

CÜPPERS, Christoph – SØRENSEN, Per K.: *A Collection of Tibetan Proverbs and Sayings. Gems of Tibetan Wisdom and Wit*. Tibetan and Indo-Tibetan Studies 7. Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag 1998. XXXIII + 444 pp.

The present publication represents the most comprehensive and systematic collection of Tibetan proverbs, folk-sayings and aphorisms (*gtam dpe*, *kha dpe*) so far published. As correctly stated by the authors (p. X) paroemiological studies have been so far neglected in the Tibetology and their contribution is therefore most welcomed. Another important reason brought up by Ch. Cüppers and P. K. Sørensen is the irreversible process of acculturation which is taking place both among Tibetans in the People's Republic of China and those living in exile, particularly in India. Due to this specific processes of Sinicization and Hinduization (and the global Westernization encountered also by other non-dominant cultures) the rich and important proverbial tradition of Tibetan literature (with roots reaching to the first surviving Tibetan written documents found in Dunhuang materials, as mentioned by the authors, pp. XI–XII) is in danger of vanishing from the spoken vernacular and written literature. The first step towards research in this seemingly marginal field was successfully made by the authors of the publication under review.

The main part of the publication is preceded by an Introduction (pp. XI–XXVII) devoted to the place of proverbial literature in the Tibetan written culture, to the sources of the present collection, and to other related problems. The authors made use of the two minor collections of proverbs compiled by A. H. Francke and J. van Manen and also of the compilations (*phyogs bsgrigs*) published recently mainly in the People's Republic of China and to a lesser extent in India. The authors note also the fact, that many of the Tibetan proverbs were modelled on the Indian Buddhist tradition and some are direct translations from Indian sources. However, a large share of the collected material comprises Tibetan colloquial proverbs of fairly recent origin, which reflect an older tradition. The application of the proverbs in Tibetan classical literature is illustrated on the well-known autobiography of the high-ranking Tibetan official (*bka' blon*) bSod-nams bStan-'dzin dpal-'byor tshe-riñ (1760–after 1812) from the noble house dGa'-bzi entitled *dGa' bzi ba'i mi rabs kyi byuñ ba brjod pa Zol med gtam gyi rol mo* (briefly “The Music of Outspoken Speech”). The writer, well-versed in classical literature, inserted in his text many colloquial proverbs and sayings and the authors quote a few illustrative examples. The skilful use of proverbs by this Tibetan author shows that this material is an important source for the study of the imaginativeness of Tibetan metaphor (e. g. “the remaining Tibetan border-troops ... fled like ‘a heap of beans being scattered by a club’”, *sran phuñ ber kas gtor ba*, p. XXI). His poetic comments on the events of Nepalese-Tibetan war (1788–1792) show, that this text deserves a full translation.

The main part (pp. 1–280) of the present volume is made of a list of proverbs classified according to the Tibetan alphabet (altogether 10,756 entries) with the source of each proverb specified. This is accompanied by a word-index (pp. 281–444) which makes this collection a useful tool also for lexicologists and lexicographers. As Ch. Cüppers and P. K. Sørensen note (p. 282), “the sayings have been adopted and registered in this collection exactly as found in the sources credited, without revision linguistically or philologically in accordance with standard spelling”, that is the user should look not only for the current standard form *nam mkha'* (p. 363), but also the variants *gnam mkha'*, *gnam ka* and *gnam kha* (all p. 364).

As the authors characterized the publication under review as a small appetizer (p. XXVII), the Tibetologists are certainly awaiting with great expectations for the main

dish which will meet the high standards established by the present volume. On various occasions they present the ambitious intention to continue collecting and eventually publish further volumes (p. X), beginning with the English translation of the proverbs included in the collection of van Manen and the maxims from mKhas-btsun bzañ-po published in Dharamsala in 1974 under the Tibetan title *gTam dpe sna tshogs darī gžas tshig kha śas* (p. XXVI), and prepare a forthcoming publication dedicated to a detailed linguistic analysis of the language of *gtam dpe* (p. 282). All these undertakings would immensely widen our understanding of the proverbial genre in Tibetan literature.

Martin Slobodnik

GRÜNFELDER, Alice: *Tashi Dawa und die neuere tibetische Literatur*. Edition Cathay, Band 41. Bochum, Projekt Verlag 1999. 145 pp.

The author of the publication under review, Alice Grünfelder, has devoted her interest to a topic, which was so far neglected not only by Western Sinologists and Tibetologists, but also by the Tibetans in the diaspora – namely modern Tibetan literature published in China (and as she is a Sinologist, her research was limited to Tibetan authors who write in Chinese, or whose works were translated into Chinese). She has already published a paper which dealt with this topic (“Tashi Dawa and Modern Tibetan literature”, in: Krasser, M., Much, M. T., Steinkellner, E., Tauscher, H. /eds./: *Tibetan Studies*, Volume 1, Wien 1997, pp. 337–346), edited and translated into German a collection of modern Tibetan short stories (*An den Lederriemen geknotete Seele*, Zürich 1997), and she had the opportunity to interview Tashi Dawa. A. Grünfelder concentrates her interest on the group of young Tibetan authors, who started to publish in the late 1970s and early 1980s with Tashi Dawa as the best-known, both at home and abroad, and representative among them (one should also mention Alai, Sebo, Jimi Pingjie). Her knowledge of their writings is certainly most intimate among Western scholars as is also shown in the present book. The scope of the publication is limited by the fact that she cannot read Tibetan and she does not discuss modern Tibetan poetry. These remarks should not diminish the value of the publication, but the reader should be aware of her understanding of modern Tibetan literature which is within the above-mentioned limits.

As stated by A. Grünfelder, her present contribution is only a preliminary study (p. 68) and many questions, often raised also by the author, remain unanswered. However, at this stage, when outside the People’s Republic of China there are almost no studies devoted to modern Tibetan literature, her work is most welcomed. In focus of her interest stands Tashi Dawa, but the first half (pp. 1–68) of the book is devoted to more general issues of contemporary Tibetan literature. She makes the reader acquainted with the context of Tibetan literature in the Chinese cultural and political arena: namely the concept of the so-called minority literature (*shaoshu minzu wenxue*) which she, with good reasons, rejected as a mere political label which does not help in understanding and evaluating it. An interesting aspect of this problem is the reception of modern Tibetan literature in the People’s Republic of China by Han-Chinese literary critics. Her quotations and comments, together with the brief introduction into the short stories and novels about Tibet written by Han-Chinese authors (e.g. Ma Jian, Ma Yuan, Liu Wei, although their approach to Tibet differs considerably) illustrate that the fascination with Tibet, recently analysed by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (*Prisoners of Shangri-La. Tibetan Buddhism and the West*) and in the proceedings edited by Th. Dodin and H. Räther (*Mythos*