

cultures, and to anyone who enjoys the insights that a culture's narratives provide. This series promises to be a welcome addition to the shelves of both personal and institutional libraries.

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NEPAL

HÖFER, ANDRÁS. *A Recitation of the Tamang Shaman in Nepal*. Nepalica No. 7. Bonn: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1994. 379 pages. Map, photos, figures, tables, appendices, bibliography, indices of subjects and select terms and names. Cloth DM; ISBN 3-88280-044-5.

Nepal has been one of the most productive regions for shamanic studies in recent years, and Höfer has already made a number of significant contributions in this area. The present work is, however, in scale and ambitiousness one of the most substantial items to come yet from the region, and it also aims at a degree of linguistic sophistication lacking in much of the earlier work. The major part (part 2, 51–271) of Höfer's new book consists of a transcription with translation of the text recited, mostly in the Tamang language but partly also in Nepali, of a single ritual performed by a Tamang *bombo* (shaman), along with detailed commentary. Part 1 (15–50) is an extensive introduction, including a discussion of the *bombo* and his ritual techniques; part 3 (273–329) consists of "Notes on the Pragmatic Function of Some Figural Patterns" (i.e., in Tamang ritual language). The work is completed by appendices, an extensive bibliography, photographs, and diagrams. It provides what is certainly the most detailed and comprehensive account I have seen of any shamanic ritual from Nepal.

The ritual in question, a ritual of "looking for the cen" (*cen māiba*), was performed on 12 October 1971 in the village of Bhokteni, west of Trisuli Bajār in Dhāding District, Central Nepal, in connection with a sequence of marital disagreements focussing on the wife's barrenness and menstrual problems. The couple concerned consulted the shaman (Syirjaron Bombo), who undertook the *cen māiba* ritual in the couple's house in order to divine the deity (*cen*) responsible for the trouble. The ritual falls into a series of sections, commencing with invocations of the Māi or "collective mother goddess," including two elaborate ritual journeys (*rirap*), one to Lasya, the Queen of the Witches, the second in search of the *cen*, a divination sequence, the shaman's falling into a state of possession by the gods, and a number of other short ritual episodes. The language is described as highly metaphorical; thus the journey in search of the *cen* is

an impressive effort to interrelate three "worlds," namely the inner one of the patient's organism, the outer one of physical nature, and the hidden one of metaphysical nature.

It is undertaken a) to find out which botanical species of flower corresponds to the "life-flower"/"womb-)flower" of the patient, and b) to identify the one particular *cen* who control: both of these flowers. (163)

One might wish that the book had been more clearly and coherently set out. The reader often has to work quite hard to find basic information. We are told little about the particular *bombo* who recited the text (and also helped in its editing; 48–49), and the description of the context of the ritual (57–58) is elliptical and hard to follow. One would like to know much more about the role taken by the patient and her family, and their reactions to the ritual, especially in view of the author's comment that "the text is designed to produce an immediate effect on the patient" (276), although it is good to know that she did eventually give birth to a son, for which she gave credit to both the *bombo*'s ritual and the multi-vitamin pills given to her by the ethnographer (270, n.5)!

Despite indications here and elsewhere that Höfer is aware of the parallels with the tradition of shamanic analysis deriving from Lévi-Strauss and developed, in the Nepali context, by Holmberg, Desjarlais, and others, and the citing of many of these works in his bibliography, Höfer's theoretical contribution in part 3 takes place in relative isolation from the existing literature. This section opens with a brief discussion of how it is that the patient might be affected by the ritual despite not listening to it with much attention (275–76), but Höfer appears unaware of other discussions of this question in the literature on shamanism (e.g., LADERMAN 1987, ATKINSON 1987). The remainder of part 3 is essentially a very detailed exposition of the complex and sophisticated linguistic devices Höfer identifies in the shaman's text.

The interested reader should note that Brigitte Steinmann, who has herself worked with the Eastern Tamang, has questioned many of Höfer's textual interpretations in a wide-ranging critique (STEINMANN 1996). Höfer responds in the same journal that Steinmann's criticisms derive from her ignorance of the very different Western Tamang dialect and are unfounded (HÖFER 1996). I have so far been unable to consult Steinmann's criticisms and Höfer's reply in detail, and it is in any case difficult for someone without specialist knowledge of the Tamang language to comment on the details of this dispute. The existence of the kind of complex metaphorical language described by Höfer would however be no surprise, given what we know of shamanic language in other Himalayan cultures and elsewhere.

For the specialist in Nepalese and Himalayan shamanism, Höfer's book seems bound to become a vital reference, while for a Tibetanist like myself, it is a treasure trove of parallels and borrowings, since the Western Tamang are of all the Nepalese hill-peoples among the closest in language and culture to the Tibetans, and have Tibetan Buddhist lamas alongside the shamanic *bombo* and a third type of religious functionary, the *lambu*. Other readers will no doubt find other valuable aspects to this work. The book provides an abundance of material and interpretation and is undoubtedly a landmark in the research on shamanism in Nepal. Professor Höfer has left us all in his debt.

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MASKARINEC, GREGORY G. *The Rulings of the Night: An Ethnography of Nepalese Shaman Oral Texts*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. xi + 276 pages. Illustrations figures, map, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth £58.50; ISBN 0-299-14490-9. Paper £20.50; ISBN 0-299-14494-1.

Maskarinec presents an excellent ethnography of oral texts preserved among fourteen Nepali shamans (*jhāngari*). These texts were collected during the fifteen-year period from 1977 to 1992 in Jajarkot and Rukum Districts of Nepal. His purpose is to “identify the knowledge required to be a shaman, how they negotiate the relations between language, action, and social realities and to show what it is that shamans say as they perform ceremonies and the ways that those words make their rituals significant” (10).

Jhāngari are Himalayan shamans, who accomplish their intermediation through diverse rituals that conspicuously incorporate both long, publicly chanted recitals and short, whispered incantations. Their performances take place mostly at night, as they are responsible for the rulings of the night. The shaman, dressed in a shaman’s costume, enters a physical frenzy, a frantic state perceived by his audience to demonstrate possession by spirits (*deutā lāgnu*). As he drums, dances, and engages in various ritual activities, he speaks, sings, chants, whispers, and shouts. His speech during ritual performances is generally considered incomprehensible to common men and women, or to have no real meaning. However, by analyzing the language of shamans’ speech lexically, semantically, and pragmatically, and by trying to answer the question, “What exactly is it that shamans are saying in these performances?”, Maskarinec has finally discovered that their public recitals and short *mantars* are well constructed, orally preserved, and accurately memorized texts. He reveals that the *jhāngari*, in diagnosing and treating afflictions that trouble their clients, rely on extensive training in oral texts that contain the core of every shaman’s knowledge.

First, Maskarinec precisely describes shaman texts that tell stories of the origin of men and of the mustard seeds thrown to the six directions at the beginning of every ceremony, as well as texts describing the creation of the universe and its elements, the origins of worldly disorder, and the histories of malevolent forces. He identifies the types of afflictions that clients regard shamans as effective in curing, e.g., witchcraft, malevolent spirit possession, and astrological imbalances. In describing rituals performed during treatment to manipulate particular afflictions, he finds that the sources of ailments and crises are explicitly postulated throughout the texts and that Nepali shamans learn to identify the diversities of causes by memorizing texts. Thus he shows that, as the shamans repeatedly recite their texts, patients and public also learn to recognize the relations of specific causes to specific conditions.

Then, by examining other specialists, including oracles (*dhāmi*), Brahman priests (*paṇḍit*), astrologers (*jaisī*), seers (*gyāni*, *herneharu*), counselors (*prakīl*), and pulse readers (*pārki*), Maskarinec finds that the copresence of multiple forms of ritual activity is only accidental, and that shamanic texts operate to connect the different ritual practitioners of western