

Medieval Tibeto-Burman Languages IV

edited by Nathan W. Hill.

Leiden: Brill, 2012, 480 pages, 10 colour photos, ISBN 9789004232020. Euros 158 / \$220.

Reviewed by Kazushi Iwao

This volume contains a selection of papers from the Fourth Medieval Tibeto-Burman Languages Symposium, held in 2008 at the School of Oriental and African Studies in conjunction with the 41st International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics. It consists of Nathan Hill's introduction and 15 individual articles, which deal with various topics and methods related to Tibeto-Burman languages. Six of the 15 papers cover Tangut studies, reflecting a current attraction to the field, especially in China and Japan. The remaining papers represent the work of scholars interested in a variety of Tibeto-Burman languages: they include three papers on Tibetan and one each on Mon, Burmese, Lepcha, Pyu, Nam, and Yi. Although the core studies concern linguistics, the papers in this volume also encompass various other fields such as literature and philology. Due to space limitations, it is impossible to comment on all 15 papers in this short review; therefore, I have selected certain papers on which I offer my comments.

Among the six Tangut papers, Bojun Sun and Chung-pui Tai's 'Features of the Tangut consonant system as reflected in Sanskrit-Tangut transliterations' is especially remarkable. The authors study the Tangut transliteration of Sanskrit *dharanis* to reconstruct the Tangut consonant system. It is noteworthy that they indicate the importance of Sanskrit-Tangut transliteration materials for reconstructing Tangut pronunciation. These materials were often used in the field's pioneering studies, although they are now often overlooked. Kirill Solonin's 'The Chán teaching of Nányáng Huìzhōng (-775) in Tangut translation' is also important: it is an intensive study of the Tangut translation of the *Chán Teaching of Nányáng Huìzhōng*. He provides the background of the work and the complete annotated English translation of the Tangut version. However, one should note that the Chinese text provided in the 'annotated translation' section is not the original but the reconstructed version from the Tangut text.

Shintaro Arakawa's 'Re-analysis of "Tangut-Tibetan" phonological materials', Guillaume Jacques' 'The Tangut kinship system in Qiangic perspective' and Takumi Ikeda's 'Verbs of existence in Tangut and Mu-nya' highlight the similarity between Tangut languages and Tibetan, Rgyalrong, and Mu-nya, respectively. Jacques discusses Tangut kinship terms based on *Degree of Mourning* and notes that it is strikingly similar to Rgyalrong kinship with regard to siblings. In addition, he indicates the existence of an Omaha-type skewing rule in Tangut, which is also observed in Rgyalrong.

With regard to Tibetan Studies, Nathan Hill's 'Tibetan palatalization and the gy versus g.y distinction' revisits the polemic issue of the Old Tibetan orthographic distinction between <gy> and <g.y>. Investigating previous interpretations and comparing them with the case of the Burmese ry-, he concludes that the distinction between <gy> and <g.y> represents the phonetic distinction of [gʲ] and [gʲ]. Iwao Ishikawa's 'A note on the theme and the author of PT 239 Recto 399' focuses on the Old Tibetan religious text, P.t.239 recto, which provides ample information on early Buddhism in Tibet. His primary argument concerns the meaning of the term *bsngo-ba*, which appears in the title of P.t.239. He concludes that the term, previously interpreted as 'substitution', actually means 'improvement'. As P.t.239 is essential to understanding early Tibetan Buddhism, and because the term *bsngo-ba* is key to deciphering the text, those who deal with P.t.239 cannot ignore this work.

Takumi Ikeda's 'Highlights in the decipherment of the Nam language' and Uwe Krech's 'A preliminary reassessment of the Pyu faces of the Myazedi inscriptions at Pagan' address the interpretation of unknown texts (Nam and Pyu, respectively). Ikeda's paper attempts to decipher Nam, an unknown language written in Tibetan script that emerged from the Dunhuang caves. There are three extant fragments of Nam manuscripts: P.t.1241, P.t.1246, and IOL Tib J 736. According to Ikeda's analysis, these originally comprised one manuscript. Thus, this paper represents a significant step toward deciphering the Nam language.

In the field of orthography, Sam van Schaik's 'The origin of the Headless Script (*dbu med*) in Tibet' is impressive. Comparing several examples of Tibetan script in Dunhuang texts, he concludes that the headless style originated from official bureaucracy during the imperial period. This is an important achievement for tracing the orthographic development of

Tibetan writing. Halina Wasilewska's 'Orthography of traditional Yi writing: conventions of sign use in the ritual scriptures of the Yi' demonstrates the orthographic diversity of traditional Yi writing in Southwest China. Wasilewska presents several examples in tables and diagrams, among which the list on pp. 456–464 erroneously provides the same data twice.

The remaining papers, Christian Bauer's 'When did middle Mon begin?' Rudolf A. Yanson's 'Aspiration in the Burmese phonological system: a diachronic account,' Heleen Plaisier's 'Two Lepcha *deluk* texts' and Hongyin Nie's 'Notes on the predicative personal suffixes of the Tangut language,' also provide excellent data and analyses based on primary sources and the authors' individual research. Overall, this volume clearly reflects the high standard of contemporary Tibeto-Burman studies.

Cardamom and Class. A Limbu village and its extensions in East Nepal

by Ian Carlos Fitzpatrick.

Kathmandu: Vajra Publications (Cinnabaris Series of Oriental studies-IV), 2011., 321 pages, ISBN 978-9937506663. \$25.

Reviewed by Olivia Aubriot

This book is about socio-economic changes brought about by cardamom cropping, which was introduced into eastern Nepal in the 1970s. The book's singularity stems partly from an anthropological political economy-based approach, which is taken within a now rather unfashionable theoretical framework: that of class formation. Not only does it provide an interesting ethnographic and socio-economic description of a village in Taplejung district, but it also studies its links with the 'dispersed' village, the new settlements in the plains, as well as the impact of cardamom production on internal and international mobility.

Based on Fitzpatrick's doctoral thesis, the book provides numerous surveys carried out in Mamangkhe, one of the northernmost villages in Taplejung district, in Birtamod and in settlements around Happenchowk in Jhapa district. It also draws on participatory fieldwork research on cardamom cultivation, and on in-depth interviews with producers, merchants, plains settlers and labour migrants. Data were collected in 2007-2008 and therefore give very recent insights.

Each major theoretical aspect of the thesis—class structure, economic differentiation, migration—is introduced through a theoretical contextualisation and a clear positioning of the author. More generally, the text is well written and makes for good reading. It stresses the objectives of the study and the major changes and differences compared to previous anthropological studies, and summarises the main findings at the end of each chapter.

Organised into six chapters, the book first sets the theoretical context of economic and social stratification, and provides an overview of the anthropological literature on caste and class in South Asia, thus legitimising its approach. The recent introduction of large amounts of cash (through cardamom production and international labour migration to

places other than India), 'has redrawn the parameters of wealth and inequality' (p. 26). The author adopts a different stance from Caplan, who stressed the importance of *kipat* (a community-specific form of land tenure) for the social and economic dichotomy between Limbus and non-Limbus (specifically Bahun-Chetris): these two groups have both poor and wealthy members, and land has long been a commodity here.

The second chapter sets the historical context: the mythological origin of the Limbus, their relations with the Nepali state and with non-Limbus in the village since the eighteenth century when eastern Nepal was conquered, the political autonomy gained through the *kipat* system, their social organisation into clans and the influences of the 1990 'People's Movement' and the 'People's War' on their political movement. With regard to Gorkhali control, unfortunately no mention is made of Sagant's theory (in *Le paysan Limbu: sa maison et ses champs*, 1976): the Gorkhalis' armed, political conquest was all the more intrusive in various aspects of Limbus' lives; it was a real technical revolution brought to the area by non-Limbus, whom the State encouraged to migrate, with the introduction of the plough, irrigated rice fields, and a more productive agricultural system than the swidden agriculture Limbus then practised. The historical description of land use since the settlement of Bahun Chetris in the village (around the end of the eighteenth century) given in Chapter 6 matches Sagant's description and is worth noting.

The third chapter provides a socio-economic and anthropological description of the village, a 'true' Limbu village where Limbu language and culture have survived relatively untouched by external influences. From a socio-economic point of view, it also has the specificity of being the largest area of cardamom production in the district. Cardamom 'is far the most unequally distributed resource' (p. 115): 'the top 10% [of households] produce 17 times the value of the bottom 50%' (p. 117). The historical process of economic and social change should not be understood only through an ethnic or caste-based analysis, even if the Chetris, Gurungs and Sarkis appear to be the wealthiest social groups, but also from a class-based analysis (p. 117).

Chapter 4 deals with cardamom cultivation itself, its production and the local history of its growth, as well as its history of cultivation in eastern Nepal and in Sikkim, where villagers used to work as labourers in cardamom fields. One rather surprising finding is how unaware farmers

are of the importance of production techniques and practices, a successful cardamom cultivation being, for them, due only to ecological conditions. This chapter also shows how the economic impact of cardamom production has benefited large- and small-scale producers, as well as non-producers, and has introduced major social and economic change to the village, including out-migration.

Chapter 5 thus describes the various processes involved in mobility: within the district, migration in order to settle in Jhapa (curiously the terms 'Tarai' or 'plain' are rarely used), or for international labour migration (to Sikkim, but also to long-distance destinations requiring a visa). This is a key chapter for understanding the relations that still exist between the village in the mountains and the 'dispersed village' in the plains. This link, which does not necessarily exist in other parts of Nepal, is not sufficiently highlighted: migrants still own land in the mountain village (since cardamom is a very lucrative cash crop) and are in regular contact with those living there, for various reasons: firstly, help can be provided in the form of ready cash throughout the year, whereas in the mountains cash is available only after the cardamom harvest; secondly, plain dwellers can act as a relay for job hunting since their area is a hub for international migration; and, thirdly, their situation also serves as a template for legitimate change. Moreover, contrary to other villages, they have settled in the plains very recently (end of the 1990s) subsequent to cardamom production, but also subsequent to the Maoist insurrection. Whatever the type of migration, the social aspects of mobility are also well illustrated.

Chapter 6 starts with a history of changes in land use (with the reminder that most Chetris left the village before the introduction of cardamom). Then, using four accounts as examples, it explains how the relationship between debt and landownership has prevailed, and has even been exacerbated. However, the introduction of cardamom as a cash crop has led to some changes in the distribution of resources: in the past, economic differentiation occurred mainly along ethnic lines, whereas nowadays some Limbus, who were traditionally excluded from this process, have become wealthier.

This book describes the history of economic change in a very clear manner, showing how the introduction of a cash crop has rapidly brought major social and economic change, and has contributed to villagers'

integration at national and global levels. It is also worthwhile pointing out that economic surplus is not enough to prevent out-migration, or at least that the uneven distribution of cardamom benefits may explain that, like other Nepalese people, migration to faraway countries is also a strategy used by Mamangkhe villagers.