

according to Schneider's hypothesis (p. 26) – for the benefit of the Tibetan scholars he was working with, and perhaps directly in Tibet. This indeed would explain the systematic manner in which Indian myths are narrated in the *DAST*, as well as the very purpose of writing a commentary on a set of relatively simple Sanskrit verses. If much of the material provided is admittedly familiar, the text also contains a wealth of little-known stories, making it as instructive to us perhaps as it was to his Tibetan contemporaries. It is in Prajñāvarman's commentary, for instance, that we find the first occurrence of the myth of the Indian origin of the Tibetan people from the defeated army of king Rupati. Readers interested in the early history of Indian philosophical systems will also appreciate the colourful account of how Akṣapāda founded Mīmāṃsā [*sic*] through a favour of Śiva for his careful watch over Umā and his withstanding her seductive moves by staring at his feet (whence the name *akṣapāda*, Tib. *Rkang mig!*).

These, of course, are only a few examples of what can be gleaned from these very rich and little-known Buddhist works, of which Schneider provides us here a masterful study. Let us finally note that the very readable German translation and insightful comments will satisfy both the specialist of Indian Buddhism and the general reader. With this work, Schneider aptly pursues the task of early Tibetan translators: leading the path to Indian Buddhist thought for those who, being remote in place or time, have only fragmentary knowledge of the world in which it arose.

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THERESIA HOFER (ed.):

Bodies in Balance – The Art of Tibetan Medicine.

360 pp. New York: Rubin Museum of Art, in association with University of Washington Press, 2014. \$74.95. ISBN 978 029599359 1.

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This beautifully designed and richly illustrated catalogue has been produced for an extraordinary exhibition on the art of Tibetan medicine staged at the Rubin Museum, New York, in 2014. Editor, curator and social anthropologist Theresia Hofer has contributed to and compiled a compelling multidisciplinary series of chapters by international experts. The book explores the convergent spaces of Tibetan medicine, also known as Sowa Rigpa or the “science of healing”, as a knowledge system with different forms of practice, including its complex interaction with Buddhism. Due to the rich illustrations used as technical supports in this medical knowledge system, the book will also appeal visually to both the wider public and scholars of Asian medicine. The first part of the work introduces the reader to theoretical principles and practices of Tibetan medicine, while the second focuses on medicine, religion and historical developments. We learn not only how Tibetan medicine has developed over the past 1,000 years in Tibet, the Himalayas and regions of Central Asia and southern Siberia, but also of its ongoing, recent transformation into an increasingly globalized Asian medical practice. The catalogue presents relevant artefacts, including medical paintings, Buddha statues and surgical objects from all of these regions. Overall, the volume admirably represents both the unity and diversity of Sowa Rigpa's “harmonious polyphony”, contextualized by recent and well-grounded ethnographic and historical research.

Just as students of Sowa Rigpa would themselves first learn, the catalogue begins by setting out the principles expounded in *The Four Tantras (rGyud bzhi)*, the core text and classical compendium of Tibetan medicine in use until today, with the presentation illustrated by photographs of manuscripts from Lhasa. Alongside the structure and theory of *The Four Tantras* (ch. 1), we are later informed about this compendium's complex and contested origins, and its compiler Yuthog Yontan Gonpo, himself a founding figure and object of veneration for physicians of Tibetan medicine (ch. 8). Next, we learn about the intricate connection between body, mind and environment. Sowa Rigpa has taken up a variety of body images and principles, including some from Tantric Buddhism, such as the invisible channels and chakras that play an important role in health and illness (ch. 2). In chapter 4, we are informed about the varied types of external therapies, followed by a discussion of the importance of astrology for diagnosis and treatment (ch. 5, vignette 1). In three chapters (3, 6, 11) of the twelve, Tibetan medicines based on plant, mineral and animal ingredients receive a special focus in terms of the art of compounding, as being central to what is considered efficacious treatment, but also as globalized commodities whose mass production and consumption increasingly endanger stocks of wild *materia medica*. From handcrafted medicines prescribed by individual physicians-cum-pharmacists in Tibet and the Himalayas, to their mass production as pharmaceuticals or dietary supplements in China by a European manufacturer conforming to national regulatory regimes and legislation, Tibetan medicines remain unique in their multicomponent formulas, and central to Tibetan medical treatment.

The second part of the book introduces us to the different Buddhas of medicine (ch. 7) and dimensions of Tibetan medical history (ch. 9). Chapter 12 presents the fascinating story of how Tibetan medicine was introduced from Central Asia to Europe by a Buryat physician from a Tibetan medical family. Aside from Europe, travelling and migrating Tibetan exile physicians have also introduced this art of healing to the United States. In 2013, the Rubin Museum in New York purchased a complete set of 79 skilfully reproduced Tibetan medical paintings made in eastern Tibet, from one such practitioner: ten of these were displayed at the exhibition. These paintings are still used as visual aids for learning Sowa Rigpa. The set, which has been reproduced over time in various Tibetan and Asian contexts, was originally commissioned by Desi Sangye Gyatso (1653–1705), the regent of the Fifth Dalai Lama and himself an author of authoritative medical texts and founder of the Chakpori medical school in Lhasa (see ch. 10). One of three vignettes in the catalogue examines specific illustrations in these Tibetan medical paintings in the form of tree metaphors of the body in states of health and illness, as well as diagnosis and treatment methods, as depicted on murals found at the medical college of the Labrang monastery in far eastern Tibet or today's Gansu province of China (Vignette 2). While Tibetan medical paintings have already been the object of the detailed and beautifully illustrated book by Yuri Parfianovitch, Fernand Meyer and Gyurmed Dorje (*Tibetan Medical Paintings. Illustrations of the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso (1653–1705)*, New York, 1992), the Rubin Museum's exhibition catalogue clearly goes a step further by encompassing the intricate relationship between ethnography and history in Tibetan medical practice and art.

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