

education in Ladakh needs to address the very specific needs of the society, especially of its isolated village communities. He highlights the demanding nature of the present curriculum, and the multiple languages that Ladakhi students are routinely required to learn.

Language features in two further papers. Bettina Zeisler notes the absence of Ladakhi as a medium of instruction in medium and higher education and is critical of what she sees as the 'passive assimilation' and use of foreign loanwords in Ladakhi. She expresses concern for the future of the language and advocates a means of writing the 'ordinary' (i.e. spoken) language that retains a recognizable form of (classical) Tibetan orthography. Anandamayee Ghosh suggests that the form of Ladakhi used in the Gesar epic may be a distinct literary language akin to literary Tibetan.

Finally, John Clarke looks at the development, during recent decades, of Ladakhi metal stoves. Neil Howard discusses the dating of ancient Ladakhi painted pottery. Mick Khoo and Tsering Norbu Martse present a highly readable account of Tibetan Buddhist cosmology and Ladakhi beliefs about solar and lunar eclipses; Khoo describes his own experience of a partial solar eclipse in Ladakh in 1995. Kim Gutschow describes the events at the centre of the *smyung gnas* fast at Karsha in Zanskar, concluding that ideals of renunciation undermine norms of hospitality only, finally, to reaffirm them through the elaborate exchanges of foods that follow the fast.

This is an important collection covering a broad range of subjects that will be of value to anyone interested in Ladakh, and Himalayan studies more generally, though its very breadth leads me to wonder whether the proceedings of future colloquia might not benefit from being thematically arranged and more fully introduced and discussed.

Tibetan Mountain Deities: Their cults and representations edited by Anne-Marie Blondeau. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998. 214 pp., maps, photographs.

Reviewed by Martin Gaenzle

In recent years the religious significance of mountains in the Himalayas has been the object of growing scholarly interest, and this has resulted in a number of fascinating and valuable descriptions and discussions. The present volume is one of the latest contributions to this field. It is the outcome of a panel at the International

Association for Tibetan Studies conference held in Graz in 1995, but it can also be seen as a sequel to the volume *Reflections of the Mountain: Essays on the social meaning of the mountain cult in Tibet and the Himalayas*, edited by Anne-Marie Blondeau and Ernst Steinkellner, 1996 (reviewed by András Höfer in EBHR 14, 1998). Many of the contributors to the latter volume are also represented in this one, providing further aspects of their studies (in the same or other regions), thus adding to the richness of description and strengthening the argument. Unsurprisingly, many of the earlier volume's themes reappear, but there are also new ones which deserve special attention.

To begin with, I will take a look at the central issue, which is the 'red thread' running through all the studies: namely the question of the specific characteristics of Tibetan mountain deities. Like its predecessor, this volume presents a broad spectrum of variations on a theme. The first section contains five papers dealing with Tibetan cultures proper, in the sense that these are traditions little affected by non-Tibetan ones. Two of the papers give vivid accounts of rituals in which the mountain as such is at the centre of religious activity. Katja Buffetrille provides us with a stimulating study of a pilgrimage to a mountain which can erase the defilements of incest. Here the *yul lha* (territorial divinity) acts as a divine judge, and it seems that because moral transgression has offended this divinity, it also has the power to pardon the offence. Schicklgruber's paper deals with a martial horse-race in Dolpo at the foot of a revered mountain. In this case the *yul lha* appears as a political force which traditionally 'selects' the leaders of the village community. In both cases, the mountain divinity emerges as an ancestral power which regulates the moral as well as natural order on its territory. In the other three papers in this section, the situation is historically more complex: the mountain deity appears as the protector of the Buddhist doctrine and is iconographically represented in anthropomorphic form. Diemberger and Hazod deal with two fierce protective divinities in southern Tibet, both depicted as 'horsemen in red', whose history can be traced back with the help of texts and oral traditions. Similarly, Pommaret discusses the 'lord of treasure' of a hidden valley (*sbas yul*) in Bhutan. In these three cases the authors try to reconstruct the development from a pre-Buddhist deity (associated with ancestors and the land) to a Buddhist divinity who has been pacified and integrated into the pantheon as a protector (*chos skyong*). It is interesting that, even though the influence of the Buddhist doctrine is quite dominant, the possession of a medium by the deity still occurs in all three contexts. This might be seen as a kind of 'return of the suppressed' and indicates a tension to which I shall return below.

The six papers of the second section deal with cases from the margins of the Tibetan linguistic and cultural zone. To some extent this was also the case in the previous

volume, but here the scope is further extended, both regionally (with papers on Lahul and Amdo) and culturally (with a paper on a Kiranti group). Stutchbury provides another interesting case of a mountain which is worshipped as the protector of a whole region, Lahul. Here we also find the recurring pattern of a medium's possession by the deity and its request for blood sacrifice. What is unique in this case is that here blood sacrifice is locally seen as Hindu influence rather than as an archaism. This shows how important it is to consider the larger political context in order to understand local interpretations, a point also stressed by Steinmann in her study of constructions of national identity in Sikkim. Likewise, Tautscher examines the changing meanings and appropriations of Kalingchok and Sailung, two mountains in eastern Nepal, in the context of Hindu-Buddhist rivalry. Her study shows how two mountains may be locally conceptualized in terms of a complementary opposition: male vs. female, pure offerings vs. blood sacrifice, death rituals vs. life-giving rituals, etc. However, as Tautscher makes clear, these meanings are not part of a timeless structure, but are the result of long-standing historical struggles. That mountain deities are often heavily contested is not surprising if one considers their territorial and political significance. Ramble's study of territorial divinities in southern Mustang nicely demonstrates that the process of Tibetanization which began more than five hundred years ago is still incomplete, if ritual recitations for the local territory of the village are taken into account. The pagan priest in one village intermittently uses a language which is otherwise long forgotten. Ramble concludes that "the notion of place appears to be marked by a relatively high degree of cultural conservatism" (p. 139). One might perhaps go further: could the code-switching not also be seen as a form of resistance?

With the latter paper we have already moved somewhat away from the 'classical' complex of mountain deities (the term is not used by Ramble in this context). What is of central importance here is the village territory, and Ramble rightly stresses the notion of place. This is also the focus of Forbes' paper on the Yamphu Rai. Although this Kiranti group is only distantly related to Tibetan ones, the inclusion of this paper in the present volume is a welcome enrichment of the comparative perspective. Among the Rai too, the village territory, closely associated with a spring, is a place linked to the memory of first ancestors, and its cult is an expression of legitimate land ownership and political power (the notion of *tsawa* has been described in more detail in Forbes 1995). Though mountains are not at the centre of this religious tradition, it is the whole surrounding landscape which is the focus and imaginary stage of ritual activity. Shamans and priests go on ritual journeys through local valleys, they commemorate ancestral movements and migrations, and thereby renew the forces of fertility and prosperity. In particular, the notion of an external soul invites further comparison with Tibetan concepts, such as the *sku bla*

discussed by Pommaret.

It becomes clear that one has to be careful not to essentialize the concept of mountain deities (a point which is also stressed in Blondeau's introduction), since many of these phenomena share only a kind of family resemblance. It seems that in the local terminologies the concept of 'mountain' is not always prominent. In the last two cases mentioned above we have seen that it is mainly the territory which is revered. The two papers in the third section lead us away from the Himalayas to Mongolia and beyond. Birtalan's preliminary research report on Mongolian stone cairns (which is rather overly concerned with typologizing) focuses on the material shrine and form of worship. There are obvious similarities with the shrines of the Tibetan cases, but this is not further discussed. The last (very short) paper by Uray-Köhalmi takes the most general perspective by looking at the marriage of mountains in various traditions. Here the author gets somewhat carried away by a search for Eliade-style archetypes, and what is discussed under the heading of 'mountain deities' is a rather wide category, including the Tungus master of beasts.

The papers in this volume provide an immensely rich documentation, including in-depth analyses of the varied forms of mountain worship in the Tibetan cultural sphere. But there is another theme which recurs in almost all the papers and appears to be of equal importance to the theme of mountain deities: this is the theme of cultural assimilation and subjugation. In practically all the cases presented here, the question sooner or later arises as to how an oral pre-Buddhist, non-Buddhist or pagan cult (Ramble gives good reasons for favouring the latter term) was eventually confronted with a scriptural tradition (mainly Buddhism, but also Hinduism) and as a consequence was in some way transformed, and often appropriated. The process of Buddhicization is so central to these studies that the volume can also be read as a detailed documentation of this phenomenon with reference to the issue of sacred space. It demonstrates, for example, how the relationship to the landscape undergoes fundamental changes, how place (as Ramble, for example, demonstrates) is substituted by a more abstract realm (cf. also Bickel & Gaenszle for a related discussion), and that the project of nation-building is an important force in the reformulation of such religious concepts (Steinmann). The recurrent theme of mediumship is particularly striking: here the question arises as to why ferocious, blood-thirsty territorial spirits are the ones to come into the body of a medium. Pommaret suggests that it is a way to neutralize them, but one could go further and see it as a 'taming' of the god, as was argued by Samuel (1993: 196, quoted by Forbes), which, of course, is a well-known topos. These are issues of more general relevance, and one wonders why the authors have not linked their discussions more often to debates in Himalayan as well as South Asian anthropology (e.g. those

dealing with Hinduization, Sanskritization, universalization vs. parochialization, inclusivism, dialogue etc.).

As in the preceding volume, the strength here lies in the ‘thick description’ and the combination of philological (Tibetological) and anthropological expertise. One should note that not all contributions are equally accessible to the non-expert reader: for instance, one paper is in Tibetan. Anne-Marie Blondeau’s introduction gives a good overview of the contributions, but there is no attempt to situate the papers within a larger theoretical framework, as was done by Gingrich in the previous volume. This would have been helpful, because the papers contain a number of issues which are of wider interest in anthropological theory, such as the tension between the local and the regional/national, or the problematic concepts of syncretism and hybridity. But, considering the richness of the material and the great variety of papers it was perhaps wise to leave such generalizations to the reader and future discussions. The book is illustrated by various photographs of good quality. The one on the cover epitomizes the complex issue: it shows a radiator grill of a car along with prayer flags offered to a territorial god.

References

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Himalaya: Past and Present, Vol. IV 1993-94 edited by Maheshwar P. Joshi, Allen C. Fanger, Charles W. Brown. Almora: Shree Almora Book Depot, 2000. 243 pp.

Review by Daniela Berti

As in the earlier volumes in this series, the reason for gathering the contributions presented in this fourth volume is not thematic, but geographic. Seven of the ten contributions are dedicated to Uttarkhand/ Uttarakhand and are based on fieldwork as well as on archival research. Two contributions are on Nepal and one on Himachal Pradesh.

The first two papers deal with kinship in Kumaon, focusing on temporal and spa-