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Bianca Horlemann

Édition électronique

URL : <https://journals.openedition.org/emscat/2183>

DOI : 10.4000/emscat.2183

ISSN : 2101-0013

Éditeur

Centre d'Etudes Mongoles & Sibériennes / École Pratique des Hautes Études

Référence électronique

Bianca Horlemann, « Akasoy Anna, Burnett Charles and Yoeli-Tlalim Ronit (eds.), *Islam and Tibet. Interactions along the Musk Routes* », *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines* [En ligne], 43-44 | 2013, mis en ligne le 20 septembre 2013, consulté le 13 juillet 2021. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/emscat/2183> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/emscat.2183>

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- 1 The edited volume is a unique collection of an impressive variety of research papers in the recently emerging field of academic studies of contacts between the Persian-Arabic Islamic world and Tibetan cultural areas dominated by Buddhism. The catchy title *Islam and Tibet. Interactions along the Musk Routes* at once stirs up curiosity since the coupling of Tibet and Islam is antagonistic for most people, researchers included, and what and where are the 'Musk Routes'? The book under review is the result of an international conference held in London in 2006 and sheds light on these questions from various angles including early cartography, the exchange of medical and pharmaceutical knowledge and of religious and philosophical ideas, possible mutual influences in architecture, art and culture, trade connections (musk trade!), marriage alliances and more. It brings together contributions from Islam specialists, tibetologists, mongolists, historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, religious studies experts and sociologists. The altogether 18 chapters are chronologically arranged and span from early Muslim-Tibetan contacts in the 7th/8th century to the contemporary era, but the essays are not interrelated although there are some cross-references. Also geographically, the

contributions cover a huge area wandering from the Near East via Central Asia to the Himalayas and beyond.

- 2 In the first chapter of the book under review Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, one of the co-editors, skilfully introduces and correlates the various essays. I will, therefore, not duplicate this effort but will restrict myself to some general observations and supplementary remarks. Of the altogether 18 chapters, three illuminate the importance of the musk trade for establishing early contacts between the Tibetan and Islamic world and convincingly demonstrate why the subtitle for this volume has been rightly chosen. Anna Akasoy provides an impressive study of how and where Tibet is mentioned in Islamic geography and cartography (chapter 2) while Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani's essay (chapter 4) explores early Iranian-Tibetan cultural contacts as reflected in objects of art and luxury goods. Anya King's paper (chapter 6) focuses on Tibetan musk and medieval Arab perfumery. Apart from stressing the significance of the so far scarcely known and under-studied musk trade, the three contributions indicate furthermore, although only indirectly, that besides Western Tibetan trade connections the role of the Tuyuhun/ Azha as possible intermediaries for Iranian-Tibetan cultural exchanges needs to be reconsidered as well. The Tuyuhun not only dominated the 'silk roads' of the southern part of East Turkestan from about the 4th to the 7th/8th centuries but also a large part of what is now called northeastern Tibet (Amdo or mdo smad) until their realm was split and came under Tibetan respectively Chinese rule. Apparently, the sort of musk that was considered to be of superior quality in Persian and Arabic sources, i.e., so-called Tibetan and Sogdian musk, also came from this area. Sogdian-Tuyuhun trade relations have already been suggested, if not attested, by various archeological excavations and are certainly worth to be explored in more depth.
- 3 Another recurrent theme is the great importance of Central Asia as a catalyst not only for Islam travelling east but also for Buddhism travelling both east and west from its original homeland India. The contributions of Kevin van Bladel (chapter 3) on the Bactrian background of the Barmakids, of Dan Martin (chapter 5) on Greek and Islamic Medicines' historical contacts with Tibet, of Christopher Beckwith (chapter 7) on the Sarvāstivādin Buddhist Scholastic method in medieval Islam and Tibet, and of Arezou Azad (chapter 10) on possibly Ilkhanid Buddhist cave sites in Iran, all stress the influential role of Bactria/ Tokharistan for Buddhists in China, northern India and possibly Tibet. With regard to the presumably Ilkhanid Buddhist cave sites in Iran it might prove fruitful for Azad's comparative approach to include also those Buddhist caves in Xinjiang and the Gansu Corridor which date back to Mongol rule. The role of the Mongol Empire in diffusing religions and medical knowledge between the Islamic world and the Asian highlands including Tibet is further illuminated by the papers of Peter Zieme (chapter 8) and Paul Buell (chapter 9).
- 4 In contrast, Alexandre Papas (chapter 13) studies the concept of Muslim sacred space in Tibetan areas as reflected in Sufi hagiographies and legends and in this context points at the importance of Samarkand as a focal point for the Muslim Salar who live on the Sino-Tibetan frontier, but also for other Muslim groups in China. The latter point is further corroborated in Thierry Zarcone's contribution (chapter 14) on Islamic conversion narratives regarding 17th/18th century Tibetan Buddhist personalities. Also Diana Altner's essay (chapter 17) about the different Muslim groups living in [cultural] Tibet mentions the importance of Central Asian Sufism for the conversion of the

Muslim Tibetans of Kaligang in Amdo. In fact, all of the afore-mentioned contributions indicate that Central Asia cannot be regarded merely as a transitional zone through which ideas travelled from east to west or in reverse but that, in contrast, for many centuries Bactria/ Tokharistan and Samarkand were considered as cultural and religious centres in their own right by both Buddhists and Muslims.

- 5 Another important centre for Muslim-Tibetan relations up to modern times was Kashmir as is reflected in Georgios Halkias' essay (chapter 11) on the Muslim Queens of the Himalayas and in Marc Gaborieau's study (chapter 12) about the discovery of Muslims in Tibet by Portuguese Missionaries as well as in Martin's afore-mentioned contribution (chapter 5). For the 19th/20th century, the contributions by John Bray (chapter 16) on a Kashmiri merchant and alleged British spy in Tibet, by Diana Altner (chapter 17) on different Muslim groups and their designations in Tibet and by Jan Magnusson (chapter 18) on the 'Greater Ladakh' movement throw light on Muslim-Tibetan relations in the western Himalayas and central Tibet.
- 6 Alas, Muslim-Tibetan interactions on the Sino-Tibetan frontier remain under-represented in this volume. Although Johan Elverskog (chapter 15) studies Buddhist Mongol attitudes towards Islam which, I presume, closely resembled those prevalent in the Sino-Tibetan border area, and although Altner shortly mentions the Tibetan Muslims of Kaligang in Amdo, the already above-mentioned essay by Papas is the only one which specifically deals with Muslims east of central Tibet. This is regrettable since the study of Tibetan-Muslim interactions in the Sino-Tibetan border area could add several more facets. The history of Amdo Tibetans, for example, who for more than thirty years were ruled by Muslim warlords in what are now Qinghai and Gansu Provinces of the PR China, still needs to be told in detail. This also applies to the Muslim communities of the Bonan/ Baoan, the Dongxiang and the already mentioned Salar who have lived in the heart of or close to Tibetan dominated areas already for several centuries. Another under-researched but important topic is the development of Muslim-Tibetan trade relations along the Sino-Tibetan frontier.
- 7 For lack of knowledge in Arabic and Persian, I cannot detect orthographic or transcriptional mistakes in these languages, and therefore typos or inconsistencies in the other languages used, shall not be mentioned here either. These mistakes are very few anyway and will not disturb most readers. Apart from two maps and three figures, the book also contains several plates which add important visual impressions to some of the articles. The index is well done and reliable, but, unfortunately, no bibliography is provided. To sum up, the book under review is a splendid and much welcomed start for closing a wide gap in our knowledge about Buddhist-Muslim interactions in the highlands of Central Asia and Tibet. It is recommended for specialists as well as readers with a general interest in intercultural and inter-religious contacts who will find it stimulating and useful. Unfortunately, the sales price of the volume is rather forbidding and it can only be hoped that a more affordable paperback will be published soon.