

## Research Report

***The Tibetan Dialect of Lende (Kyirong): A grammatical description with historical annotations.*** University of Berne, Department of Linguistics, 2002, 375 pages. To be published in *Beiträge zur tibetischen Erzählforschung*, edited by Dieter Schuh, VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, Sankt Augustin.

By Brigitte Huber

This dissertation, based on twelve months of fieldwork, provides the first linguistic description of the Tibetan dialect of Kyirong (sKyid-grong). It not only gives a synchronic description of the dialect, but also attempts to show its historical development by comparing it with Written Tibetan data and, to a lesser extent, with data from other Tibetan dialects.

Kyirong Tibetan is spoken in Kyirong county in western Central Tibet about 70 km north of Kathmandu. The Lende valley, where the variety described in the thesis is spoken, lies west of Kyirong, on the border to Nepal. There are about a dozen villages in the Lende valley, on an average approximately 3,000 meters above sea-level. Most families are farmers tending cattle (cows, yaks, various sorts of crossbreeds, and a horse or two per family) and planting barley and potatoes. There are also numerous exiled Tibetans from Kyirong and Lende living in Kathmandu (approximately 800 persons) and in villages in the Rasuwa district in northern Nepal, where the four camps of the “Rasuwa Tibetan Refugee Settlement” were established in the early sixties.

The Kyirong dialect stands in very close connection with a number of Tibetan dialects spoken in the adjoining parts of Nepal, namely (a) in Langtang and Helambu (Yolmo), southeast of the Kyirong area, as well as (b) in Tsum, which lies west of Kyirong, furthermore (c) Kagate, which is also spoken in Nepal, but not in the immediate neighbourhood of the other dialects mentioned above.

The introduction provides information about Lende and Kyirong, about dialect classification and closely related dialects, as well as about the circumstances of the fieldwork. The latter was conducted in Nepal, as the author was not able to obtain a Chinese visa to work in Kyirong itself. The main informants, however, were not Kyirong Tibetans living in exile, but people who were born in Lende and actually live there, making periodical visits to Nepal.

The introduction is followed by a chapter on phonetics and phonology, where the phoneme inventory is established. In the chapter on diachronic

phonology the sound changes undergone by this dialect are extensively documented. A part of this work also led to the description of the development of tone which results in three different register tones, a development which has so far not been observed among central Tibetan dialects.

In the chapters on “noun phrase”, “verb phrase” and “clause combining”, synchronic descriptions are separated from historical observations. Most descriptive sections are immediately followed by a section entitled “historical annotations”. These are graphically differentiated by use of a different font, which should facilitate the reading for those interested only in either synchronic or diachronic issues. The “diachronic sections” provide etymologies or attempt to provide explanations for the expressions described in the “synchronic sections”, where most of the comparisons with other Tibetan dialects are made. Furthermore, the interlinearization of all the examples displayed in the study also include lexical meanings as well as grammatical functions. Thus the examples are also accessible to those readers who are not familiar with Tibetan.

The last chapter is devoted to an oral text which has been transcribed and interlinearized. Its purpose is to illustrate the use of the dialect. Finally, the vocabulary occurring in the thesis is listed in three glossaries. The Kyirong-English glossary contains the etymologically corresponding forms of Written Tibetan. This is followed by an English-Kyirong Tibetan-Written Tibetan glossary, and a Written Tibetan-Kyirong Tibetan-English glossary. A more extensive vocabulary of Kyirong Tibetan is being prepared for publication in the Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects (see EBHR 23, pp. 97-101).

Throughout the study, the data from the Kyirong dialect are written in either phonetic, or (more often) phonological transcription, whereas etymological correspondences in Written Tibetan are given in transliteration. Thus the Written Tibetan forms listed always represent the etymological correspondences of Kyirong Tibetan words, rather than a written form of the Kyirong dialect. There are two reasons for this: First, Kyirong Tibetan has no system of writing; literate people follow the orthography of modern literary Tibetan. Second, not all the words contained in the Kyirong Tibetan vocabulary are etymologically transparent. Rendering them in the Tibetan script would have amounted to inventing ways of spelling. Consequently, the Tibetan script is used only in the chapter “Diachronic phonology” where such correspondences are also given in transliteration.

The bibliography includes not only linguistic studies of other Tibetan dialects, but also general literature about the Kyirong area.

The study represents a small building block in the documentation of the Tibetan linguistic area, and is meant to contribute to the classification of Tibetan dialects and to the understanding of the historical development of Tibetan in general. Furthermore, in the field of linguistics, it can be of

interest to typologists, inasmuch as the findings provide a description of a hitherto unexplored language, with quite a few interesting grammatical and morphosyntactic peculiarities on a research basis. Lastly, used as a language manual, it could also serve anthropologists and other scientists in conducting their research in or about the Kyirong area.

## **Conference Report on *Rituals of Divine Kingship in the Central Himalayas***

By William S. Sax

On 12-13 November 2004, a workshop was held at the University of Heidelberg on the topic “Rituals of Divine Kingship in the Central Himalayas”. The conference was funded by the Special Research Area 619 “Dynamics of Rituals”, funded by the German Research Council.

The focus of the workshop was the historical and contemporary systems of “Divine Kingship” found in the North Indian states of Uttaranchal and Himachal Pradesh. In some parts of this region, tiny “kingdoms” are ruled from gods in their temples, who communicate with their subjects through possessed oracles, and enforce their decisions through their own armies. Elsewhere, human kings rule as the representatives of gods, or the system looks like the “classical” system of Hindu kingship, in which a human king with semi-divine qualities rules the land, but ritually subordinates himself to his lineage deity.

The workshop began on Friday morning with a greeting from Axel Michaels, Speaker of the Special Research Area, and an introduction by William (“Bo”) Sax, organizer of the workshop. Sax stressed the fact that in all of the systems to be discussed, “religion” and “politics” seemed to be one and the same thing. He went on to argue that this identity of religion and politics was also characteristic of Hindu kingship during the “classical” period. The scholars gathered together here, however, were not historians but ethnographers, and their contributions were based on contemporary fieldwork. The goals of this conference were two: to compare systems of divine kingship in the Central Himalayas in order to see what they had (and did not have) in common, and to examine the part played by rituals in the institutions of divine kingship.

Sax's introduction was followed by a paper from Peter Sutherland (Baton Rouge), in which he argued that the “magical” transformation of gods into