

real events. This kind of bard, who wandered the western part of Europe only until the early Middle Ages, continued to recite their narrative to the accompaniment of a string instrument in the basin of the Carpathian mountains and on the Balkan Peninsula even at the time of the war with the Turks in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Through their mediation the news of battles and heroic deeds spread. Farther to the east, in the areas of the populations of the steppes, these precursors of today's singers were indispensable for continuing the traditional role they had played since old times. As the reporters of those times, wandering from domain to domain and from aul to aul, they learned about all the important events and put them in rhymed form in order to memorize them more easily. They also represented public opinion, ethic judgment or prejudice. It suits the taste of the larger public—today also—if its heroes fit into the accepted stereotypes. The singers, therefore, shaped their material according to tested patterns and furnished it with favorite motifs. It is therefore this kind of bard who shaped and spread the story of Edige. In the case of this narrative, though, not enough time had passed to allow the different episodes to mature into a homogeneous work.

The historical Edige was for quite some time commander of troops and governor of the Khan of the Golden Horde, and as such a widely known personality. His fame spread through all the regions that were in contact with the Golden Horde, and among practically all the Kipchak-Turk groups. This was the time of the formation of such ethnic groups as the Kazakh, the Karakalpak, the Kirghiz, and the Nogai. Soon after the western Mongol groups appeared in this area, among them the restless Kalmucks. Their wanderings and wars contributed to the definite formation of today's nations. Such historical circumstances explain why in this case and for these populations the period of Edige became the "Heroic Age," though the Heroic Age of other epics is situated in other times and other circumstances.

In conclusion I wish to express to the author my grateful appreciation for this work and to encourage her to continue her research in this field.

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## TIBET

KOROM, FRANK J., editor. *Tibetan Culture in the Diaspora: Papers Presented at a Panel of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 258. Band. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997. 119 pages. Figures, illustrations. Paper ATS415.—; ISBN 3-7001-2659-X.

In June 1995, the Seventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) took place at Schloss Seggau, near Graz, Austria. Apart from the main proceedings of this conference, five panel discussions covering specific topics took place. The papers of these panels were published in separate volumes, one of them being *Tibetan Culture in the Diaspora*.

This publication so far constitutes one of the rare attempts to give an all encompassing view of the Tibetan exile situation. Depending on sources, the Tibetan refugee population numbers between 100,000 and 130,000 individuals who are scattered over the Indian subcontinent, North America, Europe, and Australia. Despite the fact that the situation of refugees in general and their way of coping with a foreign environment has been a long standing

subject of study in the social sciences and cultural anthropology, the particular case of Tibetan refugees was rather widely neglected, as editor Frank Korom points out in his introduction. The previous Tibetan studies primarily focused either on Tibet past and present, or on the traits of Tibetan culture that are preserved among the refugee population, and not on the social, cultural, and political conditions of life among the refugees. This attitude has been further fostered by the constant reference of Tibetans themselves to their ancestral land and their hope of being able to return to a “free Tibet” soon .

As some contributors to the volume clearly show (for example Christiaan KLEGER in his paper “Shangri-La and Hyperreality: A Collision in Tibetan Refugee Expression”), an exotic picture of Tibet and the Tibetans is still prevailing in Western thought, and Tibet has always played an important role in the imagination of Europeans and their descendants. The selection of papers presented in this volume successfully tries to overcome this bias in two ways.

First, very detailed information on settlement patterns, economic subsistence activities, and various ways of sociocultural adaptability (including monastic life under drastically changed conditions) of Tibetan refugees in the different geographical settings of their respective exiles is given. Thomas METIFESSEL, for example, presents very accurate statistical data about the regional distribution of Tibetan exile communities and their specific socioeconomic character.

Second, the publication concentrates on representations of Tibetan ethnic and religious identities that are provided by Tibetan refugees themselves when dealing with a wider public sphere. The papers examine how these representations of Tibetan culture are altered in the context of the refugee situation, and under the influence of a lasting interest in the Tibetan cause by Western supporters. In this respect, a number of well-documented and skillfully researched papers in the volume show that Tibetans “carry a heavy semiotic load in...[the] Western imagination” (MCLAGAN, 69)—this is despite, or possibly even because, Western attitudes toward Tibetans are in general very sympathetic.

Representations of Tibetanness are thus created by Tibetans and their Western supporters alike, with the latter ranging from political activists in favor of a “free Tibet” to practicing Buddhists and environmentalists. The prevailing viewpoint, resulting from this sympathetic Western attitude, perceives “Tibetan culture as a locus of endangered spirituality and as a valuable resource for the world’s future” (MCLAGAN, 70). In this respect, several aspects of Tibetan representations receive a rather critical review by some of the authors, e.g., the tendency of exile-Tibetans to present themselves as the sole caretakers of Buddhism worldwide (MCLAGAN, 72, 73), and their adaptation to Western expectations of an ecologically orientated society living in harmony with nature (see Toni HUBER’s “Green Tibetans...”, 103–19). As a result, some narratives of Tibetanness have more to do with “New Age Orientalism” (MCLAGAN, 87) than with anything meeting empirically proven facts.

Besides that, these representations of Tibetanness always have to compete with the “official” representations of the “Tibet Autonomous Region” (*Zi-zang*) issued by the Government of the People’s Republic of China. As some of the contributors in the reviewed publication point out, this refers to a political as well as to a cultural level, as is evident by the attempts of “the People’s Republic to assimilate the performing arts of Tibet” (CALCOWSKI, 52) for its own purpose. Since 1959, the year of the occupation of Tibet by China, a continuous “confrontation of representations” (GOLDSTEIN 1994) has been taking place between a supposedly authentic Tibetan culture preserved in exile and the “Sino-Tibetan” position.

Covering these conflicts, misconceptions, and shifts in self-representation that are evolving from this complex situation, the volume provides a collection of far-reaching and most readable papers that show the complexity of forces moulding an ethnic identity under

rather difficult conditions in an exile situation. Thus, this volume is highly recommended as it provides a very valuable supplement to the range of established studies on Tibet, and encourages further research.

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The Tibetan diaspora and the politics of performance, 51–57.

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## SOUTHEAST ASIA

MASING, JAMES JEMUT. *The Coming of the Gods: An Iban Invocatory Chant (Timang Gawai Amat) of the Baleh River Region, Sarawak*. Two volumes. Canberra: Department of Anthropology, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1997. 598 pages. Maps, figures, tables, glossaries, references. Paper \$A45.00 (overseas price for both volumes).

The production of this text is a saga in itself, one that has taken half a century to unfold. It begins in 1949, not long after the last Rajah ceded Sarawak to the British Crown. In a remote Iban community, Derek Freeman attended a longhouse festival focussed on a cosmic journey recounted by the *lemembang*, or bard, Igoh anak Impin. Impressed by Igoh's poetic genius, but lacking a tape recorder, Freeman arranged for the bard to repeat the entire cycle of songs, dictating line by line to a literate Iban, Patrick Ringkai. Over several years, Freeman made annotations to this manuscript, even after Igoh himself had converted to Christianity. In 1976 Freeman recruited James Jemut Masing, recently returned from a university in New Zealand, to undertake a translation of the text. Masing's work earned him a doctorate from the Australian National University. Now finally published in a handsomely produced two-volume set from the same institution, it represents a priceless contribution to world literature.

The text itself makes up the whole of the second volume, 219 pages of Iban transcription,