

Christoph Cüppers, Karl-Heinz Everding, and Peter Schwieger, eds., *A Life in Tibetan Studies: Festschrift for Dieter Schuh at the Occasion of his 80th Birthday*, Lumbini (Lumbini International Research Institute), 2022. lii + 764 pp.

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This massive volume contains eighteen articles in honour of Dieter Schuh on his 80th birthday. It also contains a list of his publications and a substantial bilingual (German and English) biographical essay by the editors. It is difficult to imagine that anyone engaged in Tibetan studies is unaware of Prof. Schuh as being one of the truly great Tibetologists, on a par with such scholars as Giuseppe Tucci, Rolf A. Stein, and Luciano Petech. Nevertheless, the range and sheer volume of his research, pursued over a period of sixty years, is perhaps not universally realized, nor the fact that Prof. Schuh has spent much time in the field, sometimes under challenging conditions, in Pakistan (Baltistan), India (Purig, Spiti, and Ladakh), and Nepal (Mustang).

At the beginning of their contribution to the present volume, Charles Ramble and Naljor Tsering describe Prof. Schuh's work as follows: "In the world of Tibetan Studies, Dieter Schuh is probably best known for his contribution to domains that are considered to be among the most intractable. He has been the main impetus, and in certain cases the initiator, of investigations into fields such as astrology, calendar studies, mathematics, law, administration, epistolography, sigillography, diplomatics and numerous other areas of specializations that had generally been given a wide berth by other scholars" (p. 557).

To give a presentation of each article within the restricted format of a review is hardly possible. All the contributions to the *Festschrift*, however, admirably reflect Prof. Schuh's own research interests, and several of them are in fact written by former pupils. They, and many others, have built on the solid foundations provided by Prof. Schuh. In the following, some of the articles will be briefly commented on (in alphabetical order), but the choice is rather arbitrary and should in no way be taken as modifying the consistent excellence of the articles in this *Festschrift*.

The first article, "Amtliche Reisedokumente in Tibet – Schnellpost am Beispiel eines Eilbriefes «mDa' yig»" (pp. 1-42) by Saadet Arslan,

is a detailed and richly illustrated discussion of a particular form of official document, called *mda' yig*, lit. 'arrow letter', which was used in pre-1959 Tibet to ensure that the bearer, an official, was provided with transport and other necessary facilities by villages through which he passed when travelling. It could also ensure that a messenger, a special runner or horseman, carrying urgent news or government documents, or simply ordinary letters, was given the necessary assistance and support along a preset route. The article also deals with so-called *lam yig*, passports which authorised the bearer to travel along a certain defined route. Further, the article deals with the context of both types of documents, and provides a general overview of Tibetan postal services from 1904 to 1959. This reviewer is not aware of any published work which gives a similarly concise yet detailed description of this topic, including tables showing the use of both terms from the point of view of function and linguistic context.

Over the years, Katia Buffetrille has published an important body of research dealing with pilgrimages to a number of holy mountains in Tibet. In the present article, "A myes rma chen 1990-2018: Reflections on the transformation of a Tibetan pilgrimage" (pp. 75-115), she discusses how the pilgrimage to the sacred mountain of A-myes rma-chen, in which she herself has participated five times between 1990 and 2018, has undergone profound changes – visibly in the landscape, in the form of a road encircling the mountain and the related infrastructure related to tourists, less visibly in terms of the motivation of tourists, mainly Chinese, for visiting the mountain, but also with regard to Tibetans who partly abandon, partly uphold traditional modes of pilgrimage and worship. Buffetrille's personal experience, gathered over a period spanning almost thirty years, of the physical and cultural landscape of this mountain, is surely unique among Western scholars.

The phenomenon of 'Treasures' (*gter ma*) and 'Treasure Discoverers' (*gter ston*) has over the last few years benefited from an extraordinary impetus thanks to the Oxford Treasure Seminar Series, organised by Robert Mayer, which has now completed its fourth Series. Likewise, Franz-Karl Ehrhard's article, "Transmissions and Prophecies: Visiting Treasure Discoverers in lHo-brag" (pp. 131-162), focusing on Chos-dbang rgyal-mtshan (1484-1549) and his involvement with treasure discoverers active in that area, adds a useful contribution to this rapidly developing field of study.

The art treasures of the great stūpa of Gyantse have been published in several important volumes, but the history of this unique structure has received less attention. The contribution of Karl-Heinz Everding, "Die Geschichte Gyantse's entsprechend dem

rGya bod yig tshang in Edition und Übersetzung” (pp. 163-238), is therefore most welcome as it provides a textual edition and a carefully annotated translation of the relevant part of the most important source (composed in 1434) for the history of Tibet, including Gyantse, in the 13th-15th centuries.

Bringing the reader back to the 20th century, Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy writes about the Tibetan theatre: “sKyor mo lung pa: Notes on the History of an Outstanding Troupe that Reshaped Tibetan Theatre in the First Half of the 20th Century” (pp. 285-312). The author has recently published a massive, fundamental volume on the Tibetan theatre in general (see *EMSCAT*, vol. 51, 2020). In the present article, she conveys her thoughts about the fate of Tibetan theatre (also sometimes referred to as ‘opera’) in the modern world, in the Tibetan diaspora in India as well as in Tibet itself, ending (p. 309) with the reflection that,

Despite the unavoidable simplifications, misunderstandings, reinventions, and standardizations induced in modern times, *lha mo* songs, with their unique and challenging vocal techniques, are still ringing in the Tibetan social media. One can frequently see children singing *rnam thar* songs with passion and dedication, as if these sounds were tangible echoes of a lost past.

Peter Aufschnaiter belonged to the last generation of Westerners, few in number, who had a personal experience of living for many years in pre-1959 Tibet. In his contribution, Christian Jahoda, “Peter Aufschnaiter (1899-1973): A Fresh Biographical Sketch” (pp. 355-420), is inspired by the fact that “Nearly fifty years after his death, the overwhelming majority of the scientific legacy of Peter Aufschnaiter... is still unknown, not researched and not published” (p. 356). Jahoda points to the rich material awaiting exploration – “diaries, manuscripts, documents, texts (in German, English and partly in Tibetan), correspondence, visual materials (photographs, sketches of maps, drawings), collected religious items and other objects” (*ibid.*) and provides a “short fresh biographical sketch... with brief extracts from unpublished diaries, papers, and letters” (*ibid.*). A new research project aims at making this material accessible.

A field of study in which Schuh has been a pioneer, is Indo-Tibetan and Sino-Tibetan astral science, which is likewise the topic of Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp’s article, “A propos of *Skar rtsis pa* and *Nag rtsis pa*” (pp. 421-458), drawing upon an impressive range of Tibetan scholars, starting with Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251).

Yannick Laurent’s contribution, “From Lithang with Love: A Travel Permit from the Seventh Dalai Lama” (pp. 459-482), places a

bilingual Tibetan-Mongolian travel permit (*lam yig*), beautifully reproduced in colour, in its historical context. This fascinating article should be studied in conjunction with Saadet Arslan's contribution (discussed above).

Prof. Schuh has, as pointed out by Charles Manson and Fernanda Pirie, been "both a pioneer and an unrivalled authority" (p. 483) in the study of Tibetan legal texts. In their contribution, "The earliest Tibetan legal treatise: the *Khrims gnyis lta ba'i me long*" (pp. 483-522), Manson and Pirie provide the first-ever comprehensive translation of a legal document belonging to class known as *zhal lce*. The text in question is both the earliest and longest *zhal lce* hitherto known. The translation has been made in close consultation with Prof. Schuh. The authors provide not only a translation, but also a transcription of the Tibetan text and a reproduction of the original manuscript (first reproduced in 1985), of which only one copy is currently known, preserved in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala. It is worth mentioning, as Prof. Schuh already pointed out in 1983, and as is evident from the translation of the *zhal lce* text studied by Manson and Pirie, that its contents have little, if any, basis in Buddhism. It is therefore a significant contribution to the study of secular aspects of Tibetan culture and society.

Another type of document, a *gan rgya*, a declaration of a certain obligation, in this case an obligation "to participate in the protection of the sanctuary of [*the sacred mountain – PKṽ*] Bu le gangs ra in southern gTsang" (p. 577), is presented and discussed in detail by Hanna Schneider in her contribution, "Sacred Ground and The Skilful Use of Land(Scape) Resources – Two Facets of The Same Gem" (pp. 575-598). Like several other contributions in this volume, this important article mirrors Prof. Schuh's own interests and style of scholarship: presentation and discussion of the historical origin and contents of the document ("Directly relating to the enthronement of H.H. the 14. Dalai Lama... on February 22nd, 1940"), including the two official seals representing deeds of confirmation and the imprints of thirty individual private seals, followed by the Tibetan text of the document, a translation, and finally images of the entire document.

Prof. Schuh has been a pioneer in the study of Tibetan seals. Peter Schwieger's article, "The Gold Seals of the Fifth and Seventh Dalai Lamas" (pp. 599-623), is therefore a highly appropriate contribution. It revisits a seal, already noted by Schuh in a groundbreaking work in 1981, attached to a document in the Tibetan archives in Lhasa, studied (digitally) by Schwieger during a study tour to Lhasa. At the end of a detailed discussion of a number of relevant seals, he concludes that this seal, previously generally identified as belonging to the Fifth Dalai Lama, is almost certainly a

seal granted to the Seventh Dalai Lama in 1730.

Rounding off this impressive volume, Bettina Zeisler revisits the topic (attested as early as Herodotos) of 'gold digging ants' in what today is Baltistan, Ladakh, and Western Tibet in her contribution "Of gold, ants, and fables concerning the 'Dards' of Ladakh (and Baltistan)" (pp. 705-764), in which she discusses the wider question of the possibility of "an early influx of 'Dardic' culture or perhaps even a (more) aboriginal 'Dardic' cultural layer" (p. 705).

Five of the contributions in this volume are written in German, while the others are in English. Prof. Schuh wrote and published practically all his research in German. It is therefore obvious that scholars who do not have a working knowledge of German cannot access or benefit from his œuvre, except via publications by other scholars quoting from or referring to his works. The editors of *A Life in Tibetan Studies* make this point which deserves to be quoted in full (p.li):

Even though he revolutionised numerous fields of Tibetology, his works have still not achieved the level of widespread familiarity among Tibetologists that they deserve. This can only be explained by the reluctance of contemporary Anglo-American Tibetology to engage more than superficially with German-language research – and Dieter Schuh's publications are almost exclusively in German.

In fact, this is just one instance of a wider problem, which does not only concern the use of German. Thus, it is difficult to see how one can study the Gesar epic without reading the works of Rolf A. Stein (the relevant ones remain untranslated from French), or engage in the study Tibetan theatre ('opera'), intensively studied by Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy, or familiarize oneself with Tibetan folkloristics without access to the 15 volumes of the series "Beiträge zur tibetischen Erzählforschung" (edited by Dieter Schuh), or study the early history of Christian missions in Tibet without consulting the massive seven volumes published in Italian by Luciano Petech (*I missionari tibetani nel Tibet e nel Nepal*) – and so on. It is entirely unrealistic to believe that even the core works of Tibetan studies will ever be available in English (or any other single language) in their entirety. I once met a German professor who told me he had spent an entire year in Copenhagen in order to be able to read the works of the Indologist Poul Tuxen, most of which were written in Danish. Hopefully this kind of dedication to the intellectual challenges of humanistic research has not disappeared. One of the merits of this Festschrift is that it points – implicitly – to this issue.

Be that as it may, the volume is an indispensable survey of Dieter Schuh's unique research in Tibetan studies, outstanding not only for

its quantity, but equally for its quality and originality. Moreover, the eighteen articles in the Festschrift constitute an extremely valuable collection of articles, each one of which is an original and substantial piece of research.

