

vincial People's Congresses, provincial branches of the China's Buddhist Association, etc.) in today's China. However, anybody dealing with these and other issues of the evolving Sino-Tibetan relationship is well advised to consult also the publication under review.

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BĚLKA, L.: *Tibetský buddhismus v Burjatsku* [Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya]. Brno, Masarykova univerzita 2001. 348 pp. ISBN 80-210-2727-4.

The publication under review is devoted to the history and contemporary situation of Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya, a subject basically neglected by researchers outside the former Soviet Union and Russia. The author, L. Bělka (Institute for the Study of Religions, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic) presented his monograph to the interested reader after a long and laborious research conducted both *in situ* (several research trips in the 1990's) and with the use of primary and secondary sources from Russian archives and publications. He grasped the opportunity when the religious revival started in Buryatiya after the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and thanks to repeated stays in the region was able to follow this process which was unfolding literally in front of his eyes. The focus of his research is the historical context of the diffusion of Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya and a religious topography (a kind of modern metamorphosis of the traditional Tibetan genre *neyig /gnas yig/*) which gives a detailed structure of the monastic institutions in Buryatiya in the past and in the present. As stated in the foreword (p. 15) his approach is more descriptive and to a lesser degree analytical and interpretative. The monastic aspect of Buddhism in Buryatiya (for which he has coined the term ecclesiastical structure, p. 18) stands in the centre of his interest and issues related to the non-institutionalized aspects of the religion of the laity are mentioned only briefly.

His monograph is preceded by a chapter (pp. 19-28) devoted to the available sources and research so far done on this issue. This introductory part is very useful as it makes the reader acquainted with the situation in the field to which mostly Russian-language scholarship has contributed. Although the works published during the Soviet period were influenced by the ideological viewpoint (so-called "scientific atheism"), these secondary sources provided the author with much valuable information and without them this field of research would be a *tabula rasa*. The author was able to consult most of the works published in Russian and the extensive bibliography (pp. 303-323) gives evidence of the fine heuristic work accomplished by him. The works so far published in other languages than Russian are scarce and usually deal merely with partial problems of this issue and do not provide a broader picture. A typical example is the book of J. Snelling *Buddhism in Russia: The Story of Agvan Dorzhiev, Lhasa's Emissary to the Tsar* (1993) which discusses only a limited chapter of the history of Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya. Bělka's *Tibetský buddhismus v Burjatsku* [Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya] is the first non-Russian monograph devoted to this issue. It might be stated already at this point that it would be useful to publish it also in English and make it available to a broader readership.

The first part of the monograph (pp. 29-113) examines the historical developments of Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya. The author also briefly mentions issues related to the ethnogenesis of the Buryats, their language and the administrative divisions of the region. The diffusion of Tibetan Buddhism from Mongolia to Buryatiya in the 17th-18th

centuries is described in the context of the spread of the religion from Tibet to Mongolia, where especially north-eastern Tibet (Amdo /*a mdo*/) had played a crucial role. The oldest archeological findings (dating from the 5th and 9th century) and information from written sources (13th century) which illustrate the earliest contacts between Buryatiya and Buddhism are also mentioned, but the author's conclusion is that one can speak about the presence of Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya only starting with the 17th century. A very interesting part of his research is devoted to the attitude of Tzarist Russia towards Buddhism and the Buryats. Various measures designed by the ruling court from the middle of the 18th century (full translations of some of these regulations are included in the appendix of the publication under review, pp. 269-293) show the tolerant religious policy of Russia and the later politicization of this primarily religious issue as the cross-boarder ethnic links with Mongols and the religious relations with the large Buddhist monasteries in both Mongolia and Tibet were considered by the Tzarist court as a potential source of danger in its territorial conflicts with the Chinese-Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It resulted in the creation of an autonomous Buddhist church in Buryatiya with Bandido Khambo Lama at its head, which should have led to the exclusion of outer influences. The issue of the policy of Tzarist Russia towards Tibetan Buddhism is very interesting from the comparative aspect when we see it in the context of the policy of the Chinese Imperial court towards Tibetan Buddhism (for an overview see for example S. Dabringhaus, "Chinese Emperors and Tibetan Monks: Religion as an Instrument of the Rule", in: *China and Her Neighbours. Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century*, eds. S. Dabringhaus, R. Ptak. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 1997, pp. 119-134). Applying the comparative perspective (which was outside the scope of the author in the publication under review) one could also approach the developments of the Tibetan Buddhism in the Stalinist Russia where it resulted in the complete destruction of the monastic institutions (about 50 monasteries with 16 thousand monks) in the 1920s and 1930s, and the situation of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the Mongolian People's Republic and People's Republic of China. For example the functioning of the so-called councils of the monastery established in the two remaining Buryat monasteries (Ivolginskyi and Aginskyi datsan) after 1945 (p. 92, 278-280) and the functioning of the Monastery Management Committees (Chin. *siyuan guanli weiyuanhui*, Tib. *dgon pa'i do dam u yon lhan khang*) established in Tibet after 1980 would enable a fruitful comparison. The last chapter of the history of the Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatiya, that is the religious revival of the 1990s is also briefly treated.

The second, larger part of the monograph (pp. 114-260) comprises a description of 49 Buryat monasteries. The author briefly mentions the educational role of the Buddhist monasteries in Buryatiya and the system of various *gratshangs* (*grwa tshangs*, "faculty") functioning in larger monasteries. He notes that the Buryat curricula were modelled upon the educational system in the large Gelugpa (*dge lugs pa*) monasteries in Central Tibet and Amdo. For each monastery L. Bělka gives a short history of its foundation, later development and its current state. Some monasteries (for example Aninskyi, pp. 173-197; Tamchinskyi, pp. 136-148; Ivolginskyi, pp. 248-259) are described in great detail due to the fact that they have played an important role in the Buryat ecclesiastical structure and therefore there are more sources on their history. Sometimes the author quotes Russian documents which give detailed descriptions of internal decorations (*thangkas*, sculptures, library holdings) of various large temples. The author was able to supplement these sources with his observations and interviews conducted, which are mainly related to the phase of destruction and revival. The entries on many monasteries are complemented by diagrams which illustrate the position of individual temples and buildings in-

side the monastery compound and reflect the state either before the destruction or the current state. This only increases the high documentary value of Bělka's monograph. Other monasteries (e.g. pp. 237-238) are treated only very briefly and represent a challenge for the author or other researchers following in his footsteps. The descriptive part raises some questions which remain so far unanswered as they were outside the scope of the author's interest. For example it seems that in Buryat monasteries (pp. 143, 147, 155, 164, 204-205, 219) models of Buddha Amitābha's Western paradise Sukhāvātī (Tib. *bde ba can*) were quite popular – which is, so far I know, not the case in Tibet – and one wonders what place had Amitābha and Sukhāvātī occupied in the system of beliefs of Buryat Buddhists. In his concluding remarks (pp. 263-266) the author treats briefly the issue of religious (dis-)continuity in Buryatiya. He perceives the continuity mainly in the realm of the laity where, in the hearts of the commoners, Buddhism has survived also the long persecution during the socialist period. However the institutionalized aspect of Buddhism, the monasteries and their inhabitants, was more vulnerable to the ferocious attacks by Soviet (not only Russian but also Buryat) authorities and therefore there the author sees the discontinuity of an almost lost tradition which has been recently revived.

The text is supplemented with numerous photographs (some of which were found in the Russian public and private archives, and others taken by the author) and a map (p. 127), which helps the reader to locate the monasteries described in the second part of the book. While dealing with this topic the author had to solve various philological problems as the Buryat Buddhist terminology, which he uses throughout the book, has Tibetan and Mongolian roots. A glossary of terms regularly appearing would certainly help the reader with the understanding. It is a pity that a longer English summary is missing as this publication is intended not only for the Czech reader.

The publication under review is a valuable contribution from a researcher from a post-socialist country, where the discipline of the study of religions (*Religionswissenschaft*) has – due to ideological reasons – established itself at the universities as late as in 1990. L. Bělka's monograph is an interesting read for all those who are interested in the history and current religious situation in Buryatiya as such, or approach this issue in a broader comparative perspective – either in its historical and religious relations with adjacent “Buddhist” regions, that is Mongolia and Tibet, or in the context of the policy towards religions and minority nationalities in Tzarist Russia, the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia.

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DROZDÍK, Ladislav: *Modern Written Arabic*. Bratislava, Veda Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences 2001. 227 pp.

In this scholarly book Professor Drozdík provides linguistic description of some grammatical and lexical aspects of 19th and 20th century codified Arabic, known as Modern Written Arabic or Modern Standard or even Modern Literary Arabic. The work comprises twelve studies dealing with different aspects of Arabic. The study “Functional variations of the so-called feminine marker in Arabic” proposes a short synchronic survey of the most out-standing functional variations of the suffix *-a/ -at/* in a number of linguistic systems of Modern Written Arabic and some of its colloquial varieties. The