraction of *damo ñinda*;

“O Mistress (of the Earth), our mouth”...

V. 118. A. H. : *pūila meḥluṅ (...)*, “the flame in (her) knee”,

B. S. : *pūila meḥluṅ* means simply “the rotule”!

V. 122. A. H. : *da:mo ñinda karbo tha:ri ba:jyi wa: marbo tha:ri ba:jyi wa: ?*

“Has (the harmful agent) affected the white blood, has it affected the red blood of the dear mistress ?

B. S. : “Has the harmful agent affected our white moon, above, our red sun” ?

karbo tha:ri = Nep. *seito jun māthi* (Tib. *dkar-po thog-ru*), “the white moon, above”; *marbo tha:ri* = Nep. *rāto gam māthi* (Tib. *dmar-po thog-ru*), “the red sun, above” !

V. 123. A. H. : *khañsari ba:jyi wa: syiñsari ba:jyi wa: ?* “has it affected the homestead, has it affected the fields ?

B. S. : *khañsari*, Tib. *gangs-sa* “the snowy mountain” (and not *khang-sa*, “the homestead”); it is put in opposition, here, with *zhing-sa*, the fields.

p. 95, V. 125. A. H. : *sadañ.sò:i kuldap, sadañ.sò:i ñeṅdap*, “let us go and find the magic arrow (made) of the *sadañ.sò:*”

B. S. : *sa-dang-svo*, Tib. *lha dang klu*, for the bompo, or “gods of the earth and heaven” (Tib. *gnam-kyi lha = svo; klu sa-bdag btsan = sa*); A. H. does not translate precisely *kuldap (...)* *ñendap*; it is Tib. *bksul-thabs* and *brngan-thabs*, see above. According to Höfer, all these are “magic projectiles”, and the *sadañ.sò*, “the birch-tree”:

“Let us call to work the gods of earth and heaven, let us honour them with gifts”;

A. H. : *yarlamdai*, *marlamdai*, “crossroads”, “the place where evil spirits and ghosts are expelled to”;

B. S. : *yarlamdai* evokes more precisely the Tib. *yar lam-mdo* or *gnam rim-pa dgu*, “the crossroad at the upper part of the nine stages of heaven, where the demons reside” and *mar lam-mdo*, “the lower part”;

P. 97, V. 127. A. H. : *lam gyaram gu:ri*, “near the crossroad”;

B. S. : *dgu*, “nine”, and not *gu*: “corner”: “at the crossroad of nine ways”; (the *bla-ma* say that there are eight *dursa*, and the bompo say that there are nine ways and nine *dursa*).

V. 130. A. H. : *cengi dāser (...)* *mengi dāser*, “the *dāser* of a *ccn*, the *dāser* or a *men*”!

B. S. : *men*, for the bompo of Temal, is effectively Tib. *sman*, “a *sman-mo*”, very known among the Tamang; why not to translate here? *da* is Tib. *mda'*, but *ser* would suggest *mda'-zor*, and not *gzer*, “nail”;

“the sharp arrow of a *btsan*, the sharp arrow of a *sman-mo*”.

V. 131. A. H. : *chalam ñambi noccyen salñi*, *bulam ñambi noccyen salñi*

“let us go and find the harmful agent which injures the great-grandchildren (?)!”

B.S. : *chalam*, Tib. *sha lam (bsnoms pa)*; *bulam*, Tib. *dbugs lam*, “the breath”, “which injures the flesh, which injures the breath” (and not “the progeny”, with an “artificial disjunction”, according to A.H., va p. 165 !);

P. 101, § 15, V. 137. A. H. : *ḍi:ba laru ḍajye ḍi:ba, ṭhi:ba menḍu ḍajye ṭhi:ba*,

“(In order) to perfume, perfume with the pure *laru*, to purify, purify with the pure *menḍu*,

B. S. : *di:pa* may be equivalent with *sbor-ba*, “to set fire to”; *laru ḍajye*, Tib. *lha yi dag-byed*, “the sacrificial grass” (*kusha*); *ṭhi:ba menḍu ḍajye* means probably *me-tog mda'can* or *dga' rab dbang phyug*, “the son of Vishnu, the god of love (Kamādev).

A. H. : *mrawai luñjye sanba*, “to incense from the lowland”

B. S. : *mrawai* is most probably *smra-ba'i*, an epithet of *rma-bya*, the peacock (*smra-ba'i*, “the one who speaks”, qualificative of the Tamba in the East).

P. 103, § 16, V. 139, A. H. : *Ñasyiñ Lamo, Samḍul-Namḍul*, not translated,

B. S. : *Snang-srid Lha-mo*, or “Lhamo of visible appearances”; *sa-'dul-ba*, *gnam 'dul-ba (sa-'dul gnam-'dul gyi dgon-pa)*, “the *dgon-pa* established by the Guru Rinpoche”.

A. H. : *pe:ma cya:ri syí sanba*, “incense the *pe:ma cya:ri syi*: “the four zones of carved patterns of endless knots”

B. S. : in fact, it is “Padma Sphyan-ras-gzigs”!

V. 140, A. H. : *Sinsin Dólmo*, "the name of a tree"

B. S. : "Shing-srin sGrol-mo"

A. H. : *khardai gla:ri thunbai krèggi jara-nara sanba*,

"incense the roots of the cane which originates in the kharda's place",

B. S. : *jara-nara* is the inversion of Nep. *rāja-rāna*, "king and queen of the obstacles" (*bgegs-kyi rgyal-po*), and certainly not "the roots of the cane"!

A. H. : *cya:gi gošum kù sanba, saŋgi gošum kù sanba*, "incense the nine iron gosums"...("amulets on the bomo's back")

B. S. : *Lcags-kyi sgo srung dgu, Zangs-kyi sgo-srung dgu*, "the Nine Iron Guardians, the Nine Copper Guardians".

P. 105, § 17, V. 146. A. H. : *hoṭṭa*, is *hoser* ('*od-spro*, "light");

B. S. : it seems much more to be '*od + da* (Nep. *lāi*).

V. 150, A. H. : *nañbai tinle Tabu Norbu khurñi*, "let us go and carry Tabu Norbu"...

B. S. : The *bompo* does not carry but rides on the *rlung-rta*, the wind-horse on the *rlung-rta*.

V. 154, A. H. : *phrañḍi phrañgu sya:ñi, lamdi lañgu sya:ñi* ! "let us go and remove the *phrañ*-obstacle on the path",

B. S. : '*phrang-dgu*, "the nine ways", *sya:ñi*, "to dance", according to the *bompo* :

"let us go and dance on the nine ways" (*lam-dgu* and not *lam gugs-pa*, "to draw back").

V. 155, A. H. : *noocyen damla ta:ñi, noocyen chyibda braññi le Phamo*,

"let us go and magically fix the harmful agent, let us go and break open the union (of) the harmful agents O Phamo" !

B. S. : *damla ta:ñi*, Tib. *dam-la btags*, "to link by oath"; *braññi* is not *bralba* "to force open", but *bsgral-ba*, "to kill" (by liberating); *chyibda* is not *chyippa*, "to join", but *gnod-sbyin* (or *gnod-can* or *chen*) '*chi-bdag*, "the masters of death"!

"let us link by oath the great harmful ones, let us liberate the masters of death O Phamo"!

§ 18, v. 159, A. H. : *bonda misal, gañsal thoñju, hišye, nòšyc thoñyu* !

"come down and have clear-sightedness, clear sensedness (...) mystical wisdom"...

B. S. : According to T. G. : "if words are not clear, everything will become clear"...

V. 163, A. H. : *Brigañsyi, 'bru gan-kyi bdag-mo*, "the mistress of the sacrificial vessel filled with seeds".

B. S. : '*Bri sgang bzhi, Bod-yul* ('*Bri-yul-gyi sgang bzhi-yi bdag-mo*).

A. H. : *Chene Chegara Sañmo*, "obscure" for A. H.

B. S. : *lcags-ra bzang-mo* ? which would be the only proof of *chene* meaning "metal vessel".

V. 165, A. H. : *Phola Karbo, Phola Marbo*, (*phola*, "the stones placed in the *chene*"), *Syelgar Jyomo*, "a female in whitish rocks",

B. S. : *Phola*, "*rus-kyi pho-lha*"; *Syelgar, Shel-dkar Jo-mo*, "Mistress, White crystal", or a place in sTod, in Tibet.

V. 176, A. H. : *Lemba Gara Dúba Ṭha:duñ*, "the divinity of the ritual dagger",

B. S. : *Lemba Gāra*, or *rDo-rje Leg-pa*; *Gāra* alludes also to the Kami (*mgar-ba*). *Ḍúba Ṭha:duñ* or *sGrub-pa khrag 'thung*, (*khro-bo*, fearful aspect). The note 176 is very confusing. *Ḍúba Thu:nyen Chyembo* is *Thugs rje chen-po*, or *sPyan ras gzigs*, (*zhi-ba*, peaceful aspect). Further, *Khyuñ Raḡu Chyembo* is *Khyung rva dgu Chen po* or *Mahā Gaṛuḍa* with nine horns (and not "the epithet of all kinds of *khyung*", see note 178).

P. 111, § 20, v. 184, A. H. : *cadañ.ju, pradañpri repta gyurnem*, "all insects, dung-beetles perished",

B. S. : *rtsa dang chu*, "all the roots and water"; *spra dang sprchu*, "the great and small monkeys";

P. 113, v. 195, A. H. : *luwa-buwa*, "the bushiness of the *dubo* grass",

B. S. : *rbu-ba*, "foam", *khu-ba rbu-ba*, "from the water and the foam"; it is a metaphor of the creation starting from the foam, which is omni-present in the songs of Eastern Tamang.

I leave aside many other examples of what could be a tedious list of mistranslations and misunderstandings, to give a brief commentary of certain arguments of the book. In the introductory chapter (p. 17), A. Höfer writes that the description he gives of the *bombo* "is not to mystify him"; but is it not a kind of mystification that to create new specialists (the *sañduñ-prañduñ*), new kind of impurities (eating of horse-meat), new places of worship (the *chene* - p. 60, A. Höfer admits that the shamans did not help him a lot in this interpretation -), new sickness, the *thomdom riri*; fantasies about the porcupine; and to ignore many basic expressions and allusions

like the *sadañ svo*, the nine ways of the bon, the role of the *mdos* in the rituals, (denoting there a strong influence of the *nying-ma-pa* doctrine and of written texts among the bompos), the exact names of divinities of the Tibetan Pantheon; to confound the "sphere of the homestead" with the snowy mountains, the grand-child with the flesh, gods with trees, Padma *sPyan-ras-gzigs* with four knots, "our" with "us", and so on ?

P. 32, note 5, there is a note about "the recent origin of Tibetan documents in Tamang hands" which Macdonald found at Bodnath. Höfer adds that "these documents tibetanize the Tamang, i. e. treat the Tamang tradition in an essentially Tibetan and Buddhist terms". The paradox here is that it is A. Höfer himself who started a long time ago to recreate a more logical Tamang language from Tibetan etymologies, which was a patient and useful work as long as it was based on a real ethnographic work, which does not seem anymore to be the case here (the recordings transcribed here go back to the seventies - 12th October 1971). Further, one cannot help being baffled by the affirmation of the recent origin of the Tibetan sources in the hands of the Tamang: the rituals alluded to by the western bompos are obviously borrowed from lamaist recitations of *nying-ma-pa* apotropaic rituals, described in old ritual texts in the hands of Eastern Tamang: for example, the celebration of certain clan deities with *mdos* (*srid-pa spyi mdos*, *Ma-mo'i khrag-mdos*, *zor-mdos*, *mkha'-gro sgrub-mdos*). A glance at these texts would have helped A. Höfer better to understanding the exact role of the different magic weapons, and to avoid attributing the "syururu" to the porcupine only; *dakini* do that also ! Why, in this case write (p. 56)

that "certain terms (*sgrol-ma*, *mkha' 'gro-ma* and *rnal-'byor-ma*) reveal the influence that Tantric Buddhism, especially the Old Sect, must have had on the Tamang *bompo's* tradition ?

In another surprising note (ch. II, note 7), we read that "in our days at least, not even the most respected Tamang Lamas are able to understand their Tibetan ritual texts". I think that many lamas would be delighted to learn this from A. Höfer, these lamas who try patiently to make understandable to the poor illiterate ethnographers difficult allusions, rhetorical figures and metaphors. If the ethnographer refers to one or two informants only, he has little chance of understanding, or he will soon persuade his informant to tell him what he wants to understand (see the remark p. 48 : "SB who had soon developed into a genuine folk-philologist, did the bulk of this work"). A. Höfer seems to doubt himself about his philological method (p. 47) : "now, it is one thing to denounce the inadequateness of our own tradition of exegetic illusion developed on written materials": why is there no recorded disk at the end of the book, to allow the reader to check the transcription of the words ?

Finally, despite many affirmations about "the challenge to raise the quest for meaning", more than often, A. Höfer cuts short the debate by putting in brackets, with question-marks, the difficulties, for which he always proposes a translation and a transcription. Is it not a way of throwing the responsibility on the informants, and to let it be understood that these songs, after all, can be only a matter of western philology, being produced by illiterate Tamang ?

Note from the editors : Any review may be responded to by the author. In this case, because the author of the book reviewed above is one of the editors of the Bulletin, the response appears in the same issue.

A Brief Reply to Brigitte Steinmann's Review of *A Recitation of the Tamang Shaman in Nepal*

András Höfer

This review is the outcome of a superficial reading and conspicuously partial interpretation of my book. Steinmann is mistaken in her approach, arbitrary in her verdicts and tendentious in her selective use of quotations and references.

(1) She falsely accuses me --and that's a bit much, indeed-- of inventing objects, creating phantom words, and adding suffixes (*sc.* in order to make the text more comfortable for interpretation). (2) It is absurd to pretend that I want "to recreate a more logic Tamang language from Tibetan etymologies" (what an idea!). (3) It is simply not true that my "*translation* still consists in the reconstruction of the meaning of unknown Tamang words (...) from supposed Tibetan roots or words found in the dictionaries" (my emphasis). (4) Steinmann's quite apodictic recifications of my translation are pure fancies. (5) It is hardly legitimate to denounce as erroneous what I find in my fieldwork area simply on the grounds that it does not