BOOK REVIEWS

Hartmann, Jens-Uwe und Thomas O. Höllmann. *Wörterbuch der tibetischen Schriftsprache*, 22 fascicles (to be continued). Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften / Verlag C. H. Beck, München, 2005–2013. 384 pp. (fascicles 1–6) + 512 pp. (fascicles 7–14) + 512 pp. (fascicles 15–22).

In recent decades, Tibetan lexicography has been enriched by the publication of many dictionaries – from Tibetan to other languages, from other languages (mainly English and Chinese) to Tibetan, and, naturally, by dictionaries which provide explanations and synonyms in Tibetan (or in Tibetan and Chinese). It would be beyond the scope of this review to provide even a selective list of these works. Nevertheless, one dictionary deserves particular mention, viz. the Tibetan-Tibetan-Chinese *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (“The Large Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary”), 3 vols., published in 1985 by The People’s Publishing House in Beijing, until recently the most comprehensive and useful dictionary of Tibetan. A promising start in making this work available to a larger number of users was the publication in 2001 of the first volume in the form of a Tibetan-English dictionary: *An Encyclopedic Tibetan-English Dictionary*, jointly published by The School of Oriental and African Studies, London and The Nationalities Publishing House, Beijing, in 2001. This volume covers the letters KA to NYA. Unfortunately, there would seem to be no information as to when the remaining two volumes will appear.

In the meantime, however, an even more ambitious project has been launched by The Bavarian Academy of Sciences in Munich. This is a Tibetan – German dictionary of literary Tibetan (by which is meant archaic and classical Tibetan rather than modern literary Tibetan), initiated by the Tibetologist Helmut Hoffmann, probably a few years after he, together with Erich Haenisch (both professors at the University of Munich), had founded the Committee for Central Asian Studies (Kommission für zentralasiatische Studien, now Kommission für zentral- und ostasiatische Studien, now Kommission für zentral- und ostasiatische Studien) at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences in 1954. In 1964 Helga Uebach joined the project, from 1970 on a full-time basis. Collaborating since 1974 with Jampa L. Panglung (Panglung Rinpoche), Dr. Uebach was in many respects the driving force of this project until her recent retirement.

During the first years of the project, the focus was on excerpting words from existing dictionaries, but starting from 1964, this was supplemented by systematic excerpting of words from a selection of Tibetan texts, numbering, in the end, more than 200. This gradually became the main focus of the project, which soon proceeded without interruption. In 1998 Dr. Uebach and Panglung Rinpoche published a presentation of the project: “The project “Dictionary of Written Ti-betan. An Introduction”, in: Boris Oguibénine (ed.), *Lexicography in the Indian and Buddhist Cultural Field*, Studia Tibetica Band IV, Kommission für zentralasiatische Studien/Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, München, pp. 149–163. This presentation has been supplemented and brought up to date in the “Einleitung” in fascicle 1 of the work under review (pp. ix–xiv).

The *Wörterbuch* is unique not only in scope (the 16th fascicle and more than 1 400 pages only brings it up to the entry *gñā' chu*, i.e. roughly halfway through the eighth letter of the Tibetan alphabet), but above all in being a comprehensive *reference dictionary*. It is the first dictionary of Tibetan to be based on rigorous philological principles, each word being documented by one or several phrases in which it occurs, with a German translation of the entire phrase and exact reference(s) to the relevant source(s).

In all fairness it must be said that already H. A. Jäschke to some extent compiled his dictionary, published in 1881, on the same principles, but on a far more modest scale. The same may be said of

Sarat Chandra Das's dictionary from 1902 (*A Tibetan-English Dictionary with Sanskrit Synonyms*). For this reason the dictionaries of Jäschke and of Das, all things considered, have remained until now the most useful lexical tools for students of Tibetan, especially for learners, although their scope is on a far more modest scale than the *Wörterbuch*.

To give but a single example, chosen at random, of the scope of the *Wörterbuch* as compared to earlier standard works, the word *ka ca/ka cha* may be chosen. Jäschke has a two-line entry, with the translation "goods, things"; S. C. Das (1903) has "articles, goods, effects, property, furniture", adding two phrases where the word is used, and three synonyms, seven lines in all. The *Encyclopaedic Tibetan-English Dictionary* (2001) does not add anything, in fact it is rather more brief than Das, allotting only five lines to the entry. If, on the other hand, we consult the *Wörterbuch*, we find *ka ca/ka cha* dealt with in an article covering almost half a page, or 29 lines, with numerous excerpts from Tibetan texts as well as native dictionaries, always with exact references. This is simply something totally different from what we have had up to now.

It is to be hoped that the publication of new fascicles of the *Wörterbuch* will continue at the same regular pace as has hitherto been the case. Tibetologists who do not read German will therefore have every reason to acquire this skill, a challenge which should, after all, be far less daunting than learning to read Tibetan. The *Wörterbuch* is a timely reminder that whatever the merits of English, it does not, in fact, constitute a sufficient language skill for a scholar of Tibetan who is serious about his or her work, for this publication is likely to become, in a literal and absolute sense, an indispensable tool for all Tibetologists.

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