and the irony of insisting on scientific testing of the authenticity of a letter which their opponents claimed had been written by the 16th Karmapa while at the same time believing in 'correct methods' of ascertaining reincarnation, are lost on the author. When Nydahl reacts to events with aggression this is ascribed to his past life as a Tibetan general; when others do so, they reveal their own ignorance and delusion.

Despite this partiality in the way it is written, the story is a fascinating one, and told with much convincing detail. The inner workings of the Kagyu order are revealed, in particular the jealousies and manoevrings of the leading rinpoches. The drama of the narrative–forged letters, pitched battles over relics, Chinese Communist plots, religious rivalries–is undeniable. Just how reliable this version is will have to await the judgements of historians; but regardless of these details, the book paints a vivid picture of a global religious network and the politics it gives rise to. It also demonstrates once again how a unified Buddhist monastic order requires a strong political authority (normally from outside the Sangha, but in Tibet the Sangha *was* the political authority) to support and maintain it. If there could be three Popes at one time in medieval Europe, it should come as no surprise that there can be contending candidates for the leadership of Kagyu Buddhism. The book gives some idea of what may be in store when the position of Dalai Lama becomes vacant.

Tibetan Elemental Divination Paintings: Illuminated manuscripts from the White Beryl of Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho with the Moonbeams treatise of Lo-chen DharmaSri. Commentary and translations by Gyurme Dorje. London: John Eskenazi in association with Sam Fogg, 2001. ISBN 0953994104. 424 pp., indices, numerous illustrations.

Reviewed by Martin Boord

This most remarkable book, enormous in size, scope, and price, deals with the ancient Tibetan system of elemental divination (*'byung rtsis*) which has both Chinese Buddhist and Taoist antecedents, for which reason it is often known as Chinese divination (*nag rtsis*) when contrasted with the practice of classical Indian astrology (*dkar rtsis/skar rtsis*).

The origins of its methodology are generally attributed in Chinese historical works to the legendary emperor Fu Hsi (Tb. sPa-hu 'shi-dhi) who is believed to have lived from 2853-2738 BCE, although the Buddhist

tradition attributes the original teaching to the *bodhisattva* Mañjughosha on Mount Wu Tai Shan.

After more than 3,000 years of development in its homeland, the texts of elemental divination began to be translated into Tibetan at the time of the Yarlung dynasty (7th-9th century). This early, tightly regulated, system of elemental divination (*rgya rtsis rnying ma*) should not be confused with the later innovatory techniques of divination and astrology introduced after the mid-17th century (*rgya rtsis gsar ma*).

The Chinese system was subsequently integrated inside Tibet with that of Indian astrology and a Nepalese system of martial conquest (*gYul rgyal*) deriving from the Indian Saivite *Yuddhajayanāma-tantrarājasvarodaya* (Tb. *dByangs 'chi*) and Tibetan masters also came up with numerous treatises in the form of treasures (*gter ma*). This is the transmission which eventually fell to the Dalai Lama's regent Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho (1653-1705).

The unique manuscript of intriguing illuminations reproduced in the present volume came out of Tibet only recently. Painted in the 18th century, mainly at Sa-skya by the master artist bSod-nams dpal-'byor of rTse-gdong some 60 years after the death of Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho, it once depicted the zodiac (*go la*) of Indian astrology, the *cakra* diagrams of martial conquest, and the elaborate hidden points (*gab tshe*) of Chinese elemental divination. Unfortunately, it now lacks the zodial charts, and only six folios of the section of martial conquest survive. It remains, however, the finest and most detailed illuminated manuscript known illustrating the intricate tabular calculations of elemental divination described in Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho's monumental treatise and this publication is sure to remain the definitive work for the foreseeable future, although a more user-friendly edition is a serious desideratum.

The *White Beryl* in its Lhasa and sDe-dge editions comprises 35 chapters dealing with all aspects of astrology and divination as presented in the system of Phug-pa lHun-grub rGya-mtsho. Chapters XX-XXXII deal specifically with the subject of elemental divination and the present volume, corresponding to these chapters, offers us access to this mysterious knowledge in the form of a veritable feast of scholastic and artistic excellence. Discussing in fine detail legends concerning the origin and historical transmission of elemental divination in ancient China and Tibet, the text goes on to explain the symbolism of the turtle divination chart, geomantic observations and such other topics as are of traditional concern to prognosticators.

Although the charts depicted in this beautiful volume would once have functioned as table-top grids upon which black, white or neutral divinatory pebbles could be directly placed, they have more generally been utilized as model wall-charts, while a schematic grid is actually utilized for specific divinations, the white pebbles being indicated by noughts and the black by crosses. The Mother relationship of the elements, for example, deemed to be the most excellent, is symbolized by three noughts and the most inauspicious Enemy relationship by two crosses. The elements upon which the divinatory relationships are based are depicted symbolically here in accordance with the 7th century Chinese (sPor-thang) scrolls of princess Wen Cheng: wood is green and depicted as a tree or bush, fire is red and depicted as a triangular flame, and so on. In accordance with the esoteric rules of this system, the diviner calculates the forces of: (1. *srog*) the life-sustaining vital force resident in the heart, (2. *bla*) a luminous essential spirit that migrates around the human body in harmony with the waxing and waning of the moon, the mother of the life force, (3. *dbang thang*) the 'element of destiny', personal power, charisma, strength, (4. *lus*) the 'body element', health, the energy of physical well-being and (5. *klung rta*) the 'luck aspect' which is the capacity to unite the other four and ensure their optimum advantage. For example, in determining the energy of the life force (*srog*), he reads in the text: "The life force of the animals resides in the elements of the directions. The life force of the tiger and the hare in the east is wood. That of the horse and the snake in the south is fire. The life force of the monkey and the bird in the west is metal. That of the rat and the pig in the north is water. As for the ox, the sheep, the dog and the dragon, all four have the *srog* of the earth element which governs the intermediate directions." After tallying the pebbles or symbolic noughts and crosses in the context of a given chart, the diviner may then calculate the pebbles of conclusive analysis (*btang gcod rde'u*) and consult the *White Beryl* commentary in order to determine his prognosis.

One of the most intriguing aspects of this entire divinatory system is the detailed and arcane science of geomancy, said to be based on a survey of the locations of many hundred spirit lords of the soil (*bhūmipati, sa bdag*). Since the opportune pathways of the years, months, days, or hours are deemed to be those not occupied by such spirits, activities coinciding with their presence in a specific location may only be undertaken if counteracting rituals are performed.

In antiquity, when the *bodhisattva* Mañjughosa emanated the reliquary turtle (*ring sel gyi rus sbal*) and incised it with his sword of contemplation, these spirit lords of the soil are said to have emerged from the turtle's subtle vapour (*rdul gyi rlangs pa*) with their king, The-se, emerging at the turtle's crown and his minister, Tsang-kun, at the heart, and so on.

According to *The Gathering of all Precious Elements ('Byung ba rin chen kun 'dus)*, which is the primary source enumerating the spirit lords of the soil, their most detailed enumeration comprises 1,000. However, when these are subdivided according to elements, spatial locations and their outer, inner, secret, and most secret aspects, their number is said to be infinite. In general, there are said to be 102 spirit lords who are ever-present, without reference to temporal fluctuations, and a further 474 directly associated with the years, months, days, and hours.

There are also other categories such as the "deities moving through the days of the month" (*tshes rgyu ba'i lha*) which determine the "greater black days" (*nyi ma nag chen*). One of these is the so-called "nine black omens occuring together" (*ngan pa dgu 'dzoms*) on the seventh day of the first spring month provoked by Rāhu circuiting mount Sumeru in an anti-clockwise direction. At that juncture, descending and ascending winds are reversed, horizontal winds are disturbed, the five elements are agitated, and the sunshine resembles aconite.

The movements of all these spirits is detailed in the *White Beryl*, together with a summary of the results of infringing their personal space and ritual remedies for such infringements. Fascinating stuff.

Pastoral Politics: Shepherds, Bureaucrats, and Conservation in the Western Himalaya by Vasant K. Saberwal. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-19-564308-9. 246 pp., maps, tables, index.

Reviewed by Ben Campbell

This fine Himalayan contribution to OUP's series on Social Ecology and Environmental History offers a well-researched investigation of conservation policy and its impact on Gaddi herders of Himachal Pradesh. Saberwal's aim is to demonstrate the interplay between scientific ecological discourse, institutional politics, and the effect of policy on communities and their livelihood practice. At the heart of his argument is the institutional rationale for the Forest Department's alarmist rhetoric of environmental degradation caused by overgrazing. Unlike studies of environmental history and politics, which project a monolithic view of the state, Saberwal manages to convey the insecurities of the Forestry Department in its historical relations of rivalry with the Revenue Department. He suggests that this rivalry accounts for the tone of alarm since the Forestry Department's establishment in 1865. He is at pains to