

SHORT REVIEWS.

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Rato Matsyendranath of Patan and Bungamati;

Tribhuvan University; Institute of Nepal and

Asian Studies Historical Series No. 5,

Kirtipur, 1973, xi and 118 pages.

In five short chapters Father Locke has summarized information derived from European and Nepalese sources concerning this very interesting cult; and he has added clear descriptions based on his own observation of the ritual, and knowledge of the sites. He begins by describing the two temples of Rato Matsyendranath – Taha Bahal at Patan and the temple at Bungamati—and gives some new facts about the thirty-one Panjus, who reside at Bungamati, and their role in the ceremonies. The second chapter is devoted to the Chariot Festival: details are given of the Snan Jatra, the Bhoto Jatra, and the twelve-year festival, several of which are not to be found in the writings of previous writers such as Gopal Singh Nepali or D. R. Regmi. The author then passes in review the Buddhist and Hindu versions of the legends of Matsyendranath and some legends concerning the Bhoto Jatra. Data to be found in chronicles, inscriptions, *thyasaphus*, and descriptions of the Chariot Festival by foreigners in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries are then grouped together in an examination of the historical evidence concerning the origin of the cult. The final chapter discusses the identity of Rato Matsyendranath.

This is a useful and unpretentious-although at times somewhat pompously written, book. The author is particularly to be commended for his use of Nepalese sources: and the photographs which illustrate his text are interesting and clear. An important title missing from his bibliography is 'S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta, 1962.

There is no doubt that the study of a cult of this importance raises many problems of method. As the author himself remarks (p. viii): "An immediate problem is that of what name to use for the deity. The deity is known as Machendranath (with variant spellings), Matsyendranath, Aryalokitesvara, Lokesvara, Padamapani, and Bunga Deva (not to mention identifications with Laksmi, Vishnu, and other gods). After going through all of the relevant data one can make a very good case for the thesis that the proper name of the deity and therefore the one that should be used, is Bunga Deva. Yet this name is currently confined to Patan and Bungamati, seldom used by Nepali writers and virtually unknown to non-Nepali writers." In fact, when one has read through this book, one is still pretty uncertain as to who the divinity really is. Perhaps in future studies less attention should be paid to historical problems of nomenclature and more to the structure and the economics of the rituals. If it is true

that similar chariot festivals were not "a feature of Tibetan Buddhism" (p. 103), it should also be pointed out that they were, up to recent years, of some importance in Mongolian Buddhism. For an attempt to plot out the structure of some similar Indian rituals, see "Juggernaut reconstituted" in *Journal Asiatique*, 1953, 4, p. 487-528. Michael Allen, from another viewpoint, has recently written: "Hindu devotees equate Machchendra-nath with Siva and Buddhists with Aryalokitesvara, Lord of the Universe. He is worshipped by all Newars regardless of caste or religion, but he is wholly owned, administered by and ritually controlled by Buddhist priests" ("Buddhism Without Monks: The Vajrayana Religion of the Newars of Kathmandu Valley" in *South Asia, Journal of South Asian Studies*, No. 3, August, 1973, p. 14.) Dharmasvamin (p. 64) was not the only Tibetan to take an interest in Bu-kham which, incidentally, he mentions before Thām vihāra (see G. N. Roerich, *Biography of Dharmasvamin*, Patna 1959, p. 512-513 of the Russian reprint in *Izbrannye Trudy*); Smin-grol qutuqtu in his 19th century 'Dzam-gling rgyas-bshad also wrote of A-kam bu-kam (T. V. Wylie, *A Tibetan Religious Geography of Nepal*, Rome, 1970, p. 14-17); and the *Yul chen-po nye-ba'i tshandho-ha bal-po'i gnas kyi dkar-chag* which I hope to edit and translate in the near future, has quite a lot to say about this cult.

Father Locke has not written the last word on the question but his book should certainly stimulate further research.

A. W. M.

David and Nancy Watters,
An English-Kham, Kham-English Glossary;
 Summer Institute of Linguistics, Institute of Nepal
 and Asian Studies, Kirtipur, 1973, vi and 126 pages.

This little book which is very well printed in off-set, is a fine example of the work being done at Tribhuvan University by members of the Summer Institute. The greater part of the work is constituted by an English-Kham glossary (p. 1-53) and a Kham-English glossary (p. 53-113). Kham is spoken by 30-40,000 people living in the Daulagiri and Rapti Zones of West Nepal. The glossaries are based on the particular dialect spoken at Taka, Baglung District, by about 1500 people who live in the geographical centre of the linguistic area, and whose dialect is described by the authors as "the prestige dialect." In Nepal, Kham is a minority language of the Tibeto-Burman family; and the authors estimate on the basis of Swadesh List comparisons that its vocabulary is "about 25 per cent cognate with the Magar and Gurung groups, slightly below 25 per cent with the Tibetan group, and about 15 per cent with the Rai and Limbu groups" (p. i.) Kham speakers are Magars of the Bhuda, Gharti, Pun and Rokha subtribes, Taka village being composed almost entirely of Bhuda. The authors use the term Kham-

Magars to distinguish Kham-speakers; for as they point out the term Magar usually designates people of Palpa and Southern Gulmi who speak the Magar language.

Kham-speakers have to date received little attention from anthropologists. As the authors obviously know a good deal about the material culture of this interesting group (see the entries under "cold" p. 8; "jug" p. 22; "knife" p. 23; "loom" p. 25; "pole" p. 32; "pot" p. 33; and "sheep" p. 39), it is to be hoped that they will give us the benefit soon of a short ethnographic description of Kham-Magars. In the present state of our ignorance of many of Nepal's ethnic minorities, simple, straightforward descriptions of ways of life are very valuable. Indian ethnography and the world would have been poorer if the scruples of not having been trained as a professional anthropologist had inhibited Verrier Elwin from writing about the Indian tribals.

The glossaries are introduced by a very short summary of Kham phonology and of the orthography used in spelling Kham entries, and a note on major phonetic variants and pronunciation. Appendices are added, after the glossaries, on Indeterminate Dimensions, that is to say "a special class of quantities which are immeasurable in terms of specific weights and measures" (p. 114-119); on Locatives and Directionals (p. 119-124); and on Weights and Measures (p. 125).

One would have liked to see more entries in the areas of communication and geography. How do the Kham-Magars designate their neighbours and those with whom they do business? There are some tantalizing entries under "shaman" (p. 38, 39), but the glossaries tell us little of Kham-Magar magico-religious beliefs and of their knowledge of and interest in the outside Nepalese world. However this is an excellent beginning and we shall perhaps learn more soon about this very interesting group. There is little likelihood that they will be confused with the Khams-pa who are from Khams and not, as the authors seem to suggest (p. i), from Central Tibet. Is Kham ever noted down in devanagari orthography and if so with what success? However frivolous this question may appear to professional linguists, the point is not altogether irrelevant in the perspective of Nepalese national linguistic integration. One cannot help wondering how many readers this book will have inside Nepal.

A. W. M.

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