

system in which local languages would be privileged, fixed grammatically, and standardized such that they could become the transparent languages of command, as Bernard Cohn so famously named them, under a modern colonial state.

The implications are clear: The formation and institutionalization of these new epistemologies and practices of writing, provoked by new modes of ruling, themselves undergirded the formation of a document raj, a papereality of law and governance. More profoundly still, they produced a fixed language and its geography, modern Tamil and the Tamil-Speaking lands of Tamilnadu. The practices that formed the document raj would be far reaching, for they ultimately provided the commonsense ground for a new kind of imagined community in the Tamil nationalisms of India and beyond.

Bhavani Raman's extraordinary book is both disciplined in focus and expansive in implication. From its attention to the micro-processes of writing and the cultivation of memory to the establishment of modern bureaucratic governance and nations, it moves from a well-crafted story about the formation of a particular polity to an elegant theory of the relationship between linguistic and political modernity.

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Caroline Humphrey and Hürelbaatar Ujeed, *A Monastery in Time: The Making of Mongolian Buddhism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, xiii, 426 pp.

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Humphrey and Ujeed's *A Monastery in Time: The Making of Mongolian Buddhism* is a meticulous and theoretically sophisticated study of a unique institution in the Mongol world: Mergen Monastery in the Urad district of Inner Mongolia, China, which rejected the Tibetan liturgy used across Inner Asia and established its own vernacular tradition. The book, based on more than a decade of ethnographic fieldwork and historical-archival research using many original sources, skillfully demonstrates how a little-known institution on the outskirts of China could be considered a kind of "center" from which to view the most dramatic events of the last few centuries in Asian history: the Qing rule, the onslaught of the Han migration, the Cultural Revolution and the near disappearance of religious activity under state atheism, and, finally, the revival of Buddhism in contemporary China (approved in Inner Mongolia as part of "ethnic culture"). Spanning the period from the eighteenth century to the present, the book traces the development, institutionalization, ruptures, and transformations of a local form of Mahayana tantric Buddhism

in the Mongolian language, while offering fresh, ethnographically informed, theoretical reflections on what constitutes a “tradition.”

This “Mongolian Buddhism,” as the first two chapters explain, was instituted by an incarnate lama known as Mergen Gegen (1717–1766). He was a cultural innovator, poet, historian, and creator of vernacular liturgical texts that are now chanted daily by monks at the monastery and diligently studied by a small industry of local academics under the rubric of “Mergen Gegen Studies.” Such studies can safely celebrate a *Mongolian* cultural form of Buddhism, since Mergen’s use of the vernacular separates “Mongolian Buddhism” from the “renegade” Tibet. There exist a number of interpretations of the phenomenon of Mergen. First, there is a “nationalist” reading, which posits that since the Manchu Qing government was trying to control Mongols by using Tibetan Buddhism, Mergen’s vernacularization of liturgy was a kind of contestation of imperial policy. There is also a “Marxist” interpretation, in which Mergen emerges as a dissident hero similar to John Wycliffe, switching liturgy from a foreign language to a language comprehensible to the “masses.” Yet, as Humphrey and Ujeed argue in Chapter 2, Mergen did something more “interesting and unexpected.” His endeavor, the authors claim, was aimed at cultural and moral autonomy, but most importantly, Mergen was engaged in the profound transformation of his own people, creating new subjectivities and a specifically Mongolian ethic to bring forth moral regeneration in a native language.

The chapters that follow are equally rich, and it is impossible to do justice here to the very intricate ethnographic and historic narratives that make each chapter a self-contained entity that is nonetheless linked seamlessly with the rest of the book. Chapter 3 looks at the Mergen monastery as a “complex of relations” and includes insightful analyses of landscape, monastery sociality, organization of the economy, and the local understandings of religious and occult forces. Chapter 4 focuses on secular forces, such as dukes and politicians, and tells the story of a nineteenth-century local noble, Duke Galdan. Chapter 5 takes us back to the discussion of the occult, in particular the sacrificial cult of *sülde* (vital forces). Chapter 6 deals with the last, 8th Mergen Gegen, whose life traversed the turbulent history of the twentieth century. Chapters 7 and 8 tell stories of two contemporary lamas, each embodying a famous Buddhist ideal-type of authority: that of an incarnate lama and that of an ordinary but very knowledgeable lama. The last two chapters deal with the transformations of the Mergen monastery since 2005, focusing on the new, active role of the laity and offering final reflections on tradition and archivization. The Epilogue demonstrates how permutations of Buddhism in Inner Mongolia are markedly different from those occurring in Mongolia and Buddhist regions of Russia, such as Buryatia, Kalmykia, and Tuva. The activity of Inner Mongolian Buddhists is mostly contained within highly state-regulated structures; New Age cults and shamanism are illegal; the Dalai Lama is strictly banned; and there are very few books on Buddhist teachings available to the

laity. Yet, if Buddhism everywhere had always existed in the creative tension between dispersion and centralization, Humphrey and Ujeed conclude that the history of Mergen has manifested a “very Buddhist way of being in time” (386).

The book draws on diverse theoretical and disciplinary approaches, ranging from anthropology to Buddhist Studies to insights from continental philosophers such as Deleuze, Derrida, and Latour. It will be useful in seminars on the anthropology of religion and Buddhist studies, as well as to scholars of Asia who wish to go beyond nation-based histories to consider perspectives from Mongolian, Chinese, and Tibetan studies in order to understand Inner Asia as a place of interconnected peoples, traditions, and political processes.

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Chiara de Cesari and Ann Rigney, eds., *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*. Media and Cultural Memory 19, Berlin, De Gruyter 2014, ISBN 978-3-11-035902-2, 99,95€.

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“Transnational Memory” opens new horizons for the field of memory studies. The book leaves no doubt about the need to decisively break with methodological nationalism and turn to polyphonic and multi-layered constellations of memory. It is a significant contribution to a third wave of memory studies and represents the field’s cutting edge in a globalized world.

The editors’ introduction postulates, “Globalized communication and time-space compression, post-coloniality, transnational capitalism, large-scale migration, and regional integration” (p. 2) have challenged the exclusive dominance of national frames for any construction of meaning and identity in contemporary time. De Cesari and Rigney compellingly question the historical pertinence of an overdetermined connection between nation and memory, and demonstrate that transcultural entanglements already permeated colonialism and slavery (7). But what guides most of this volume’s case studies is the globalized present, which necessitates a conceptualization of memory as dynamic, heterogeneous, multidirectional, and entangled.

Instead of mapping another set of now “transnational” *lieux de mémoire*, the articles approach memory primarily through a (socio-cultural) micro-prism. Most of the case studies focus on mnemonic discourse of recent years, notwithstanding the introduction’s historical contextualization and widely applicable conceptual statements. Readers from historical disciplines will find this feature puzzling. Flexible research designs here allow enquiries into examples that are important and dazzling, if at times “exotic” and narrowly tailored, but the links between them are not self-evident. The volume produces stimulating insights, for instance into non-territorial figurations of mnemonic groups